



March 29, 2021

Dear Brothers,

This past Friday, March 26, 2021, I completed the Provincial Visitations of each community and every individual. With the celebration yesterday of Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord we have entered into the holiest week of the liturgical year. I invite you to fully participate in the Triduum of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil as best you can, hopefully with your community and/or ministry.

We — our nation, our province, congregation and world — are slowly emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, the worst pandemic in a more than 100 years. Hopefully, we will soon find our way to a “new normal.”

I sincerely thank each one of you for your availability during the Visitation of the various communities that began on December 8, 2020, and ended last week. I appreciated the time we were able to spend together either in person or by Zoom.

I know that this has been a difficult time for many during and because of the pandemic. It has been hard on many of our local communities. All have faced similar hardships and struggles, and for this reason, in a spirit of Sint Unum, I have decided to write one letter to sum up and conclude the Provincial Visitations for 2020-2021.

I have, for five years now, enjoyed the opportunity to sit and visit with each of you individually. As I have shared often, these individual meetings are truly graced moments for me, and I hope, for each one of you. I felt blessed by the willingness of each of you to be open and share your personal, communal and ministerial joys and challenges with me.

I will now reflect briefly on the three areas that were covered during the visitations: health (physical, emotional and spiritual), community life, and ministry.

## I. Health

- a. **Physical Health:** Obviously we run the spectrum from younger to older in our province. The youngest postulant just turned 20; and the oldest member is 91. While many of you are living a healthy lifestyle, some said that they could take better care of themselves, exercise more and/or eat less. Some are living with significant health issues, while others have not seen a doctor in quite some time. All are grateful that we have a Province Director for Health Care in Mary Balistreri. The overall reality and belief throughout the province, especially in our senior residences, is that we are well taken care of in terms of our physical health.
- b. **Emotional Health:** It is certainly clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on both individuals and communities. As I wrote in a previous letter in which I asked for a return to community, I emphasized our sense of hospitality. We SCJs

often pride ourselves on our hospitality to others. Right now, we need to double our efforts to offer that hospitality to each other. When a member of your community who has been distanced takes the first steps to return, help him to feel welcome. Transitions take time, and many of us have developed strong feelings in regard to the pandemic and our response to it. Let us be gentle with each other.

- c. **Spiritual Health:** My sense is that all of us are doing our best in difficult times to improve our spiritual health. Many have spiritual directors and regularly spend time in spiritual reading. Most are trying to live our vowed life as SCJs in the best way possible. We have been better, for the most part, in living the vow of poverty thanks to the pandemic. Not being able to travel, go to restaurants, movies or malls has helped us save money. Once we are able to resume a semi-normal life, we consciously have to be aware of our responsibility to use our benefactors' gifts wisely and justly.

## II. Community

In our SCJ Constitutions and Rule of Life we read these words:

*b. Devoted to the communal life (Acts 2:42)*

63. Our community life is not only a means to an end: although always in need of improvement, it is the fullest realization of our Christian life.

We let ourselves be permeated with the love of Christ and we hear His prayer *Sint unum*: we do our utmost to make our communities authentic centers of Gospel life, particularly by openness, sharing and hospitality...

79. As Jesus loved to remain in union with the Father, we too shall set aside times of silence and solitude to let ourselves be renewed in intimacy with Christ, and to unite ourselves with His love for people. Without the spirit of prayer, personal prayer breaks down; without community prayer, the community of faith weakens.

During the pandemic it has been difficult, if not impossible, for many of our communities to pray together and for most of our communities to meet. Regardless of the pandemic, some members come to prayer only when "they feel like it". Some don't come at all. And some have forgotten about their commitment to our common vowed life. As religious men, I strongly call each one of us back to communal prayer! Our Province Mission Statement clearly states that, "***we are called to live together simply, to pray together and to be, especially among the poor, 'prophets of love and servants of reconciliation,' offering ourselves with Christ to a world which hungers for justice and peace.***"

Throughout the Visitations there was a strong desire and call to meet more frequently as a community. For some of our communities, a bi-weekly gathering may be necessary. For others, bi-monthly or quarterly meetings were called for by many of you. Sometimes a business meeting might be beneficial, meetings for discussion on our communal life, and sometimes just to check in with each other. Some SCJs say they don't meet because

“there’s no agenda items” or “we have nothing to talk about”. Brothers, let me assure you, there’s always something to talk about.

I applaud you for the common life that you try to live or are living, but you (we) can do better. While most of you believe you have a good community or are content with the way things are, *“each community is always in need of improvement”*.

### III. Ministry

I am pleased to report that most of you in Active Ministry are happy, content, fulfilled or nourished by the work you do and the people with which you are called to serve and collaborate. Those who have been asked to take a new assignment have accepted these assignments with an open heart and open mind and I am grateful.

Most of our retired SCJs seem happy in their activities or are content to spend time in prayer and leisure. Remember that the Sacred Heart Residence in Pinellas Park and Sacred Heart at SHML are “Houses of Prayer”.

During this Holy Week I pray that each one of us will be renewed in mind and heart with a renewed spirit in each of our communities.

In John’s Gospel for the Mass of Easter Day, Mary of Magdala is seeking Jesus at the tomb and saw the stone rolled away. She runs back to tell Simon Peter and John *“they have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.”* So Peter and “the other disciple”, John, run to the tomb and find it empty. *“The other disciple also went in... and he saw and believed”*.

Brothers, the Resurrection of Jesus brings a deeper joy than we can experience in our day-to-day life. Easter becomes an opportunity to imagine that God will be present in our lives to roll away the stone from the tombs in the darkest moments in our lives, even during a pandemic.

I hope and pray that you experience Easter joy, joy which we are called to carry forward in our lives and show forth to others, especially in our communities. In the words of Fr. Leo John Dehon, *“Like Peter and John, let us run towards the risen Jesus. This race will last as long as our short life, with temporary pauses granted by the mercy of God and the love of our Lord. Let us run, let us leave everything behind for the greater good, and let us never look back.”* May you be inspired to run towards the risen Christ, carry forth his joy and proclaim with all the world: **Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, Alleluia, Alleluia!**

Finally, please try to encourage, forgive, support and even compliment one another from time during this Easter Season so that we may live a renewed and more authentic SCJ religious life as Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Be assured of my thoughts and prayers and I humbly ask for each of yours.

Happy Easter,



Edward Kilianski, SCJ  
Provincial Superior