



The Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order  
1820 Mt. Elliott Street  
Detroit, MI 48207

**MINUTES OF THE  
48th ORDINARY CHAPTER OF THE  
PROVINCE OF ST. JOSEPH OF THE CAPUCHIN ORDER  
JUNE 5-9, 2023  
ST. XAVIER UNIVERSITY  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

*\*N.B. Unless otherwise indicated, all those noted here by name are all friars.*

**Monday, June 5**

The friars registered for Chapter and their rooms and gathered for supper, evening prayer and a social.

**Tuesday, June 6**

Robert Williams, Moderator of the Chapter, welcomed everyone. The Chapter began with prayer, led by Roach Gaspar.

Tino Arias, General Councilor and President of the Chapter by delegation of the General Minister, asked John Celichowski, Chapter Secretary, to read the Letter of Convocation issued by Roberto Genuin, Minister General on March 23, 2021 (Prot. N. 00162/21).

Tino then gave a short address to the Chapter. He first acknowledged the absence of the General Minister, Roberto Genuin, as well as Roberto's visit to the Province several months ago. Tino then summarized some notable changes in the Capuchin Order:

- The shifts in membership from Europe and the North America to Africa and Asia, as well as Brazil. The Capuchins are now the largest religious order on the African continent. Many of the former mission territories are now sending missionaries to other countries.
- The structures of the Order were created to facilitate the growth of the Order. Now they are being used to also accommodate the diminishment of the Order (e.g., in Europe).
- The North American Pacific Capuchin Conference (NAPCC) has been able to weather the demographic challenges facing the order because the provinces have embraced fraternal collaboration and have also become more multicultural through their vocations and initial formation programs.
- The Minister General has asked some of the more vital provinces, including the Province of St. Joseph, to support the provinces that are struggling. He does not foresee an amalgamation of the provinces of the USA like the one undertaken by the OFMs. In addition, he is asking for more collaboration between provinces in the conference, e.g., in initial formation programs, San Lorenzo communities, etc.

The Chapter Secretary called the roll. It was determined that there were 72 capitulars present, sufficient for the quorum necessary to conduct the business of the Chapter.

Following the roll call, Mark Joseph Costello, Provincial Minister, offered some words of welcome. He expressed gratitude for the ability to have a larger gathering, Tino's presence, and the opportunity to talk and act together. Mark Joseph also expressed the desire for the friars to embrace some of the newer realities that the Order, Province and Church face these days.

He noted the friars who, for poor health or other reasons, were not able to participate in the Chapter. He also remembered the 29 friars and 3 affiliates of the Province who died since the last triennium ended in June 2020:

- Friars: Alexis Luzi, Robert Wheelock, John Willger, Charles Robinson, Joseph Howe, Ronald Smith, Werner Wolf, Paul Yaroch, Martin Pable, Alfredo Gundrum, Mel Hermanns, Bernard Wagner, Walter Balduck, Paul Reichling, Reynold Rynda, Paschal Siler, Keith Clark, Francis Solanus Fary (General Custody of St. Felix of Cantalice), Richard Hart, John Hascall, Walter Kasuboski, David Heffron, William Frigo, Jerome Higgins, Kenneth Smits, Thomas Hill, Paul Hanisko, John Holly, Michael Gaffney.
- Affiliates: Rita Petrie, Bettejean Ahee, Patrick Giffer.

**Nomination and Election of Chapter Officers**—The Provincial Minister and Council nominated the following to serve as Chapter Officers:

- **Presidential Council/Steering Committee**—Michael Bertram, Mark Joseph Costello, Tien Dinh, Michael Dorn, Brenton Ertel, Zoilo Garibay, William Hugo, Steven Kropp, Vito Martinez, Antony Julius Milton, Biju Parakkalayil, and Chrispin Shirima.
- **Chapter Moderator**—Robert Williams (Province of the Stigmata [NJ])
- **Parliamentarian**—Patrick McSherry
- **Chapter Secretary**—John Celichowski
- **Assistant Secretary for Elections**—Lawrence Webber, assisted by Javier Rodriguez
- **Tellers and Assistant Tellers**—Alwin Antonysamy, Fred Cabras, Jerry Cornish, Brenton Ertel, Nathan Linton, José Vera, Peter Kafumu, Baudry Metangmo

Following the nominations for the various officers, the Chapter approved the officers by a show of hands.

## Welcome of Guests

Mark Joseph welcomed a number of guests who would participate in the Chapter:

- **Friars in Post-Novitiate Formation**—McLean Bennett, Igor De Bliquy, Jaico George, Layola Keerthivasan, Shebin Philip.
- **Postulant**—Arnaud Dadjo
- **Special Guests**—Celestino Arias (General Councilor and President), Robert Williams (Moderator), Diane Simpkins (Provincial Treasurer), Bishop Paul Schmitz, Timothy Hinkle (Director of Public Relations), and Norbert Zwickl (Liturgical Commission).

## Presentation and Approval of Chapter Agenda

Steve Kropp presented the proposed agenda for the 48<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Chapter of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph:

- Provincial Minister's Triennial Report (including dialog with friars)
- Financial Report (including dialog with the friars)
- Keynote Address by John Allen, Editor, *Crux* (provided via pre-recorded video) with Panel Discussion
- Continuing Education from the Office of Pastoral Care and Conciliation (OPCC)
- One Discernment Session and One Straw Ballot re: Elections
- Election of Provincial Minister and Councilors
- Presentation on *Laudato Si* Action Plan (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission)
- Votes on Submitted Chapter Proposals (including dialog with friars)

The agenda was approved by a show of hands.

## Housekeeping Notes

Steve Kropp presented various items, including: HVAC controls, no beverages in auditorium, keys, requests for services, emergency calls and services, tech issues, roll call and ballots, and birthdays.

Tino Arias described the processes for being excused from Chapter sessions or renouncing passive voice.

## Provincial Minister's Triennial Report

Mark Joseph Costello noted that he would not present a word-for-word rendition of his written report. He also highlighted some features of the current life of the Province, including:

- Change: demographic changes (ethnic/racial diversity, fraternal collaboration, deaths, global pandemic, vocations, etc.)

- Fraternal collaboration, while not without challenges, has enriched our communities and ministries. At the same time, we need to address the challenges and conflicts that exist.
- Some of our retirement needs will change. For example, in the not-too-distant future, we may no longer need St. Fidelis Friary in Appleton. St. Felix Friary in Mt. Calvary and the former convent at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Milwaukee are for sale.
- There are far fewer friars living alone or in small communities. There has been a shift toward larger communities and a desire for more friars to work together in our ministries.
- Community prayer—especially the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist, as well as contemplative prayer—is strong in our houses. Mark Joseph proposed a new model for providing retreat opportunities for the friars, featuring smaller groups, use of technology (remote presenters), and more conversation. Many of these could be hosted at Capuchin Retreat. A new modular building will be constructed at Pickerel in 2024 and will be available for small retreats in Wisconsin, as well as for family and initial formation gatherings, meetings, etc.
- The evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity, and obedience) continue to raise practical challenges, e.g., in our use of vehicles, healthy and needed conversations about celibacy and sexuality, responding to invitations/calls to move or accept a different ministry.
- The Province has a friar assigned to be a full-time Vocation Director, and the Capuchin Vocation Office has incorporated new technologies and is exploring new opportunities to recruit new members.
- The Province’s ministries have expanded their programs and services, many of them beyond the traditional parish model. There is greater collaboration between our ministries (e.g., Capuchin Retreat, the Solanus Casey Center, and the Capuchin Soup Kitchen).
- The Province’s domestic mission on the Northern Cheyenne and Crow reservations in Montana has been stabilized, and it is being proposed as a potential site for a San Lorenzo Community. This remains the Province’s sole mission and is an essential part of our identity as Capuchins.
- The Province’s mission, vision, and values need to be more widely shared and integrated, including among our employees. Collaboration and various forms of ministerial partnership present both opportunities as well as potential problems.
- Recent changes in our ministries include the establishment of the Solanus Mission Association, a more deliberate process for remembering prayer intentions, and the strengthening of the Provincial Archives.
- The Province has shared its resources with other groups through our Gifts and Grants program, which is supported by a tithe of the friars’ income. The Provincial Minister and Council recently decided to annually dedicate a portion of our Gifts and Grants to the Office of Economic Solidarity at the General Curia to support its projects.
- St. Francis Monastery in Milwaukee has been restored and renovated and the St. Francis Capuchin Center was built to strengthen the presence of the friars in Milwaukee and provide future ministry opportunities. The carriage house and grounds continue to be renovated.

- The *Sandal Prints* magazine has been revived and has proved to be popular with donors as well as other provinces.
- Several longtime employees are retiring, including Jeff Parrish (Director of Provincial Ministries and Human Resources) and Dave Orzechowski (IT).

Mark Joseph expressed deep gratitude to the Provincial Council members and previous administration for their dedicated work and service to the fraternity.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's Report was delivered by Ms. Diane Simpkins, Secretary/Treasurer of the Province. Here are some highlights:

- The Province's net assets increased during the triennium.
- The Province's projected income is expected to decline by roughly 50% in the next 15 years, while projected expenses will decline by about 33%.
- Many building projects are underway and proposed for the coming five years. These include renovations at St. Lawrence Seminary, a new HVAC system for Capuchin Retreat, a new bake house for the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, and a new friary in Detroit.
- The Province received substantial Paycheck Protection Program loans from the federal government to support the wages and salaries of our employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. These loans were forgiven.

Following the presentation of the reports, the friars took a break for Mass, lunch, and photos.

### **Keynote Address and Panel Discussion**

The keynote address was delivered by John L. Allen, Jr., Editor of *Crux*, via pre-recorded video. Here are some highlights:

- Mr. Allen noted his long relationship with the Capuchins, from his elementary and high school years in Kansas. He is a big fan of the friars.
- There are four "megatrends" in the Church today:
  - **Changing Church Demographics**—The Church is undergoing its largest demographic changes in history. A century ago, Catholicism was essentially a white, northern family of faith. Today, more than two-thirds of Catholics live in the global east and south, especially in Asia and Africa, and by the end of this century more than three-fourths of Catholics will live outside Europe and North America. One consequence of this is the Holy See's more moderate and non-aligned position on the war in Ukraine. The locus of creativity in the Church will come from unfamiliar parts of the world. American Catholics are only 6% of

the global Catholic population. Capuchins and other religious orders can help the Church in the USA to accept and navigate these tremendous changes.

- **Tribalization**—On each side of the Left-Right continuum, there are many smaller groups or “tribes,” each with a (set of) special interest(s). Many of them are interiorly-focused and siloed: there is not much good communication with others. In this respect, the Catholic Church in the USA reflects the cultural and political forces of the nation. Increasingly, Americans live, work, recreate, and worship only with people who look and think like them. This makes polarization and demonization of “the other” easier. Resisting and transforming tribalism is rooted in friendship, and friendship can only be forged in encounter. As a moderate and practical fraternity rooted in the gospel, and a community known for pastoral care that serves a variety of people in different settings, the Capuchins can facilitate these encounters. The friars can be architects of a post-tribal Church in the USA.
- **Evangelical Catholicism**—This is rooted in the papacies of St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI. It includes a reassertion of (often traditional) Catholic identity in the face of growing secularism and moral relativism. This is seen, for example, in the popularity of devotional practices and an emphasis on doctrine and catechetics among younger Catholics who have no experience of the pre-Vatican II Church. This hunger for markers of Catholic identity is generational and not cultural. The Capuchins are called to welcome and reinforce this hunger for Catholic identity while also resisting the politization and weaponization between the Left and Right in the Church.
- **Synodality**—Pope Francis is a strong proponent of this effort to create a more listening and participatory Church, one that better reflects the creativity and desires of the people of God. The Capuchins were synodal before the term became “a thing.” The Province can consider how the laity, including women, to participate in our work and decision-making.

Mr. Allen expressed great confidence and hope in the Capuchin friars. He said that he looked forward to seeing the Province engage in facing the challenges he outlined. He added that he was willing to do whatever he could to be of help to the Province. “This is a beginning, not an end.”

Robert Williams invited several panelists to share their reactions to Mr. Allen’s presentation:

- **Peter Kafumu** said that addressing the “megatrends” requires a concerted effort by the Province. He issued a challenge: “Are we ready to change?” Change is inevitable and necessary. The Church in the USA needs Capuchins! What can we do to strengthen the Church and the works and witness of the Capuchins here? How can we keep the spirit of St. Francis alive and pass it to the next generations? This is our time to do what St. Francis of Assisi did in the 13<sup>th</sup> century: rebuild the Church with brothers. Let us see every brother as a gift from God, regardless of where he comes from. Recall that the Capuchins are a global fraternity. We should be open to all ideas, but we should evaluate them by the criteria of fraternity, mission, love, and unity.
- **Nick Blattner** expressed gratitude for John Allen’s presentation, especially its balance and expression of “common sense” Catholicism. Nick called division and tribalism especially problematic. He recalled that such divisions were present in the Corinthian church at the time of St. Paul. These divisions could be catastrophic. We sometimes avoid difficult theological, pastoral, and liturgical conversations. It was humbling to hear Mr. Allen offer the Capuchins as mediators

or bridge-builders, and Nick urged us to first not contribute to the divisions by our own attitudes. Are we willing to be part of the problem or part of the solution? Transformation is already underway in the Province, e.g., through more diverse vocations and fraternal collaboration. We can help it to continue, enriching the Church, Order, and world.

- **Truyen Nguyen** offered remarks on the trends of demographic change and tribalism. It is important to note that a majority of American Catholics today are from Hispanic and Asian backgrounds. The Province has changed: younger friars think differently than their older brothers, and it is important to respond to the forces of racism, sexism, and other forms of marginalization. We also need to challenge different forms of tribalism, from provincialism to ideological divisions. We are called to build a culture of encounter between ourselves as well as with others. Like St. Francis, no one can show us what to do. We need to live the gospel.
- **Javier Rodriguez** was surprised by the impact of the Capuchins on John Allen, and he suspected that many other people throughout the world would have similar testimonies. However, we can only do outside of the Province what we do among ourselves. Are we a Province that lives by the principles of unity, openness, dialog, trust, mercy, cooperation, and mutuality? Javier said he sometimes felt silenced and marginalized. He did not believe that we are yet ready to address the forces of demographic change, tribalism, etc. We need to look within ourselves!

Peter, Nick, Truyen, and Javier engaged in a brief conversation about what they heard from each other. In sum, the Province has great potential and also faces great challenges. A few friars then shared their own brief reflections and questions for the panel.

## **Cultural Video I: Tamil Nadu**

The Chapter viewed the first in a series of short videos reflecting the growing cultural diversity of the Province. Julius Milton introduced a video about Tamil Nadu, in the southeast part of India.

## **OPCC Report and Continuing Education**

Amy Peterson, Director of the Office of Pastoral Conciliation, began her presentation with an overview of her nearly 14 years of ministry in the office. There has been a shift of focus from responses to prevention and maintaining and improving our programs and structures. However, the environment in which we live and minister is changing, and we need to change in response to it. The Province has, for example, established its own Safe Environment Program, which is audited every three years.

Dr. Jim Freiburger, who conducted the most recent audit/review, expressed gratitude for the cooperation of the friars, ministries and offices in the process. Everyone interviewed was well-prepared and diligent in providing the requested materials. He noted that the conversations were fluid and practical. Like Ms. Peterson, Dr. Freiburger acknowledged that policies and procedures need to change in response to changed conditions. The work of creating safe environments takes time, experience, and thought.

The review noted that the OPCC received only a couple of reports of potential or alleged misconduct, and they were addressed promptly, effectively, and in accord with the Province's policies. Everyone involved in the processes did what they were supposed to do.

Ms. Peterson added that provincial leaders, formation personnel, and others were interviewed. She asked if the assembled friars had any questions, concerns, or reflections. One friar asked about the important elements on prevention: new training (e.g., for bystanders), consultation with OPCC, cultivating healthy environments (e.g., good communications, promptly addressing potentially problematic behavior, promoting holistic wellness, not allowing people to isolate).

Dr. Freiburger noted that everyone he interviewed expressed satisfaction with the OPCCs communications and support, e.g., responding to questions or concerns. He added that he found that the Province has an effective and engaged Review Board and Initial and Continuing Formation programs.

Ms. Peterson responded to a question regarding the Attorney General of the State of Wisconsin who had requested that dioceses and religious orders turn over records to his office as part of an investigation. However, the Attorney General did not have jurisdiction to make such a request. Dioceses and religious orders pledged cooperation with any reports of historical or current abuse. Attorney Generals in Illinois and Michigan, who have different laws and regulations, have continued to conduct investigations and release reports.

Mark Joseph Costello noted that the OPCC has continued to provide effective responses to people who continue to come to the Province with claims of abuse. Many people, however, will never come forward. Others only will when statutes of limitation are amended or temporarily lifted.

Dr. Kevin McClone provided a training session on *Sexual Issues and Boundaries*. Friars were asked to sign a form confirming their participation in the training. Here are some highlights:

- It is essential to accept that we are sexual beings.
- Ministry is a profession that involves ethical standards, the exercise of power and authority, and accountability.
- There are many characteristics of ministry that make it vulnerable to potential boundary violations: dealing with people in emotional crises; trust and the sharing of intimate details; ease and access to initiate contact with persons; power, prestige, and influence; personal qualities that are attractive (warmth, openness, etc.).
- It is the minister's obligation to be conscious of the power he has in any relationship. He has the duty to stop any inappropriate relationship.
- The ministers' power comes from his assumed credibility, expert knowledge, expectations and projections, and a sense of his/her own power.
- Shame and low self-esteem put a minister at risk of misconduct.
- As human beings, we are all sexual by nature. Ignoring or denying this is not helpful.



- Sexualized behavior includes words and actions that convey sexual interest. Its ethical status is rooted in the imbalance of power between the minister and those he serves.
- It is important to be aware of expectations and projections. Needy people give power to ministers, and the needier they are, the more power the minister has.
- We need to remember that:
  - Our sexual nature has positive and destructive capacities.
  - We need to develop a healthy capacity for intimacy with God, self, and others, and to resist the wider cultural influences (e.g., social media, pornography) that degrade the sanctity of our sexual nature.
  - A balanced lifestyle includes recognition of our strengths and weaknesses/vulnerabilities.
  - Our primary relationships require committed and ongoing engagement.
- Awareness of the dynamics of transference and counter-transference (e.g., memories of childhood/adolescence, family of origin issues) can help to prevent boundary violations. How can we remain reasonably objective when flooded with feelings? We need to be in touch with our feelings, including those that have sexual content.
- Boundaries are rules, norms, and codes of conduct that create a safe and nurturing environment for each person emotionally, physically, sexually, and spiritually. *Boundaries are a way to love as well as act professionally.*
- Avoid dual relationships (e.g., formator and spiritual director/confessor), which can be complex, confusing, and difficult to maintain.
- Healthy boundaries are set by the minister and are flexible, sensitive to self and the other, and concerned for the spiritual good of the other.
- Unhealthy boundaries, by contrast, are set by others, rigid, intrusive or disrespectful, self-focused, and lacking in concern for others.
- An offending moment occurs at the intersection of three conditions: in the offender, the victim, and the system. Each of these three circles must be addressed for effective prevention of abuse.
- “Confrontation without care is control.” (+Michael Crosby, OFM Cap.)
- All of us are vulnerable in some ways. That’s part of what it means to be human. Each of us needs to be aware of our various vulnerabilities. Those that make people prone to boundary violations include: arrested psychosexual development; poor intimacy skills; external focus on role, status, power in connection with others; lack of self-care and healthy stress management; healthy spirituality and relationship with God.
- Environmental factors: double standards b/w men and women; pornography; rigid cultural systems and stereotypical male and female roles; increased sexual stimuli in media; sexual desensitization.
- Social factors: open vs. closed systems; ministerial stress; lack of balanced lifestyle, etc.

- Vulnerable religious and seminarians: ordination as way to reduce shame; codependent; rigid and judgmental thinking; denial re: sexual issues; history of abuse; rigid formation; poor relational skills; unresolved sexual difficulties; mental illness, incl. depression; impoverished spiritual life.
- Denial fuels an addictive or compulsive cycle of misconduct.
- Wellness includes creating circles of intimacy and support (God, self, community, family, close friends, etc.), addressing burnout, and developing a holistic spirituality.
- It is important to listen to our guts when we feel uncomfortable and to check things out with someone we trust.

### **Discernment and Straw Ballot for Provincial Minister and Councilors**

Straw ballots were distributed following the first afternoon session. Discernment and discussion were encouraged during the breaks.

Following the afternoon sessions, Larry Webber and Javier Rodriguez explained the balloting process. Friars were instructed to stay in the same seats throughout the elections process.

Patrick McSherry, noting that the number of capitulars has changed over the years, made an intervention requesting that the capitulars temporarily suspend the provisions in the *Procedures for Celebrating a Provincial Chapter* regarding the seating of electors. The Chapter approved the suggested change by a show of hands.

### **Evening Events**

Tuesday of Chapter concluded with supper, evening prayer, and a social.

### **Wednesday, June 7**

Wednesday of Chapter began with Mass, breakfast, and Morning Prayer.

Tino Arias, President of the Chapter, provided an explanation of the voting and ballot counting processes. John Celichowski, Secretary of the Chapter, led the roll call. 72 capitulars were noted present.

### **Election of Provincial Minister**

Mark Joseph Costello was elected Provincial Minister on the first ballot with 64 votes.

### **Election of First Councilor**

Tien Dinh was elected First Councilor on the first ballot with 42 votes.

## **Cultural Video: Kerala**

The Chapter then viewed the second in a series of short videos reflecting the growing cultural diversity of the Province. Julius Milton introduced a video about Kerala, in the southwest part of India.

Following a break, there was another roll call. 72 capitulars were noted present.

## **Election of Second Councilor**

William Hugo was elected Second Councilor on the first ballot with 42 votes.

## **Election of Third Councilor**

Biju Parakkalayil was elected Third Councilor on the first ballot with 41 votes.

## **Election of Fourth Councilor**

Nicholas Blattner was elected Fourth Councilor on the first ballot with 50 votes.

## **Announcement of Friar Death**

The Provincial Minister announced that +TL Michael Auman died on June 7, 2023. Funeral arrangements were pending.

## **Change in Schedule**

Because the elections of the Provincial Minister and Councilors proceeded with unprecedented speed, there was an unexpected amount of additional time available for the Chapter to use. The Presidential Council recommended the following changes to the agenda and schedule:

### **Wednesday, June 7**

2:30 PM	Chapter Proposals Group Photo
3:30 PM	Coffee Break
4:15 PM	Cultural Video III <i>Laudato Si</i> Proposal (JPIC Commission)
6:00 PM	Supper
7:00 PM	Evening Prayer (Anointing of the Sick)
8:00 PM	Social

**Thursday, June 8**

7:15 AM	Breakfast
8:30 AM	Morning Prayer
9:00 AM	Video Replay of Keynote Address (John L. Allen, Jr.)
9:45 AM	Small Group Meetings to Respond to the Keynote Address and Panel
11:00 AM	Election of Provincial Vicar
12:00 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM	General Councilor Address and Discussion with Elected Provincial Minister and Council
4:00 PM	Installation Eucharist
5:15 PM	Social
6:30 PM	Chapter Banquet

**Friday, June 9**

7:00 AM	Eucharist
7:15 AM	Breakfast
8:30 AM	Morning Prayer Departure

After some brief discussion, the proposed changes to the agenda and schedule, moved by William Hugo and seconded by Paul Koenig, were approved by a show of hands.

**Proposals****Pastoral Planning**

The Provincial Minister and Council proposed that the Pastoral Plan of the Province be amended as noted below and implemented during the 2023-2026 triennium:

As the Province adds, hands over, abandons, sustains, or changes ministries in the future, it will give preference to ministries that offer additional opportunities to Catholics, Christians, and others which are not typically available in parishes.

Among our first efforts to implement this principle, the Province will develop programming, events and displays at our St. Francis Church and Capuchin Center in Milwaukee to create a pilgrimage/destination site for the region. An open-door policy for the church and center will enhance hospitality to St. Francis Parish, and for visiting groups and individuals, and offer opportunities for private and group prayer, and celebration of appropriate sacraments. We will develop displays that tell the story of this place and the Calvary Province within the world-wide Capuchin Order. Suitable Capuchin and other personnel will be assigned to this new ministry.

David Preuss encouraged support for the proposal, citing the successes and continued popularity of places like the Solanus Casey Center in Detroit and St. Joseph's Oratory of Mt. Royal in Montreal.

David Hirt also advocated for support for the proposal. He said that it would be a good way to promote our Capuchin Franciscan charism and work well with the Postulancy Program. He noted, however, that it would also require the support of the friars living at St. Francis Monastery.

Antony Julius Milton suggested that the proposed site in Milwaukee could also boost vocations. He asked Mark Joseph what some of the possible programs might be. Mark Joseph replied that the center could provide spiritual support for the volunteers at Capuchin Community Services. He added that the church and St. Francis Capuchin Center could be open to the faithful for more hours, offering confessions, providing space for justice and peace and prayer groups to meet, offering a home for people on the margins of church and society. These would build on much of what is already happening at St. Francis of Assisi Parish.

Jerome Schroeder reminded the Chapter that St. Benedict the Moor Parish has long been a haven for “people who don’t fit” in the church and society. He encouraged those assembled to not forget ways that St. Benedict’s could be included. William Hugo noted that there could be collaboration between a St. Francis spirituality center, St. Benedict the Moor Parish and St. Francis of Assisi Parish, and Capuchin Community Services (St. Ben’s Community Meal and the House of Peace).

Thomas Skowron recalled that one of the insights of the Secularization Project was that fewer people are coming to visit churches and spiritual centers. To him, the proposal felt “static” and needed to have a component of outreach and evangelization.

Tom Nguyen shared Thomas Skowron’s concerns and added that it would be important to include a variety of stakeholders in the concrete details and implementation of the proposal. Mark Joseph noted that the proposal represents a shift in orientation and criteria for developing the ministries in Milwaukee.

Michael Bertram spoke in favor of the proposal. He added that, in his experience as Pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, the church is already a refuge of sorts for people who cannot find a spiritual home anywhere else.

Peter Chinnippan reflected on his positive experiences at the Solanus Casey Center and urged support for the proposal.

Jerry Cornish added that what the Provincial Minister and Council proposed could affect a wide array of ministries across the Province, e.g., in our domestic mission in Montana.

Tien Dinh reflected on the Province’s long search for a new ministry that has long been included in the Pastoral Plan. He said that as the Province has sought such a ministry in a new diocese, the local bishop has typically asked the friars to accept a parish. He shared how the integration of ministries in Detroit and outreach has strengthened the Capuchin “brand” in Detroit. It could do the same in Milwaukee and other places.

Anthony Kote-Witah voiced support for the proposal, remembering that his first exposure to the Order was in Milwaukee. He noted that it would be good way to develop a stronger Capuchin presence on the west side of Lake Michigan.

George Kooran also spoke in favor of the proposal, noting the importance of providing places outside Detroit where those with a devotion to Bl. Solanus could visit. Fr. Solanus, for example, spent some of his life as a friar at St. Francis in Milwaukee.

Javier Rodriguez affirmed the proposal, noting that it would complement the work being done at St. Francis of Assisi Parish. It could also invite further collaboration by the friars in Milwaukee, Mt. Calvary, and Chicago.

Jerome Johnson asked whether the Province would assign more friars to assist in the development and support for additional ministries. Mark Joseph Costello confirmed that.

Anthony Kote-Witah recalled that historically the Province received many vocations from the Milwaukee area.

The proposal was moved by Fred Cabras and seconded by Nathan Linton. It was approved by a show of hands.

### **Proposal re: Return of Chapter Venue to St. Lawrence Seminary**

David Schwab introduced a proposal that the Chapter direct the Provincial Minister and Council to convene the 2026 Provincial Chapter at St. Lawrence Seminary in Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin.

Jerry Smith expressed concern that citing the Chapter at a particular place could constrain the Provincial Minister and Council in their planning.

Carl Schaeffer asked how many friars St. Lawrence could accommodate. David answered that there were 92 available bays in the dorms. Friars would, however, need to use shared bathrooms.

Larry Webber and Gary Wegner spoke against the proposal and suggested instead that the Provincial Minister and Council look at options other than St. Xavier University. Steve Kropp, however, reminded everyone that one benefit of having the Chapter at a place like St. Xavier University is that they have staff members who can address needs for catering, maintenance.

Mitchell Frantz, who lives at St. Lawrence, noted that the conditions in the rooms/bays at St. Lawrence may not be as private as assumed.

David Schwab said that St. Lawrence Seminary has a good food service and responsive maintenance staff. He also noted its significance as the foundation of the Province.

Having heard from the Chapter, David and the proponents of the proposal present moved that the proposal be withdrawn. The Chapter voted by a show of hands to approve the motion, and the proposal was withdrawn from further consideration.

The Provincial Minister and Council subsequently agreed to take under advisement that the Province consider sites other than St. Xavier University for the 2026 Provincial Chapter, including St. Lawrence Seminary.

Following a break, the Chapter assembly reconvened.

### **Cultural Video: Tanzania**

The Chapter then viewed the third in a series of short videos reflecting the growing cultural diversity of the Province. Alwin Antonysamy introduced a video about Tanzania, which is located in the southeast part of the African continent.

### **JPIC Commission Presentation on *Laudato Si* Action Plan**

The Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Commission provided an update on the Province's implementation *Laudato Si* Action Plan. David Hirt presented a summary of responses from the regional meetings held over the past year. The Province has already adopted a number of practices to reduce our energy use, reduce waste, recycle, decrease our consumption of meat, etc. A more detailed list of practices, concerns, and suggestions will be shared with the friars via the Capuchin Communications Office. We need to move forward spiritually as well as practically, and the JPIC Commission is ready to assist with resources to offer communities.

Mike Dorn gave a PowerPoint presentation on the work that has been done and the work that remains. Here are a few highlights:

- The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere continues to grow. The USA has 4% of the world's population, yet we emit 15% of greenhouse gases.
- The JPIC Commission had three significant "asks:"
  - **Diet: reduce consumption of meat**—By reducing our consumption we can have a big impact on reducing our carbon emissions.
  - **Transportation: reduce flying and single person travel**—By driving hybrid vehicles, using mass transit, riding bicycles (including electric bikes), using videoconferencing for meetings, etc.
  - **Buildings: examine construction and maintenance**—Reducing our carbon footprint by adopting green building practices, switching to more sustainable forms of energy, etc.
- The Commission asked each community to meet and discuss practical ways it can build a culture of ecological conversion, specifically by adopting one action in each of the three areas above and share those with the Commission and Province.

The Chapter assembly was offered the opportunity to share comments and questions:

- Gary Wegner expressed concern that, while there has been a lot of effort devoted to recycling, many jurisdictions do not do a very good job recycling. Some items saved for recycling, particularly some plastics (other than #1 and #2), go into landfills or are incinerated. It is best to look for alternatives to plastic packaging.
- Jerry Smith expressed concern that our food service at St. Xavier University has used disposable plastic and Styrofoam products. We should look at alternatives for future chapters.
- Vito Martinez shared that utilizing alternative utilities or transportation (e.g., geothermal HVAC, electric vehicles, etc.) often requires significant investments. Not every ministry has the resources to make such investments.
- Bill Hugo recalled that the Province's accounting firm, Baker Tilly, is assisting the Province in exploring ways that we can obtain tax credits for sustainable building projects under the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. The initial effort will focus on the redevelopment of the 1820 Mt. Elliott building (St. Joseph Center) in Detroit.

Following the JPIC presentation, the friars gathered for a group photo.

The day concluded with supper, Evening Prayer (with Anointing of the Sick), and a social.

### **Thursday, June 8**

The day began with breakfast and Morning Prayer.

#### **Reflections on the Keynote Address**

Friars were given the opportunity to again watch the prerecorded video of John Allen's keynote address to the Chapter. Small group discussions followed, with the groups asked to focus their conversations on at least one of the four "megatrends" identified in the keynote: church demographics, tribalism, evangelical Catholicism, and synodality.

#### **Cultural Video: Poland and Ethiopia**

The Chapter then viewed the third in a series of short videos reflecting the growing cultural diversity of the Province. Antony Julius Milton introduced a video about Poland and Ethiopia.



## **Election of Provincial Vicar**

While any of the four provincial councilors could be elected to serve as Provincial Vicar, the custom in the Province of St. Joseph has been for the Provincial Minister to select one of them for special consideration. Mark Joseph Costello offered William Hugo as his preferred candidate.

William Hugo was subsequently elected Provincial Vicar on the first ballot with 65 votes.

The election was followed by a break for lunch.

## **General Councilor Address**

Br. Celestino Arias, General Councilor and President of the Chapter delivered his final address. Here are some highlights:

- Tino, who did his Novitiate at St. Felix Friary in Mt. Calvary, said that he always felt at home in the Province of St. Joseph.
- Tino thanked Zoy Garibay and Steve Kropp for their service on the Provincial Council during the 2023-2026 triennium.
- The NAPCC is currently looking at Montana and the U.S.-Mexico border as possible sites for a San Lorenzo Community in this hemisphere.
- The General Minister, Roberto Genuin, had a very good visit to the Province earlier this year, and this was noted in his letter to the Provincial Minister.
- There are currently 10 provinces in the NAPCC, but 7 of them have fewer than 25 friars currently active in ministry.
- The Province needs to continue to proceed with intentionality in addressing both the signs of our diminishment (e.g., sale of buildings, letting go of some ministries) as well as signs of growth and vitality (e.g., vocations, fraternal collaboration). Tino likened these realities to a process of pruning.
- There are currently more than 120 friars assisting the NAPCC circumscriptions in fraternal collaboration.
- The Minister General encourages further collaboration between the NAPCC's circumscriptions (e.g., in initial formation and ministries) and to consider restructuring where necessary (e.g., mergers of provinces, changing some provinces to custodies or delegations).
- Tino encouraged the friars to continue to grow in fraternal life (e.g., regular and meaningful house chapters, dedication to continuing formation, etc.).
- Mission remains a core element of our Capuchin identity. Friars should always feel free to ask their provincial ministers to allow them to be missionaries if they feel so called. Tino cited the exemplary dedication of the St. Augustine Province in sending young friars on mission to Papua New Guinea.

- The Pan-American meeting in Brazil in May 2022 generated a lot of energy and interest in greater collaboration among circumscriptions in the hemisphere.
- In a world often torn by tribalism, the Capuchin Order is international and missionary.

Br. Tino closed his reflections by calling the friars to consider the prayerful and fraternal experience he witnessed during the Evening Prayer and Anointing of the Sick on Wednesday, and he expressed hope that the same spirit of fraternal care will continue in our communities as well as our ministries.

### **Discussion with Provincial Minister and Council**

Another custom of the Province has been to have a plenary session near the end of the Chapter at which friars can engage in a dialog with the newly-elected Provincial Minister and Council on matters of interest.

- Thomas Skowron asked for some further information about the planned new friary in Detroit. He expressed concern that the Province seemed to be moving toward having a concentration of friars and large communities and ministries in just a few areas. Not every friar, he observed, wants to live in a large community. He also asked for a better and quicker way to communicate decisions of Provincial Council meetings.
  - Mark Joseph responded that producing the minutes of PC meetings more quickly is a challenge because it takes time to ensure that the minutes are accurate, necessary conversations take place before their publication, etc. He added that he is trying to communicate more regularly with the friars on particular issues. He acknowledged that the new Detroit friary is still in the planning and budgeting stages, and he added that St. Bonaventure Monastery is near capacity and two of the smaller existing houses (St. Mary's and Beaufait) are not accessible to people with limited mobility. Eventually St. Fidelis Friary in Appleton could be sold. The Province is also planning new construction that increases the Province's options for future disposition of properties. Pastoral planning surveys have indicated that most friars, particularly the younger friars, prefer larger houses.
  - Bill Hugo, Guardian of St. Bonaventure Monastery, argued that the Monastery is currently inadequate for the needs of the Province, particularly as it receives more friars serving in our ministries as well as those who are elderly and infirm. The construction of a new friary would represent an expansion more than a consolidation and make it a smaller community separate from St. Bonaventure's. He contended that the Province still needs to consider a new ministry in a new territory, particularly to promote vocations.
  - Mark Joseph said that two of the challenges the Province continues to face are balancing values that are sometimes in conflict and supplying sufficient personnel for current and future ministries.
- Robert Wotycka asked about the possibility and challenges of merging provinces. Mark Joseph and Tino acknowledged that the General Minister is asking the NAPCC circumscriptions to consider some restructuring. However, to be sustainable, it must be based on strengthened relationships and mutual trust. There is a possibility that some circumscriptions may become provincial custodies or

delegations. General Custodies have proved not to be effective. The Our Lady of Hope Custody (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) needs accompaniment, so they will soon become a Custody of the Province of St. Mary (NY/NE).

- Tom Nguyen reiterated the need to improve communication from Provincial Council meetings to mitigate the risks of gossip and hurt. He asked for some clarification on the processes of decision-making and asked that there be more engagement of the wider Province in decision-making. He asked the new PC members, Biju and Nick, to share how they plan to use their gifts.
  - Nick said that it was up to the friars themselves to avoid gossip, as well as for the Provincial Minister and Council to be careful in their communications. He said that some of the gifts he could bring were hope, business acumen, and youthful perspective.
  - Biju said that he had the gift of open ears: he is ready to listen.
  - Mark Joseph asked that the friars feel free to share their concerns with him and the members of the PC on a more regular basis. Sometimes friars assume that provincial leadership can read their minds. They can't. Good communications, especially in a spirit of goodwill, are everyone's responsibility.
- Vito Martinez noted the importance of friars being able to serve the people of God in multiple languages.
  - Mark Joseph said that there was a difference between requiring, encouraging, and permitting friars to study other languages. Encouraging such studies in initial formation can be helpful, but requiring it is not practical unless there is a possibility it will be used.
  - Bill Hugo said that there is a need for friars at the Solanus Casey Center to hear confessions in multiple languages.
- Chrispin Shirima encouraged the Province to consider sending friars to other countries in fraternal collaboration, e.g., when the Province receives five friars from another country it should consider sending a friar there for a year or two. He also expressed concern about the ways we communicate with each other: friars tend to give compliments to a friar's face but deliver criticisms behind his back.
- Jozef Timmers asked the friars to reflect on the challenges of creating Chapter proposals that make it difficult to address complex issues in ways that will bind the Provincial Minister and Council in the future. Patrick McSherry noted that the Chapter *Procedures* provide ways to shape better proposals.
  - Bill Hugo mentioned that one way to address complex issues is by asking items to be placed on the Chapter agenda for discussion rather than through the proposal process.
  - Mark Joseph Costello said that it would be helpful to create different ways outside of Chapter to address challenging issues.
- Michael Bertram asked about the Province's commitment to send students to Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago.

- Mark Joseph said that CTU's finances are stronger than they were several years ago. More recently, the Lutheran School of Theology and McCormick Theological Seminary are moving their programs to the CTU building. That will help the CTU financially, but it may create more tensions re: Catholic identity. Other concerns that our students have raised include the declining quality of education, improving the academic preparations for ordination candidates, etc. Mark Joseph noted that many theological schools and seminaries are facing challenges. The Provincial Council met with CTU President Barbara Reid, OP last triennium to address the Province's concerns.
- Michael Dorn invited friars who are open and willing to serve in Montana to consider it and the Provincial Minister and Council to be open to assigning more willing friars to serve on the Northern Cheyenne and Crow Reservations. Five friars to serve a huge mission is not enough. Mike added that friars need to be willing to commit to serve for an extended period of time.
  - Mark Joseph Costello affirmed that it will be critical to have a sustainable core of friars in Montana, whether through the Province or a possible San Lorenzo fraternity via the NAPCC.
  - Nick said that he would be willing to serve in Montana sometime in the future.
- Gary Wegner, CTU Trustee, encouraged friars (especially those in initial formation) to let him know their concerns. He added that there are other pressures facing the school, e.g., the possibility of some sponsoring religious communities leaving the school.
- George Kooran encouraged the Province to consider (re)establishing a new ministry in Chicago. He also asked the Province to consider collaborating with another province elsewhere on an overseas mission. It could help attract vocations.
- Tien Dinh reiterated the challenges that friars in missions face as well as the perils of releasing partial or inaccurate information too soon.
- John Celichowski gave a brief description of how the Provincial Council minutes are drafted, edited, and distributed.
- Vito Martinez noted that it was important for the Province to properly vet possible new ministries.

Following a break, the friars gathered for the Installation Eucharist. Br. Mark Joseph Costello was installed as Provincial Minister for the 2023-2026 triennium, along with Bros. Williams Hugo (Provincial Vicar), Tien Dinh, Biju Parakkalayil, and Nicholas Blattner.

After the Mass, the friars gathered for a social and banquet.

## **Adjournment of Chapter**

At the banquet, the adjournment of Chapter was approved on a voice vote.

## **Friday, June 9**

Friars were invited to gather for Eucharist, breakfast and Morning Prayer. Most departed for home. The Provincial Minister and Councilors from the 2020-2023 and 2023-2026 terms had meetings the rest of the day to facilitate a smooth transition between provincial administrations.

*Approved by the Provincial Minister and Council July 20, 2023.*