

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MINUTES

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**Provincial Council Meeting
Provincial Office, Darien, Illinois
October 24, 2020
Minutes**

Present in Darien: Carl J. Markelz, O.Carm., David McEvoy, O.Carm., Gregory Houck, O.Carm., and Rolf “Nepi” Willemsen, O.Carm.; Present through Lifesize Video: Daryl Moresco, O.Carm., and Luis Jesus “Chuy” Paz Acosta, O.Carm.

Opening Prayer

Nepi led the Council members in an opening prayer for unity composed by Thomas Merton.

Personnel Assignments

José Manuel Santos Alvarado	Residence at St. Cyril Priory, Tucson, AZ (effective November 1, 2020) with continued Internship ministry at St. Cyril Parish.
John Sprissler	Retirement with residence in Villa Scalabrini, Sun Valley, CA (effective November 1, 2020)
Richard Supple	Pastor, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Tenafly, NJ (effective February 1, 2021)
Enrique Varela	Internship Supervisor for Manuel Santos (effective November 1, 2020)

Health Care Issues

Emil Agostino	Stable at his residence in Kankakee, IL.
David Blanchard	Continues to receive nursing care at home.
Augustine Carter	Stable at Skilled Nursing at Villa Scalabrini, Sun Valley, CA.
David Fontaine	Has returned to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Priory, Tucson, AZ, after toe amputation.
Peter Hinde	Hospitalized in El Paso, TX for COVID-19.
Myron Judy	Recovering at home after a fall that caused hip and shoulder damage.
Michael LaFay	Suffering from dementia; Remains at St. Patrick’s Carmelite Manor in Framingham, MA.

Ivan Cormac Marsh	Back to Sunrise Senior Living in Tucson, AZ after a successful carotid artery surgery and being diagnosed with atrial fibrillation.
Blaise McInerney	Stable at Springs Nursing Home in Sarasota, FL.
Tiernan O'Callaghan	Stable at Morning Star Assisted Living in Phoenix, AZ.
Henry Ormond	Now in the Skilled Nursing Facility at Mercy Retirement Campus in Oakland, CA.
Clyde Ozmonkowski	Now in Skilled Nursing Facility at the Lourdes Carmelite Pavilion in West Palm Beach, FL.
Emilio Rodriguez	Now COVID-free and has returned to his duties as Pastor at Transfiguration Parish in Torreon, Mexico.
Paul Schweizer	In Englewood Hospital, Englewood, NJ, with pneumonia.
John Sprissler	Has been allowed to retire under the category of medical disability, due to his restrictive lung disease, kidney disease, and other severe medical issues.

Personnel Form

The Council discussed the advisability of sending a Personnel Form to the men of the Province as a communication instrument. The purpose of this form would be to formally query our men regarding their current health, overall satisfaction, and future aspirations. Nepi presented a sample form used by the Paulist Fathers for this purpose. It was decided that a sub-committee of Carl, David, and Gregory would construct a personnel form which would be sent to the men of the Province in 2021.

Provincial Vocation Study for US and Canadian Vocations

Due to the small number of incoming vocations coming to the Province from the Church in the US and Canada, Carl announced his approval of a comprehensive study to be conducted by the Mission Advancement division of Christian Brothers Services of Romeoville, IL. Mary J. Foley will be the Managing Director of the Study with Tina Walker as Executive Consultant. Both have proven track records with the Carmelites, having served on the *Field of Dreams* Campaign for Mount Carmel High School, Chicago. The total scope of the study, which is yet to be determined, is to help the Province assess all aspects of the current vocation situation in the US and Canada.

Obvious questions for us include: Why are our numbers so low in the US and Canada and relatively healthy in Mexico, El Salvador, and Peru? Why do some religious groups in the US draw larger numbers? Do they retain them? Are we maximizing our vocation efforts in the modern media? What is the connection

between our own community life and our vocation efforts? What can we realistically do to turn the situation around? What is the immediate impact on our ability to sustain our ministries if vocations in the US and Canada do not increase?

Formation Issues

The Provincial Council discussed a number of issues regarding our men in initial formation. With the consensus of the Council, Carl announced the following:

Three men currently in our Pre-Novitate program in El Salvador are approved for entrance into the Novitiate in Lurín, Peru, in January 2021:

Christian Orlando Garcia Hernández
Ángel Saúl Hernández Martínez
Pedro Antonio Mira Padilla

Four men currently in the Novitiate in Lurín, Peru, are approved to profess simple vows on December 26, 2020, and to return to El Salvador to continue their studies:

Wilmer Ulises Ascencio Piche
Tereso de Jesús Benítez López
Jairo Augusto Hernández Jiménez
Daniel Edgardo Juárez Colocho

Five men currently in formation in El Salvador in simple vows are approved to renew their vows on December 6, 2020:

David Ulises Garcia Hernández
Henry Mauricio Cienfuegos Ostorga
Santos Antolino Méndez Ramírez
Daniel Ulises González Cabrera
Jose Aristides Menjivar Larios

Joliet Catholic Academy

The Provincial Council reviewed the minutes of the Board of Member's September 30, 2020 meeting. The highlights include that the school is on budget with 600 students and the finances seem stable for this school year. The future of Catholic education at the grammar school level was discussed, as the Catholic grade schools in Joliet are much smaller than they were 15 years ago. This will have an impact on the future enrollment at JCA.

The school has hired Lakisha Cameron as the Director of Diversity and Inclusion, and she has been working with faculty, students, alumni, and the many

committees and departments that make up Joliet Catholic Academy. A task force was created and devised the following statement: **“Inspired by our Catholic faith, JCA boldly embraces the challenge to create a culture of acceptance that celebrates differences and upholds justice for all.”**

We congratulate the school on this statement and encourage all of our schools and parishes to be places of welcome, acceptance, and justice. If other schools and parishes have made similar statements, please send them to one of the Council members.

Provincial Finances

Brian Gawel, Director of Finance, (in person) and Elias O’ Brien, Provincial Treasurer, (on Lifesize Video Conference) provided an update to the Council on the financial matters of the Province through the first quarter of the 2021 Fiscal Year. The following was discussed:

--Brian presented a review of the balance sheet and the income statement as of September 30, 2020, and for the three month period ending September 30, 2020, respectively. Even though we are still in the midst of a pandemic and a volatile economic market, the balance sheet of the Province as of September 30, 2020 is positioned strongly, with no third-party debt. The results of operations for the three month period ending September 30, 2020, albeit not as planned, were certainly better than what could have been. Reducing discretionary spending where appropriate has helped, as revenues from communities, parishes, and members have certainly declined.

--The investment portfolio valuation at September 30, 2020 was provided to the Council for review. Having stayed the course in terms of investment diversification and holding was the right decision as the Province was rewarded with a positive return for the quarter. Cash flow has required a distribution from the portfolio for operations, but that was anticipated.

--The Province has been called upon to financially support the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, as it has been severely impacted by the pandemic. It is anticipated that the Province will need to continue to financially support the Spiritual Center until operations can resume more normally. For the three month period ending September 30, 2020, the Province has provided approximately \$90,000 to the Center.

--Capital expenditures and Provincial Projects were reviewed with the Council. To date, we have only funded approximately \$50,000 of capital improvements, as compared to an appropriated budget of \$585,000. Many of the budgeted

projects have not commenced, either due to COVID delays or the difficulty in finding the right service providers for the work needed. We anticipate some of the budgeted projects to get started soon. This may stress our cash flow or require future distributions from the investment portfolio.

“Costa Azul,” Sonsonate, El Salvador Property

The Provincial Council affirmed the gift of \$50,000.00 from the Mission Office for the “Costa Azul” future retreat house project in El Salvador. \$30,000.00 is to be allocated for construction of a small cabin which will include basic landscaping, installation of electricity and water service. \$20,000.00 will be used to build a perimeter wall around the property. This was approved by the past Provincial Council in January 2020.

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission Meeting

The Provincial Council reviewed the minutes of the JPIC Commission’s Lifesize Video Conference meeting of October 3, 2020. Page Gravely of Catholic Energies of Middleburg, Virginia, led a discussion at this meeting on how Catholic Energies can partner with the Province in providing resources and a strategy to move the Province toward net zero emissions. The JPIC Commission felt that a good place to start this effort would be with our Carmelite high schools and then expand to include our parishes. Based on the recommendation of the JPIC Commission, the Provincial Council is asking Page Gravely to give a presentation to the Provincial Council at their November 21 meeting.

PCM Formation Commission Meeting

The Provincial Council discussed a number of issues presented at the PCM Formation Commission Meeting on October 16. The meeting was conducted via Lifesize Video Conference. Formators from the US, Mexico, El Salvador, and Peru participated in the meeting. Oral reports were presented from the Vocation Directors in all regions of the PCM Province. Formators presented progress reports on all of our men in formation from the various regions and various levels of formation.

The most important issue addressed at the PCM Formation Commission Meeting was a discussion on the best way to welcome and integrate newly professed Carmelites from Mexico and El Salvador, coming to the US for English studies, following their profession of simple vows in Peru. Following these language studies, these men would then begin internship experiences in the US. Paul Henson presented information on ESL (English as a Second Language)

programs at the University of Arizona and at Pima Community College, both in Tucson, AZ.

This year's novices, who will profess simple vows in Peru on December 26, 2020, would normally be expected to begin English classes at the University of Arizona on January 4, 2021. It was the consensus of the Commission that this is not an acceptable time frame for the newly professed to return from Peru to El Salvador (or Guatemala) for a short family visit, complete their US Visa paperwork, and arrive in time to start studies in Tucson. Last year's newly professed did not arrive in Tucson until February, and immediately were behind in their classes which had started a month earlier.

A sub-committee of Gerald Payea, Chuy Paz, Mario Loya, and David McEvoy were given the task of recommending a course of action to the Provincial Council. David interviewed the interns, Manuel Santos, Esteban Rodriguez, and Miguel Angel Guerra, to receive their input on their experience this past year with the Tucson program. The sub-committee discussed three options in a video conference on October 21: 1) Continue to have the newly professed from El Salvador and Mexico come to Tucson in January 2021 for language studies; 2) Have the newly professed come to Whitefriars Hall at a slightly later date and begin studies at the Lado Institute; or 3) Have the newly professed remain in El Salvador for a year following simple profession, continue their studies at the University of Central America, and then come to the US for language studies and internship the following year. Option #3 is more in sync with the current practice of our US and Canadian brothers coming to Whitefriars Hall for a year of theology studies at Catholic University before beginning internship. The subcommittee unanimously recommended Option #3, which was then accepted by the Provincial Council at the October 24 meeting.

Interprovincial Formation Commission Meeting

The Provincial Council also discussed issues addressed at the Interprovincial Formation Commission which met by Lifesize Video Conference on October 17. Vocation and Formation Personnel from the PCM and St. Elias Provinces were present. An overview of each Province's vocation efforts, status of their houses of formation, and students in formation were presented.

The most important issue debated involved the Carmelite Studies Program currently being conducted at Whitefriars Hall both in August and in January. An evaluation of the August program was reviewed. This was the first effort by Lifesize video conference to include formators and formandi in Peru, El Salvador, and Mexico. Overall, the August program was considered a success.

Some members of the SEL Province recommended that the January program be discontinued due to the amount of effort involved in promoting the program, the timing of various events taking place in January, and the need for student involvement to conduct this particular program. Most PCM members felt the value of the January meeting outweighed the efforts required to conduct it. The PCM students are more isolated from one another in the various regions of the Province at their various internship sites and have a greater need to connect in this program than perhaps the SEL students who are more concentrated in the East. The final vote was to continue the January Carmelite Studies Program.

Prayer and Liturgy Commission

Carl reported that the Prayer and Liturgy Commission is preparing an app for Compline (Night Prayer) to be used during the Season of Advent and beyond. This app will be available on-line by November 29, the First Sunday of Advent.

Priors' Meeting

A Lifesize Video Conference of all the Priors of the PCM Province took place on October 7 with Carl Markelz and David McEvoy in attendance. Because of the restrictions of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the priors of each community are being asked to meet with each of the men in their respective communities and then give any pertinent feed-back to the Provincial Council. The session was viewed positively, and as a result, the priors will meet again by Lifesize on December 2, 2020.

PCM Review Board Meeting

The PCM Review Board met with Carl Markelz on October 8, some in person at the Provincial Office in Darien, and some via Lifesize Video Conference. The Review Board, as part of the Accountability and Ethical Ministry commitment of the Province, discussed Safety Plans for a number of our men and also reviewed the work of the Province's attorneys in reviewing all abuse allegations involving men of the Province from 1950-2020. The need to be transparent and to publish a list of our men with credible allegations for misconduct with minors over this seventy year period has been a desire of our Provincial Administration for many years. With a final meeting of the Review Board on November 5, it is our hope that this list will be published on our Carmelite website before the end of the year.

Retirement Plan Trustees Meeting

The Provincial Council discussed some issues presented at the October 22 Lifesize Video Conference Meeting of the Retirement Plan Trustees. The Trustees discussed the investment portfolio with Ted Disabato, our financial advisor. They also looked at our internal financial documents for the Retirement Trust and the Senior Fund. It was the decision of the Retirement Plan Trustees to accept the early retirement of John Sprissler, based on his medical disability.

Philippine Province Initiative

As part of the on-going discussion regarding the proposal of the Philippine Province of Blessed Titus Brandsma to sponsor a parish in the United States, the Council discussed an October 16 letter addressed to the Provincial Council by Michael Greenwell, current pastor of St. Teresa of Avila Parish in San Francisco, CA. Michael is more than willing to promote a discussion of the Philippine Province's request, specifically in the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the Diocese of Sacramento. This involvement might be in either parish or hospital ministry. The Provincial Council would like to wait on this proposal until the pandemic is more under control.

Avon, New Jersey Shore House

The Provincial Council reviewed an October 21 correspondence from Samuel Citero regarding the Avon Shore House. The Capital Improvement Fund recently financed the renovation of the Avon House outer deck and foundation. The house is now more secure than ever in withstanding a hurricane.

A \$2,500 annual user fee is charged to the houses in the area that most use the Shore House during the summer. Currently support is being received from communities in Englewood, Tenafly, and Cresskill, NJ, and from the St. Elias Province, the Novitiate in Middletown, NY, and from Whitefriars Hall. This income, as well as smaller donations from individual Carmelites, covers the utilities, water, sewer, cable, and internet charges, household supplies, landscaping and house cleaning charges, as well as minor repairs. The Province pays the property taxes.

On a recent visit to Avon, Ryan Anderson, Director of Provincial Properties, assessed the condition of the building and made some recommendations, the most immediate being the need for a new roof after damage suffered by the last two hurricanes. Sam is in the process of getting estimates for the new roof and

will advise the Council regarding the most needed future projects at Avon, needing Provincial support.

Issues from Recent Meeting of New Jersey Carmelites

The Provincial Council reviewed a correspondence sent to Carl Markelz on October 21 from Sam Citero summarizing various issues surfaced at a recent meeting of the New Jersey Carmelites. Three issues were addressed:

The first was a general feeling among the Jersey Carmelites that parish ministries in general, and the New Jersey parishes in particular, have not received sufficient attention from past Provincial Administrations. The question proposed to the Council is whether or not “the Province” sees parishes as valuable and worth keeping as our numbers in active ministry decrease.

The second question addressed to the current Council was: “Is there a proactive plan on the part of the Provincial Administration to seek out pastors and to cultivate leadership from within our ranks” [so as to maintain our parish ministries]?

And the third question addressed was: “Is it possible to bring in Carmelites from other provinces (as we did in Toronto) to assume responsibility for parishes we can no longer supply personnel for, thus keeping the parish ‘Carmelite?’” The New Jersey Carmelites stated that this possibility was not pursued with the withdrawal from St. Anastasia Parish in Teaneck, NJ.

The Provincial Council appreciated receiving this communication from our New Jersey Carmelites and stressed in its discussion the value of all our ministries, particularly parishes, high schools, and our retreat centers. All three points will be kept in mind as this Provincial Council does its best to maintain our current ministries, including parishes, while simultaneously coping with the reality of the current downsizing of available men in our Province. This issue obviously points to the great need for more vocations to the Province from the US and Canada, which will continue to be a major priority of the current Council.

Provincial Council Goals

The Council had discussed a tentative draft of the Provincial Council Strategic Goals for 2020-2023 at our September 26, 2020 Council Meeting, presented by a sub-committee of Carl Markelz, David McEvoy, and Nepi Willemsen. These goals focus on Community, Vocations, Integration of the Various Regions of the

Province, Climate Change, and Carmelite Spirituality. The sub-committee will meet again before the November 21 Council meeting to refine the tentative draft and to enumerate specific actions and benchmarks for the implementation of each of the above goals.

Some Future Dates:

November 5	Review Board Meeting
November 7	Chapter Preparatory Commission Meeting
November 8	Vocation Commission Meeting
November 10	Parish Commission Meeting
November 15	All Carmelite Souls Celebration--Darien
November 21	Provincial Council Meeting
December 2	Community Life Commission/Prior's Meeting
December 19	Provincial Council Meeting
December 26	Simple Profession of Vows, Lurín, Peru

(All Commission Meetings will be by Lifesize Video Conference Calls)

Respectfully submitted,
David McEvoy, O.Carm.