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•Fr. Tom Cassidy's
Vision Statement
for the province.

Minutes of the 773th Provincial Council Meeting

Conference Call, September 5, 2007

PRESENT: Fr. Thomas Cassidy, provincial superior ; Fr. Yvon Sheehy, Fr. Jim Brackin, and Fr. Vien Nguyen; Br. Frank Presto, provincial secretary, and Mary Gorski, minutes. Dn. Nagel attended the latter part of the meeting but was not present for votes.

I. Minutes — The council voted to approve, with minor corrections, the minutes of the 772nd council meeting.

II. Administration

A. ACTA — The council was presented with the elements for the ACTA for the July 31 – August 1 Provincial Conference. They voted to approve the individual pieces of the ACTA. Fr. Cassidy will write an introductory letter for it, and Mary Gorski will assemble the materials for printing. Br. Presto will oversee the task.

B. Personnel Director — Fr. Cassidy told the council that Fr. Dominic Peluse is willing to serve as part-time personnel director. He will begin travels in the province in November. The council thought that Mississippi and Houston were the areas that needed the most immediate attention.

Fr. Cassidy, Fr. Peluse and Br. Presto will work together to formulate a job description to present at the October council meeting.

The council voted to approve Fr. Dominic Peluse as personnel director.

C. 37th Street — The council voted to approve the following as house council for the 37th Street Community: Dn. David Nagel (1st councilor), Br. Ben Humpfer (second councilor and treasurer).

D. Justice and Peace Committee — Fr. Mark Mastin said that he is interested in serving on the JP Committee (the council talked about having a three-person group to lead JP efforts as opposed to a single director of Justice and Peace).

Minutes of the 774th Provincial Council Meeting

October 15-16, 2007, Hales Corners, Wisconsin

PRESENT: Fr. Thomas Cassidy, provincial superior ; Fr. Yvon Sheehy, Fr. Jack Kurps, Fr. Jim Brackin, Fr. Vien Nguyen and Dn. David Nagel, councilors; Br. Frank Presto, provincial secretary, and Mary Gorski, minutes. Fr. Dominic Peluse was present for discussion of personnel matters and Lisa Brahm, administrative assistant, was present for the first hour of the meeting.

I. Minutes — The council voted to approve the minutes of the 773nd council meeting held by conference call on September 5th.

II. Personnel

- A. Coordinator, South Dakota — The council voted to appoint Fr. Bill Pitcavage as coordinator of the South Dakota community effective November 1, 2007.

It was noted that the paperwork regarding Fr. Pitcavage's assignment as pastor in Chamberlain needs to be updated. A letter should be sent to the bishop noting the length of his assignment.

- B. Br. Lyle Hennen — The council voted to forward Br. Hennen's request for dispensation to Fr. General and his council.
- C. Fr. Byron Haaland — The council voted to approve an extension of Fr. Haaland's exclauration.
- D. Fr. David Jackson — Fr. Bernie Rosinski has been appointed as Fr. Jackson's "instructor" for the process of dispensation from vows and ordained ministry. The two have begun meeting.
- E. Pastor, St. Martin of Tours — A new pastor needs to be named as of January. The council voted to present Fr. Yvon Sheehy to the archbishop of Milwaukee as pastor of St. Martin of Tours.
- F. Lower Brule — Fr. Cassidy reiterated his belief in the importance of ministry in Lower Brule. It is the birthplace of the province. He would like to consider it having the same importance as foreign missions — if any SCJ wants to minister in Lower Brule, he should be allowed to do so even if it significantly imposes on other ministries.
- G. Job Description, Personnel Director — The council discussed with Fr. Dominic Peluse a proposed job description for the personnel director. The finalized statement is attached to these minutes as Addenda A. Fr. Peluse will begin to do personnel visits in November. He will meet with the council on December 12 to update them on his work.

III. Administration

- A. Dehonian Animation — The Generalate is organizing a course — in English — that will focus on ways to animate SCJ religious life in communities serving in parish ministry. It will take place in July, 2008, in Manila (Philippines). A similar course was held in Buenos Aires last summer. Fr. Cassidy would like to have an SCJ from each of the province's primary geographic regions attend the conference. He will talk to Fr. General about this during the October major superiors' meeting (Fr. Cassidy is unsure of how many people from each province, region or district are expected to attend). Names of participants will soon need to be submitted.
- B. General Chapter — The Generalate is reviewing delegate numbers for the next General Chapter. Three proposals have been presented which will be discussed at the major superiors' meeting. Fr. Cassidy and the Provincial Council were in favor of the third proposal, which would allow for the most number of delegates. Besides the major superior, a province would also have a delegate for each 50 members (or fraction of 50). This would mean that if a province had 120 members, it would have three delegates (one for each fraction of 50) plus the provincial superior.
- C. Elder Care — Fr. Brackin reported that because of recent needs at Villa Maria, he has not been able to begin the individual visits with elders. After January 1, he hopes to meet with all SCJs over 70. He plans to hire extra staff at Villa Maria to allow him more time for these travels. Fr. Cassidy asked that Fr. Brackin try to squeeze in a trip to Pinellas Park before the end of the year.

Fr. Brackin noted that in the recent survey of the province, 17 people indicated that they would be willing to work in elder care.

- D. Houston — Because of the condition of the rectory at Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the SCJs departure from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, SCJs in Houston are moving into new living arrangements. The OLG community is renting two, one-bedroom apartments and two, two-bedroom apartments (allowing room for guests). These apartments are near OLG. The SEAS community is renting a house, as of October 15. The lease is for six months. The community will assess its residential needs in the months ahead. Housing costs, at least in the short-term, can be covered by a checking account held by the community. It was noted that the rent for the apartments is determined by income.

It is not known if the archdiocese will contribute to the housing expenses of the SCJs who minister at OLG. The archbishop prefers that parish priests live on parish grounds.

It was noted that Fr. Richard Johnston is retiring as of November 1. He will join the community at the leased house. Fr. Peter Mastrobuono, who was at SEAS, will be living at the apartments and do ministry at OLG.

There has been discussion about taking a second parish near OLG. This discussion will continue following response to the Vision Statement. A stumbling block is language — parishes near OLG will need some Spanish-speaking ministers.

- E. Special Permissions — In the past, special permissions have been given by provincial superiors for a wide variety of needs, including permission to live outside of community and permission for personal financial accounts. It was suggested that such permissions be reviewed. Perhaps it would be appropriate if special permissions were only in effect during the provincial's term. Once a new provincial is elected, such permissions should be re-evaluated.
- F. Council of Conciliation — Br. Presto reported that all terms on the council have expired. He and the council questioned if such an entity is still needed. The province membership is smaller and problems can be dealt with on the provincial level. Br. Presto will draft a letter to the membership concerning the Council of Conciliation.
- G. Praesidium — There is one item of concern that still needs to be dealt with in regards to the Praesidium accreditation process. The item will be discussed at a conference call soon after the council meeting.
- H. Home Mission Leadership Conference — Previously, Br. Ray Kozuch represented the province at the meetings of the Home Mission Leadership Conference. Should the province continue to send a representative? Feelings among councilors were mixed. When the conference first developed, there was a component that was looking at developing lay leadership. It was thought that perhaps Sacred Heart School of Theology could be a part of this. However, there seems to have been communication issues regarding the conference .

Br. Kozuch spoke to a previous council regarding the conference. It was suggested that he do so again and help the council determine whether future involvement with the organization is worthwhile. Br. Presto will contact Br. Kozuch.

- I. Vision Statement — Fr. Cassidy shared a draft of his Vision Statement for the province; councilors discussed it.
 - 1. General Discussion — Paraphrased comments from the discussion included:
 - The membership seems to be calling not only for a vision, but for actual decisions. Should decisions, or steps toward decisions regarding future communities and ministries in the province, be stated?
 - Dialogue need to take place before decisions are made. The luxury of time is not available for extensive dialogue, but time does need to be given for feedback on this vision statement. Decisions have to come out of a mission and a vision. A vision gives rationale for decisions. The concerns of the membership must be heard in regards to the vision so that decisions made from it represent – as much as possible – the mind of the province.
 - Internal ministries need to be a priority, even though there are many apostolic needs. Vocations and formation should be a leading priority. Without concentration on these two areas, there will be no need for a vision statement because the province will no longer have active members. For many years, the province focused on internal ministries. The primary activity of the province was recruiting and educating its membership through its seminary system.
 - Young SCJs need to be prepared for various ministries even though it means taking them out of valuable assignments.
 - All ministries, whether in parishes or other situations, must be Dehonian. Reconciliation must be a part of all province ministries.

- How can the Provincial Chapter be a part of the decision-making process, or should it be?
- How can the possibilities of new ministries be discussed?
- Are there differences in “specialized” ministries? In some cases, men are prepared for a special ministry whereas others sometimes simply “fall into them.” Specialized ministries are good, but they should be done based in a community. Should the province expect those who are in such ministries to do so out of or near an SCJ community?
- Fr. Cassidy has listed his priorities, with the input of the council. It is important to realize the impact this list will have on people. Fr. Cassidy said that all items on the list are available for discussion — he noted that it is HIS list of priorities, not necessarily the province’s.

2. Priorities — Fr. Cassidy and the council listed the priorities of the province (as they envision them) as follows:

- Missions
- Vocations
- Formation
- Elder Life
- South Dakota
- SHST
- Mississippi
- St. Martin of Tours
- Texas
- Specialized ministries
- Baileys Harbor

3. Dissemination — Fr. Cassidy said that he would finalize the Vision Statement, based on the council’s input. It would then be sent to the membership with an invitation for feedback. Feedback needs to be sent to the provincial secretary before the November council meeting.

J. CMSM Region V Meeting — Fr. Cassidy and Br. Presto reported briefly on their experience at the recent CMSM meeting. Praesidium was one of the primary topics of discussion. Over 70% of religious communities in the United States either have been accredited or are in the process of accreditation.

Next year’s national meeting will be combined with LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) and will be in Denver. Fr. Cassidy encouraged councilors to attend if possible. Br. Presto will get the dates of the meeting to the council.

K. Committees — Following the membership’s input regarding province committees, the council discussed and suggested membership for the following (note: if names are not listed, the committee’s membership has not yet been finalized):

1. Finance: Dn. David Nagel (chairperson), Fr. Terry Langley, Fr. Chuck Wonch, Fr. Ed Kilianski and Br. Duane Lemke.
2. Elder Life: Fr. Jim Brackin (chairperson), Fr. Mike Burke, Fr. Joseph Dinh, Br. Duane Lemke, Fr. Tony Russo, Fr. Jim Schifano and Br. Long Nguyen.
3. Vocations and Formation: Fr. Yvon Sheehy (chairperson).
4. Dehonian Family: Mike Tyrell was named chairperson. He should suggest committee members. Names that the council suggests: Fr. Jack Kurps, Fr. Bernie Rosinski, Dn. David Nagel, Fr. Francis-Vu Tran, Donna Dean, Mary Gorski and Steve Koepke. It was noted that this is primarily the group that served last year, organizing the Mission Education Conference and Provincial Conference on the Dehonian Family. They are welcome to meet and revise the committee membership.

5. Pre-Chapter Planning Committee: Br. Frank Presto (chairperson).
6. Community and Ministries: Fr. Bill Pitcavage (chairperson).
7. Los Jovenes: Fr. Tom Cassidy (chairperson).
8. "Visioning" (the name of this last committee is still up for discussion; it is similar to what was discussed at the assembly as the "thinking out of the box" committee, a committee to address the concerns of those under 60).
9. Justice and Peace, with a Dehonian development component (making parishes and other SCJ ministries more "Dehonian"): Dn. Mark Mastin (chairperson), Br. Ha Tran, Fr. Thi Pham, Fr. Tony Kelly and Fr. Leonard Elder.

All committees will be expected to meet at least twice a year and to take minutes that will be shared with the council, if not the entire membership.

- L. Archives — Fr. Cassidy said that several people have suggested to him that documents concerning Fr. Charles Kelly be saved. Fr. Kelly is considered to have been an excellent example of holiness. Perhaps at some point there will be a move to pursue his cause. It was noted that there are very few documents from his personal effects, though some are being sent from other locations.

This prompted a discussion regarding the Province Archives. Are there policies regarding what should be kept for the archives following an SCJ's death? Br. Presto will ask Fr. Wayne Jenkins to develop written recommendations regarding the archiving of a deceased SCJ's personal effects. He should be encouraged to research what other religious congregations have done.

- M. Raymondville — The council reviewed a letter from Fr. Frank Wittouck regarding the province's commitments in Willacy County. Earlier in the year, the province returned to the Brownsville Diocese the parishes of Prince of Peace in Lyford, St. Anthony's in Raymondville and the mission of Santa Monica. The mission in Sebastian, because it falls within the parish boundaries of Prince of Peace, has been assigned by the bishop to those ministering to Prince of Peace.

The community in Willacy County now has responsibility for Our Lady of Guadalupe, Raymondville, with the three missions of San Perlita, Lasara and Hargill.

- N. International Gatherings
 1. Theologia Cordis — This seminar will be held in Lisbon, Portugal, from March 9-14, 2008. It is intended for Dehonian professors of theology, formation personnel and others whose work focuses on SCJ spirituality. Fr. Cassidy thought that it would be appropriate to have a professor from SHST attend.
 2. Communications Conference — There is a Communications Conference November 23-27 in Madrid, Spain. It was suggested that Mary Gorski attend. Mary indicated that she contacted Fr. Claudio Dalla Zuanna with questions regarding the conference (in particular, would there be English translation?). Fr. Dalla Zuanna wrote back to her and asked if an SCJ would be attending from the province. Several names were suggested but it was also noted that it is a very difficult time for Americans to travel because the conference is on Thanksgiving weekend.
- O. Calendar — The council scheduled the following council meetings:
 - March 3-4
 - April 30 – May 2 (budgets)
 - July 15-16
 - September 8-9 (in Mississippi)

IV. Finance

- A. SCJ Medical Plan — The contract for the medical plan renews on October 1. The cost of administration of the plan will remain the same for the next year. The average monthly member cost was \$438 (\$614 for those under 65 and \$262 for those on Medicare). The SCJ monthly contribution was \$475. Next year, the average monthly cost is expected to be \$665 (\$945 for those under 65; \$384 for retirees). After monitoring claims next year, the Treasurer's Office will determine whether the monthly premiums will need to be raised to \$525.

- B. Charitable Annuity Fund — An investment policy statement has been completed for the Charitable Gift Annuity Fund. In June, the Income Fund was changed to include only charitable gift annuity contracts for the Province Development Office in Hales Corners and the Sacred Heart League in Walls. Other investment stakeholders were moved to the Growth Fund, which refocused the purpose of the Charitable Gift Annuities Fund entirely on annuities. The Treasurer's Office worked with Merrill Lynch to develop an Investment Policy Statement that reflected the revised nature of the fund. The strategy for the fund is similar but slightly different than the Investment Fund. It is considered to have a mid-range level of risk and return.

The council voted to approve the investment policy statement for the Charitable Gift Annuity Fund.

- C. Villa Maria Expansion — The province is examining the possibility of expanding Villa Maria to allow for more housing and assistance options for elder SCJs. The City of Franklin, in which Villa Maria is located, has several study requirements that need to be done before such a project can be considered. The Treasurer's Office has hired the Simon Group to do studies related to various natural resources. The studies, which are expected to be rather expensive, are part of new requirements recently put into effect by Franklin officials.

Related to this, the Treasurer's Office is seeking to return to province ownership property in front of Villa Maria, bordering Highway 100. Currently, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation owns it, but the Priests of the Sacred Heart are responsible for maintaining it. If the SCJs do procure the land, building an expansion to Villa Maria on it is a possibility.

- D. West Shore Oil and Gas — West Shore is negotiating an expansion of property that is currently under easement from the Priests of the Sacred Heart. The City of Franklin requested that more landscaping be done around West Shore's property. West Shore will pay \$2,500 for an easement extension on which to plant trees.
- E. Province Audit — The on-site visit of the auditors was the week of September 10. Dn. Nagel was to get a draft of the audit on October 18.
- F. Board Meetings — Dn. Nagel reported that he took part in board meetings with the Sacred Heart League and Sacred Heart Southern Missions, as well as the C-POSH board in South Dakota. In Mississippi, much of the discussion concerned the future combining of the two entities. It is hoped that this will take place in July, 2008.

In Chamberlain, the board reviewed the financial audit, which Dn. Nagel said was very favorable. Two new high school homes have been built and two of the existing homes will be remodeled each year. Dn. Nagel sits on the Museum Committee, which recently approved the purchase of several new items. There was an update on the Sacred Heart Center in Eagle Butte. Because of a change in state funding procedures, the center is moving away from residential treatment to more encompassing family services and short-term assistance.

Fr. Vien Nguyen, who represented the provincial at the meetings, said that his impression is that Fr. Huffstetter is doing a good job directing the programs connected to St. Joseph's.

- G. Treasurer's Travels — Dn. Nagel informed the council that he would be in Rome October 23 – November 1 for the General Finance Commission meeting. John Kuxhause, Kevin Stanke and Dn. Nagel will be in Miami November 5-9 for the NATRI conference.
- H. Acknowledgements — Several SCJs have written to the U.S. Province with thanks for various items. The Polish Province thanks the U.S. Province for its gift of \$200,000 toward renovation of the building in Krakow to be used as a retirement community. The Indonesian Province sent a letter of thanks for a \$25,000 donation toward the community house in Timika-Papua. Also, the Finnish Province and Fr. Antonio Panteghini of the Cameroon Province recently expressed thanks for support from the U.S. Province.
- I. Finance Commission — Fr. Terry Langley, Fr. Chuck Wonch and Fr. Ed Kilianski all said that they are willing to continue on the Finance Commission.

V. Provincial's Reports — Fr. Cassidy updated the council on his visitations. In particular, he spoke about his visits to South Dakota, Pinellas Park and Baileys Harbor.

VI. Conference Call — A call to review these minutes will be held Monday, October 22 at 9 a.m. It is hoped that committees and their membership can be finalized at the time.

ADDENDUM A

Job Description:
Director of Personnel (Ministers)

The primary focus for this position is the coordination and communication of information to the Provincial Superior and Council regarding those members in active, external ministry.

Primary Duties include:

1. Assist Provincial Superior and Council as they evaluate current and prospective ministerial opportunities for the US Province.
2. Assist Provincial Superior and Council in their deliberations regarding the placement of members in our various parishes, organizations and corporations.
3. Assist the members of the US Province regarding their current and future ministry placements

Secondary Duties include:

1. Converse with the members of the US Province in order to obtain the following data:
 - a. Their current assignment/ministry
 - b. Time frame: start date, length of assignment, termination date
 - c. Future plans and hopes
 - d. Strengths and weaknesses of the members in their current ministry
2. Promotion of ministry opportunities
 - a. What the are needs of the province/individual
 - b. What possibilities are currently open and available
 - c. What does the position require
3. Who is available or will be available in the near future
 - a. Their willingness to participate in this opportunity
 - b. Their ability to perform within the ministry
 - c. 'Pre-employment' needs
4. Communicate with provincial superior when concerns arise regarding our members and their ministries [when possible]
 - a. When conflicts between SCJs in the same ministry arise
 - b. When conflicts between SCJs, fellow collaborators or those being served arise.
5. Assist in the coordination of requests for sabbaticals and further education

Approved during the 774th Meeting of the Provincial Council, October 15-16, 2007

CALENDAR

October 23-31	Major Superiors meeting, Rome
November 12-13	Provincial Council Meeting
December 12-13	Provincial Council Meeting
December 15	Priesthood Ordination of Dn. Mark Mastin

2008

January 28-29	Provincial Council Meeting
March 3-4	Provincial Council Meeting
April 30 - May 2	Provincial Council Meeting (budgets)
June 16-20	Provincial Chapter (proposed dates)
July 15-16	Provincial Council Meeting
July 14-23, 2008	Educators meeting, Salamanca
September 8-9	Provincial Council Meeting

UPDATES

Please note: A new North American personnel directory will be mailed to SCJs by the end of October. The next *Cor Unum* will note any changes that have taken place since the directory was printed.

NECROLOGY

LUCAS FRANCISCO KISTNER COSTA, a member of the Central Brazilian Province, died September 26. He was born in 1984 and professed in 2006.

BR. CLÁUDIO MALLMANN, a member of the South Brazilian Province, died September 27. He was born in 1919 and professed in 1939.

FR. ABELARDO BEZERRA DE MOURA, a member of the North Brazilian Province, died August 31. He was born in 1929, professed in 1948 and ordained in 1955.

ATTACHMENT: Vision Statement, October 17, 2007

*Assured of God's unfailing faithfulness, rooted in the love of Christ, we know that the choice of religious life, to stay vital, requires faithful encounter with the Lord in prayer, continuing conversion to the Gospel, availability of heart and attitude to welcome **This Day of God**.*

Our Rule of Life #144

October 17, 2007

Dear Brothers,

At the last Provincial Council meeting, I was asked to prepare and present my vision for the province during the October council meeting. In turn, the council had the opportunity to offer their suggestions; before you is the result of our collaborative efforts.

I begin this reflection, as I so often do in preaching, with a recount of a story. This one is from the book **A Long Way Gone** by Ismael Beah. I wrote about this book in one of my recent letters. Ismael Beah recounts his life from the time his village was attacked by rebels in Sierra Leone, to his eventual rescue from life as a child soldier in Sierra Leone's National Army, and finally to his arrival in the United States. Moreover, at the end of his sad, but true story, he recounts the following childhood story:

It was nighttime; we sat by the fire stretching our arms towards the flames as we listened to stories and watched the moon and stars retire. The red coals from the firewood lit our faces in the dark and wisps of smoke continuously rose towards the sky. Pa Sise, one of my friends' grandfather, had told us many stories that night; before he began telling the last story, he repeatedly said: 'This is a very important story.' He then cleared his throat and began...

'A hunter went into the bush to kill a monkey. He had looked for only a few minutes when he saw a monkey sitting comfortably on the branch of a low tree. The monkey didn't pay him any attention, not even when his footsteps on the dry leaves rose and fell as he neared. When he was close enough and behind a tree, where he could clearly see the monkey he raised his rifle and aimed. Just when he was about to pull the trigger the monkey spoke: 'If you shoot me, your mother will die and if you don't your father will die.' The monkey resumed its position chewing its food and ever so often scratching its head or the side of its belly. 'What would you do if you were the hunter?'

This is a story told in my village at least once a year. The storyteller, usually an elder, would pose this unanswerable question at the end of the story in the presence of the children's parents. Every child who was present at the gathering was asked to give an answer. No child ever did since their mother and father were both present. The storyteller never offered an answer either. During each of these gatherings when it was my time to respond I always told the storyteller that 'I would think it over.' which of course was not a good enough answer.'

'After such gatherings, my peers and I, all the children between the ages of six and twelve, would brainstorm several possible answers that would avoid the death of one of our parents. There was no right answer. If you spared the monkey someone was going to die, and if you didn't someone would also die. That night we agreed on an answer, but it was immediately rejected. We told Pa Sise, 'That if any of us was the hunter we wouldn't have gone hunting for monkeys.' We told him. 'There are other animals such as deer to hunt.'

'That is not an acceptable answer,' he said, 'we are assuming that you, as the hunter, have already raised your gun and have to make the decision.' He broke his coconut in half and smiled before putting a piece in his mouth. 'When I was seven I had an answer to this question that made sense to me. I never discussed it with anyone though, for fear of how my mother would feel. I concluded to myself if I were the hunter I would shoot the monkey so that it would no longer have the chance to put other hunters in the same predicament.'

When listening to this story from **A Long Way Gone** it struck a chord within me. There are no easy answers to what we face, yet we too face the storyteller's question: ***What would you do?*** During my visits around the province, I personally asked various province members this question: *If you were the Provincial or a member of the council, what would you do with the difficulties and challenges facing us?*

What became obvious as I went around the province is that most of you are painfully aware of our situation and are willing to take important and difficult steps in order to give the province new vitality and a new sense of hope in its future.

I was pleased to see that geographical location (which has been so much a part of our recent history), played little, if any, role for most of you in the suggestions you gave me. What I heard most was, we need to act and though we always run the risk of not taking the right fork in the road, we've come to the point that we do indeed need to make a choice, or perhaps better-stated choices.

Our baseline for these choices should be authentic to our charism as Priests of the Sacred Heart. We each found something very attractive about being an SCJ; otherwise, we would not have taken our first vows or lasted as long as we have. I firmly believe we have a marvelous charism that speaks volumes to today's world. A world caught up in so much doubt, hatred, and where feelings of lovelessness abound.

It is no accident, I believe, that **Our Rule of Life #7** states: *'Father Dehon expected his religious to be prophets of love and servants of reconciliation of people and the world in Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18).'* It is no accident that we echo the same in our beautiful mission statement as *we are called to be prophets of love and servants of reconciliation in a world hungering for justice and peace.*

I foremost believe that we must ensure that any guide to our vision and future accurately reflects Fr. Dehon's expectation and our own self-proclamation to be *prophets of love and servants of reconciliation*. How are we to express this way of life; the way of prophets of love and servants of reconciliation? I believe we have a clear guidance in **Our Rule of Life:**

[30] By its very nature, our Institute is an apostolic institute, and so we readily place ourselves at the service of the Church in its various pastoral works.

Although our Institute was not founded for a specific work, it gets from the Founder some apostolic orientations, which characterize its mission in the Church.

[31] This mission, for Father Dehon in a spirit of love and oblation, entailed Eucharistic adoration as an authentic service of the Church (cf. *Notes Quotidiennes*, 1.3.1893), and *ministry to the lowly and the humble, the workers and the poor* (cf. *Souvenirs XV*), to proclaim to them the unfathomable riches of Christ. (cf. Ephesians 3:8).

With this ministry in mind, Father Dehon gave great importance to the formation of priests and religious. For him, missionary activity was a privileged form of apostolic service.

In all this, his constant concern was that the human community, sanctified in the Holy Spirit, became an offering pleasing to God. (cf. Romans 15:16).

Our guidance begins with Eucharistic Adoration as a service to the Church. No matter what our ministry, we are called to be faithful to this exercise not for our own benefit but for the good of the Church itself. For ministerial service, we are

called to minister to the lowly, the humble, the workers, and the poor. We are called to the great task of the formation of priests and religious, and finally we are called to missionary activity (*a privileged form of apostolic service*).

We have in **Our Rule of Life** and **US Province SCJ Mission Statement**, sufficient guides to make apostolic choices that ensure fidelity to our charism and choices that can offer new hope and new challenges to all of us whether we are in active ministerial service or are in our elder years.

Mission ad Gentes

I would like to begin with the last of these *criteria*, i.e., missionary activity. For too long we have given this short shift in our province. I must confess I fell into that trap for much of my early religious life until I had the opportunity to visit the Philippines and Indonesia. It opened my eyes to the importance of *mission ad gentes* to not only the local church to which a missionary is sent to serve, but even more significant, its importance to the province and local church from which that missionary came.

The argument is always raised that *we have so many needs right here at home; or we serve in 'home missions' right here in South Dakota, Mississippi and Texas*. Both are true, but neither argument negates the value of missionary service. **Our Rule of Life**, our General Superiors from Fr. Dehon onward, and the Church herself speaking through Popes and Councils stress the importance of *mission ad gentes*.

I truly believe we will be blessed when out of our own poverty we are willing and able to send men to serve the Church and our Congregation in missions beyond our own borders. I believe it is not enough for us to say we *give of our treasure*; we need to give of our flesh and blood as well.

For that reason, I will never stand in the way of a willing and able SCJ who comes forward and asks to serve in one of our missions. I know it can be painful firsthand. It was not easy for SHST to release Fr. Charles Bisgrove, scj, for two years of service in India but I believe both Sacred Heart School of Theology and the Province will be blessed by doing so.

One final thought on the Missions: our future as a province is tied to the needs and desires of the Congregation in Asia. We have pledged financial support for both India and the Philippines in addition to what we give to Rome for use in the General Aid Fund.

I would be remiss if I did not point out one of my own inspirations for adopting this point of view is the great generosity shown by our brother SCJs in the British-Irish Province and Argentina. Out of their poverty of personnel, they have been very generous in helping to build our presence in Asia, especially in the Philippines and, perhaps at some not too distant future, Vietnam.

Having an International Outlook

Before turning inward, I do want to underscore one other aspect, which is not *missionary*, by itself, but will help to develop a missionary spirit. By nature, Americans have always looked inward; we have held the world at bay thanks to two great oceans. That era, with the events of 9-11 and others, has come crashing down around us.

I have also found our province in the past to be very insular. I have had the great privilege, and I see it as just that, of spending 12 years outside of my own culture. It was the best teacher for me to learn to appreciate the greatness in our American culture as well as its shadow side – perhaps, at times, best seen in our cultural stress on individualism to the detriment of the common good.

I hope that during my term in office we will find many opportunities to send our young SCJs to experience the SCJ reality in other parts of the congregation. Moreover, I hope that as we put more stress on education the opportunity to study in Rome will open up once again. Life in Rome is not always easy but the *international education and experience* it provides is priceless. Just ask any of our men who have lived or studied there.

Vocation Ministry

Our Formation Program will only succeed if our vocation ministry provides candidates. Fr. Yvon Sheehy and Br. Ben Humpfer have been at this work for quite sometime. Ideally, at least two SCJs in this office would provide the coverage we need. Happily, members of the province have assisted the office by making initial visits to candidates around the country from time to time. This is sometimes demanding and even frustrating work. As we look toward the future, we will also need to look to new vocation personnel to take over these duties.

We say this often, but all it seems to be is words, “vocation work is everyone’s responsibility”. Indeed, it is. All studies show that today about 80% of vocations to the priesthood come from priests asking young and some not so young men to consider God’s call. I think by extension we can say the same about brothers and perhaps even vocations to the sisterhood.

I do hope our parishes will become more proactive in vocation ministry and will cooperate with the efforts of Vocation Central to promote vocations.

SCJ Formation

At present, there are 12 men in various stages of formation. This year we do not have a novitiate, but all signs point to one for the coming year. It is the policy of the province not to run a novitiate for one individual because it lacks the give and take necessary for true human and spiritual development.

Manpower to run an effective formation program will require at least three SCJs involved directly in formation plus several SCJs in residence to provide a support system for the formation personnel and the professed SCJ community. At present, we find this support reduced since Fr. Mike Burke has agreed to serve in Lower Brule this year to relieve the personnel shortage faced by Fr. Chuck Wonch.

Within the context of pastoral works, a committee has been set up to look at the possibility of establishing a pastoral ministry near our formation house. That will be a great aid to the local community and to inculcating our candidates with our charism. With the location of our formation house on the far south side, we can look at both Chicago and the Gary dioceses in searching for an appropriate pastoral/ministerial setting.

Elder Life/Retirement Communities

At present, the province maintains two retirement communities: one in Florida and one in Hales Corners. Our current province policy allows SCJs to choose the community in which they wish to retire. It would seem to me that at least for the near future we will continue staffing these two communities and that means we need to dedicate at least four SCJs (two for each house) to this ministry.

As more and more of our members reach 70 years of age in the next five to ten years, elder care will assume more of our time, talent, and resources. I am pleased that the last administration asked Fr. Jim Brackin to assume the duties of director of Elder Life. He has helped all of us to become more focused on its realities and issues.

Our Other Province Commitments

Having looked at our internal ministries, which are so necessary to the life of our province, it is time to look at our other commitments. It is here that we feel the greatest personnel crunch. There are a number of reasons for it including (1) personal skills (language in particular); (2) length of time in a particular area; (3) geographic/weather preferences; (4) rural vs. urban living. I suppose I could list more, but the drift is clear, I think. Can we balance the above with our SCJ charism of availability and the genuine commitment to what we are about as religious?

1. South Dakota

I place South Dakota first. It is no secret that I have a fondness for this area of the province. That being said, I am not placing it first because I enjoyed my years at St. Joseph Indian School. Rather, I chose this because it has been so much a part of who we are in this country. Our founding fathers could have gone anywhere when they came to this land but for will or ill they landed first in Lower Brule, South Dakota and then in 1928 began St. Joseph's Indian School.

I have said from time to time that if we were to leave South Dakota the rest of the congregation would shake its head in wonderment. This work holds pride for SCJs around the congregation who admire the work we do at the school and on the reservation.

At present, we have three people at the school, one at the parish in Chamberlain and two on the reservations. To be honest, the reservation is the area of greatest concern and certainly the most difficult work situation. Thanks to Fr. Mike Burke's willingness to forgo his last year in Chicago before retirement, we have solved the problem for now. However, Fr. Chuck Wonch's time is drawing to a close and finding a willing soul to work in this mission is one of the great challenges for the Province. I do hope in the spirit of availability we will have someone step forward.

Without being sentimental, Lower Brule is the birthplace of our province. It has never been, nor will it ever be, an easy assignment. Yet for 80-plus years, we have always had an SCJ or two willing to work there. I hope we have not lost touch with our roots, or that call to work in difficult places.

2. Sacred Heart School of Theology

SHST holds a special place in my heart since I came to the office of provincial after serving as president-rector at this great institution for the last three years. They were happy and fulfilling years for me. I often wrote to bishops that it was a humbling experience to serve at SHST. So many of the students come after giving up careers, homes and, yes, family to pursue their calling with no guarantees that at the end of the day they would be ordained.

It would be disingenuous for me to say SHST did not have their share of difficulties over the years; nor have there been SCJs who were, and perhaps may be still, less than enthusiastic supporters. However, I believe much of that has changed over the years as both SHST and we have evolved. We SCJs can be very proud of this institution and the *product* that it gives to the Church. I like how Fr. Bob Schiafone, director of Pastoral Ministry states it: *We seek to produce priests with a pastoral heart.* It has been my experience that this is exactly what takes place.

If we are honest, outside of the efforts of our development offices, the greatest impact we have on the Church in the United States is that year in and year out we graduate about 15 men who are ordained for service in dioceses and religious communities throughout the county, and from time to time, even beyond its borders.

Our SCJ presence on the staff has steadily declined and as our own efforts to find my replacement show, we have not paid enough attention to prepare men to serve in this ministry. I do hope and pray some of our younger members will see that

the academic life of a theologian or philosopher is a rewarding ministry and a real service to the Church and Province. I'm also aware that the number of young SCJs is small and to prepare for this service will be a four-to-five-year educational process.

I recognize that SHST is the largest consumer of our province financial pie. Education is expensive and the fact that the province provides 50% of SHST's annual budget is a reality we will continue to live with. I must say that I believe SHST is a responsible consumer of our dollars and works hard to both contain costs and contribute through tuition, fees, gifts, and interest income off a very small endowment. I often like to quote an old Baptist fundraiser: *Salvation is free. Religion costs money.*

It would be nice if we could call upon other provinces to assist us by sending several bright and articulate professors to us for at least a five-year stay. That is much easier said than done. *We, the Congregation:* it means that we are to share not only our financial resources, but our human resources as well. We can *invite*, but given the structure of our congregation there is nothing we can do until a province, region, or district chooses to respond.

I would be remiss if I did not make reference to our ESL (English as a Second Language Program) that has been a great benefit to the congregation and to SHST. It is held in high regard throughout the congregation and has been a real benefit to our province in broadening our perception and understanding of our worldwide congregation.

3. Mississippi

This is an area in great flux at the moment. For some of us who have not visited or worked in this area for some time, shock is the best word to describe how one might feel upon a return visit. It is, for lack of a better word, booming. Perhaps the housing credit crunch will slow this down for a time, but I suspect major growth will continue, spurred on by two factors: (1) casino development in Tunica County, and (2) flight from Memphis. Not only is this area booming but the Church is also seeing an influx of Hispanics fueled for the most part by the construction boom and casino development. This is most notable at Southaven, but no area goes untouched.

Our current plans call for the community to return Corinth, Mississippi, to the diocese of Jackson upon Fr. Tom Burns' retirement next year. At present, two churches are under, or will soon be under, construction: Hernando and Robinsville. The latter will combine the Walls and Tunica communities and be near enough to the casinos to offer Sunday Mass to casino goers.

After some hard work, the pastoral staff in Mississippi developed a plan for weekend Masses to make it possible for one or the other, SCJ to be gone for a weekend (such as vacation time) and the others can pick up his schedule.

What is most pressing in Mississippi at the moment is trying to organize ministry for the Hispanic community. It would be most helpful to add at least one more person fluent in Spanish, and I suspect in the future that individuals going to Mississippi will be encouraged to develop their pastoral Spanish skills.

This region of the province does tremendous social and educational work. We run and staff two schools and have many social outreach programs. The social programs for the most part are staffed and operated by non-SCJs, especially religious sisters. That being said, the work is funded, supervised, and seen as the work of Sacred Heart Southern Missions.

The community recently lost Fr. Jim Cunniffe and Br. Lyle Hennen is in the process of leaving the SCJs. In addition, two of its members are battling cancer. Both men are good examples to all of us as they live with this dreaded disease.

The SCJs must confront many issues in this part of the province. Since most of us come from outside the area, coming to understand the culture of the south is important in developing good pastoral practice in proclaiming the Gospel message. While most of the parishes are not large (by urban standards) they are growing, this is especially true of Southaven and Hernando.

4. St. Martin's

This parish makes sense to me since we have such a presence in the Milwaukee area and it is our only province pastoral commitment to the Milwaukee Archdiocese. Its proximity to both the School of Theology and our various local communities means the staff of two SCJs has both community support and in turn, their parish serves both the needs of SHST and receives pastoral assistance from a number of SCJs.

It historically can be a difficult parish to work in, but over the years, the SCJs have built up a pretty good reputation among the parishioners. Recently, St. Martin of Tours became the Vietnamese parish in the archdiocese; ministry to the Vietnamese community is now under our care.

This parish has been a good place for our young SCJs to spend their pastoral year as well as their deacon experience. Dn. Mark Mastin is currently the second deacon in my four years back from Rome who is doing his deacon internship at this parish.

5. Texas (Houston & Raymondville)

As you know, we will be down to one parish in Houston as of November 1, 2007. Fr. Dick MacDonald told the archbishop last spring that we would consider a second parish. I informed the archbishop while that is true, we are reviewing our options given the aging of the province and fewer personnel available for active ministry. I told him that I hope we will have a direction set by the end of the year so that they and we can make our plans for the future.

A second parish closer to OLG is where our interest is. However, the problem then becomes one of language and the need for a Spanish speaker (at least that is my perception) in the new parish. The growing need for at least two Spanish-speaking SCJs in Mississippi complicates our work in Texas. I do believe if we stay in Texas we need to make a choice between Houston and Raymondville. We have already reduced our presence in the Valley. We certainly can make a case for either location. What we need to consider is that if we chose Raymondville over Houston, then all of our pastoral ministry would be rural in nature, with the exception of St. Martin's in Franklin and some Mississippi parishes.

6. Specialized Ministries

There have always been some specialized ministries within the province. The beauty of our spirituality is it allows such talents to surface and put to use. However, I hope that in our recruitment we place greater emphasis on preparing oneself for the works of the province. And for those who are in *specialized ministries* what is important to emphasize is that what they do, they do as SCJs and have indeed been *missioned by the province* to do so.

7. Baileys Harbor

The retreat center continues to face the challenges created by the change in personnel several years back. I am told that retreat centers across the country find it difficult because their primary cliental (priests, nuns and brothers) are all groups declining in number. Apart from what we might decide in the next few months, Baileys Harbor as a retreat center will have to justify its existence within the next year or two.

The retreat center is three hours from Milwaukee. Ray has made the *red house* a place for SCJs and their families to use. It is a decent space but I suspect many of us are unaware of its availability and amenities. I certainly encourage more SCJs to make use of the center's facilities.

Closing

Since this is my vision, you have a right to know how I would rank our provincial commitments. My order is just as I have outlined for you:

Mission Ad Gentes
Vocation Ministry
Formation Ministry
Elder Care
South Dakota
Sacred Heart School of Theology
Mississippi
St. Martin of Tours
Texas (Houston and Raymondville)
Specialized Ministries
Baileys Harbor

Given the criteria from **Our Rule of Life** and our **SCJ Mission Statement**, most of what appears on this list fits very neatly into our charism. The problem is that our manpower is limited and will be even more so at least for the next few years and this requires that we make choices. My choices are based on history, difficulty, and need.

I hope you will read this Vision Statement carefully and prayerfully. I and the council ask that you send your comments and reflections to Br. Frank Presto (provincial secretary) in time for our next council meeting on November 12-13, 2007. We will take these into account before we propose our solutions and choices that will in turn be shared with you for your consideration after our November meeting.

Sincerely yours in the Heart of Christ,

Very Reverend Thomas P. Cassidy, scj
Provincial Superior