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Minutes of the 778th Provincial Council Meeting January 29, 2008, Chicago, Illinois

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. Br. Ray Kozuch was present for discussion of St. Joseph's Retreat Center.

I. Minutes — During a conference call on December 17th, the council voted to approve the minutes of the 776th council meeting, with minor corrections. During their January 29th meeting, they approved the minutes of the 777th meeting, which took place via conference call. The primary concern of the call was the Province Development Office.

II. Personal Sharing — Councilors took a few minutes to update each other on their lives and ministries. Fr. Cassidy also updated the council on recent visits. His trip to see SCJs in Texas went well.

General comments regarding Fr. Cassidy — Fr. Cassidy said that it has been very draining for him personally to deal with the men who are ill. He is very grateful for Fr. Jim Brackin's work with the ill and elderly. Fr. Cassidy's next trip will be to Pinellas Park where he is to simply spend time with the community. While there, he will write a letter to the province concerning the vow of poverty. Fr. Cassidy isn't voicing concern about individual purchases or ownership of particular items. Instead, the issue is accountability. The vow of poverty is a vow of dependence and he believes that many in the province seem to have lost that sense.

III. Finance

A. Province Development Office — Dn. Nagel told the council that the transition following the departure of Patrick Thompson is going fairly well.

Should more be done to educate non-SCJ directors about SCJ spirituality so that the "SCJ-ness" of institutions remains even when there isn't a strong SCJ presence? Dn. Nagel said that the regular HR meetings with various office managers are a good way for the province to keep in touch with the offices. Also, Mission Education was originally developed to inform management about SCJ spirituality and the history of the congregation. It has grown to be an educational resource for a wider range of employees. Perhaps there needs to be a special focus on management education beyond the HR meetings.

It was suggested that the council meet with directors once a year. Perhaps a two-day session could be developed with one day being educational and the second being a time for sharing between the council and directors.

B. Milwaukee Housing Committee — At the 775th council meeting, the council asked that a study group be formed to research the housing needs and possibilities for SCJs in the Milwaukee area. Membership of the group includes Br. Presto, Fr. Brackin, Fr. Sheehy and Dn. Nagel.

A real estate agent reviewed SCJ properties in the Milwaukee area. He investigated both the worth of properties and the possibility for expansion and/or building on them.

The committee suggested that the province set aside \$2.5 million to build two apartment-style buildings with 12 units each plus common areas (including communal dining and recreation areas, as well as a chapel). The details and locations of these buildings are to be determined within the next six months so that construction can begin by October, 2008.

Construction costs could partially be financed through the sale of the properties on Woods Road and on 37th Street. Money from the Support and Maintenance Trust could fund the building to be used for those in independent living.

The council voted that it was in favor of the direction presented by the Housing Committee. Fr. Cassidy will inform the membership of the housing discussion in a letter.

- C. Financial Updates — Dn. Nagel said that the annual budget process is underway. On February 13, there is an investment meeting at the Provincialate; as always, councilors are welcome to attend. Finally, Dn. Nagel noted that he will be at the General Finance Commission meeting in Lucerne, Switzerland March 6-7.

IV. Administration

- A. St. Joseph's Retreat Center — Br. Ray Kozuch joined the council for discussion of St. Joseph's.

Br. Kozuch talked about some of the concerns of the staff. There is always anxiety when an organization expects to change, especially when it involves people's employment. If the center closes, some employees are concerned as to whether they will be able to find positions in the Door County area that have similar benefits. Br. Kozuch also voiced concern in regards to development. He has had success in raising funds for the center but wants to be clear with benefactors regarding the future of St. Joseph's and the SCJs involvement with the center. He has also worked with the center to do advertising and outreach, making the center better known. It would be nice if the fruit of these efforts could be passed on to another organization that could operate the center.

Questions have been raised by some in regards to the decision-making process. How was it determined that the retreat ministry was one from which the province should withdraw? Why St. Joseph's as opposed to other ministries?

After sharing these concerns, Br. Kozuch said that it would be helpful if the council set a date for action regarding the center. People would have a better sense of what to expect in the future. He said that the center's program is year-round and there are bookings on the calendar well into the next year. If changes are to take place, people affected by them need to know.

The Diocese of Green Bay may be interested in assuming responsibility for St. Joseph's Retreat Center. Dn. Nagel said that donating the center to the diocese would be a good way to continue its mission. He clarified that only the center would be donated, not the farm. The SCJs could sell the farm, perhaps giving the O'Brien family the first option to buy it.

Concerns were cited regarding disbursement of the center and farm. First, the property lines need to be clarified. There is a possibility that some of the center's buildings straddle both SCJ property and property owned by the O'Briens. Also, the Diocese of Green Bay is operating without a bishop – would it be hampered in making a decision in regards to the retreat center because of this? Several councilors pointed out that Archbishop Timothy Dolan is administrator of the diocese and could certainly make decisions regarding acceptance of the center.

The council was in agreement regarding donation of the center to the Diocese of Green Bay. It should be noted that it is unknown as to whether the diocese will indeed be able to accept the offer and if so, what their timeline for assuming responsibility might be. Regardless, a date needs to be set regarding the province's commitment to the ministry.

The council voted to withdraw from ministry at St. Joseph's Retreat Center by December 1, 2008.

The council also voted to offer the O'Brien family the first option to buy the farm.

It was noted that items of value to the province should be saved by it before either the sale of the farm or the donation of the center takes place. The province archivist can assist with this.

Letters need to go out from Fr. Cassidy to those affected by these decisions, in particular, the SCJ community in and attached to Baileys Harbor and the employees of the retreat center. Fr. Joe Dean should be informed that the letters are coming.

- B. Education Meeting, Salamanca — Steven Shippee from Sacred Heart School of Theology was invited to attend the education meeting in Salamanca, Spain in July. He informed Fr. Cassidy that he has a conflict and will not be able to attend. Fr. Cassidy

asked Fr. Charles Brown to attend and he has agreed. Fr. Cassidy asked Fr. Jan de Jong to suggest a lay person to replace Mr. Shippee. He would also like to have a lay person from Mississippi attend, perhaps one of the principals. Fr. Kurps will suggest a name.

- C. Committees — Councilors shared information about committee activities. Elder Life has a meeting in mid-February; at about the same time there will be a meeting of the HR managers. The Pre-Chapter Planning Committee is just getting started with its work.

Fr. Cassidy said that he needs to initiate Los Jovenes, and Fr. Jim Walters has said that he is unsure of the expectations of the Visioning Committee. It's not known whether the Justice and Peace Committee has had any meetings, but Fr. Mark Mastin is in the process of sending grant letters.

- D. Fr. David Jackson — Witnesses have all given testimonies which are now being reviewed. The packet should be ready to give to Fr. PJ McGuire by January 31. Fr. McGuire will serve as the notary during the next step of the process. The council reviewed the Instructor's Votum, prepared by Fr. Bernard Rosinski.

The council voted to recommend that Fr. Cassidy forward Fr. Jackson's petition for dispensation from priesthood to Rome.

- E. Elder Concerns — There are a growing number of personnel in the province who are ailing. The province wants to give these men appropriate care. It is very difficult for a community that is not specifically designed for retirement or for the care of the ill to adequately care for a person with significant health care needs. Discussion that leads to policy needs to take place in regards to elders and others with substantial health care needs. At what point should the province expect members to "come home;" in other words, to live in or near an area such as Milwaukee or Pinellas Park where there are systems in place to help elders and the ill?

Each person ages differently. However, a point needs to be established at which either a person is evaluated, or he is asked to "come home." Perhaps beginning at the age of 70 SCJs should receive evaluations every six months. It is difficult for local communities to make such evaluations since they are too close to the situation.

Another suggestion is to hire a lay person with medical training to serve as a health care advocate in each of the geographic areas where SCJs are located. There is such a person on staff at Pinellas Park who is very helpful. Also, other religious communities have hired this type of assistance. The person could assist SCJs in making good health care decisions, and also take a burden off of local communities who sometimes struggle to care for their ill conferes.

Discussions about these concerns must take place soon on the province level. The provincial chapter was suggested as a possible venue for discussion.

- F. Fr. Charles Bisgrove — Fr. Bisgrove was briefly hospitalized for a pinched nerve that caused neck and back pain. He is doing better.
- G. ESL Director — A new director needs to be named to replace Fr. Paul Grizzelle Reid. The preference is to have the director on-site, year around.

The council will revisit this issue (ESL director) during their next conference call.

- H. Praesidium — Br. Presto reported that the areas of concern noted by Praesidium have been attended to. Praesidium appears to be satisfied with the response of the province in all areas of question. It is thought that the accreditation process will soon be finalized. Br. Presto will continue to keep the council informed as the process continues.
- I. Archives and Records Management Policy — The province archivist updated the Archives and Records Management Policy following input from the council. The council voted to approve the policy.

Dn. Nagel said that Fr. Wayne Jenkins and Fr. Tom Westhoven catalogued the entire archives; Fr. Westhoven was particularly helpful with this. Mary Gorski will be taking photos of several items to keep with the catalogue.

- J. Provincial Chapter — Br. Presto informed the council that letters went to the membership regarding the election of delegates to the provincial chapter. Local communities can use any procedure they chose for the elections. The names of elected delegates need to be to Br. Presto by February 22.

All SCJs in final vows who are elected by their community are welcome to serve as delegates to the chapter. It should be noted that delegates will be expected to take part in the entire chapter; an SCJ must physically be capable of this.

There are several SCJs who live outside of community who will temporarily be attached to St. Francis Residence to allow them to take part in the election process. These include: Fr. Charles Bisgrove, Fr. Jerome Clifford, Fr. Jim Schroeder, Fr. David Szatkowski and Br. Bernard Taube.

- K. Ministry and Community Life Surveys — Fifty-six SCJs responded to the survey; however, a significant number in active ministry did not. Efforts should be made to contact those who still need to respond and get their input.

While reorganization in the province may mean that there will be men available for assignment in the next year or two, there is immediate need for personnel in South Dakota, in particular, Lower Brule/Crow Creek. In the survey, very few listed South Dakota as a ministry/community possibility. Because of its history with the province and its mission, Lower Brule has been considered a province priority, a ministry which the province would make every effort to continue. However, people are needed to make that ministry happen. If SCJs are not willing to minister there, how can the province continue to serve Lower Brule?

Councilors asked if there were options. Could a pastoral team live in Chamberlain, where there are a few more “city conveniences” and minister to the two reservations from there? There were mixed feelings about this. Some councilors thought that if the SCJs are to minister on the reservations they should live on them as well. Others thought that the option of living in Chamberlain would not be a deciding factor in regards to ministry on the reservations.

Could an elder SCJ in good health offer temporary assistance on the reservations? Should the province pull out of other important ministries the few people who have voiced willingness to go to Lower Brule? These would include people in administrative positions, positions that would also be hard to fill.

People vote with their feet. The province may believe that Lower Brule/Crow Creek is a vital ministry. Congregationally (worldwide) there is a sense that reservation ministry is vital. But again, as vital as the ministry is, if the province/congregation cannot staff it, what are the options?

A concern that some may have is that if they take a difficult assignment, such as Lower Brule, that they will be expected to serve there for many years. Instead, SCJs should understand that they can take two-to-three-year assignments. Of course, this means that the administration needs to constantly monitor personnel needs so that it is possible to rotate men in and out of various ministries.

Looking ahead, men will need to be prepared to eventually replace Br. Duane Lemke and Fr. Vien Nguyen in formation — their commitment is not indefinite. A new novice master needs to be prepared. Maintaining a prepared pool of personnel for various assignments is a necessary but challenging task.

Related to the discussions of reservation ministry, some councilors voiced concern that there is less of a willingness in the province to “sacrifice.” People have put increasing limits on what they are willing to do in ministry. Does this speak to a wider problem regarding the values of religious life? Members of the province are creatures of the wider American society. The need for personal space and privacy, the focus on individualism — these are characteristics increasingly seen in American society. As religious, how do the SCJs address these characteristics within the community? Is this (renewal of religious life) something that the provincial chapter needs to focus on? Is it possible to have honest discussions about living in community, accountability and sacrifice?

If the SCJs were forced to leave Lower Brule/Crow Creek, should the province also leave St. Joseph’s Indian School? The decision to leave Lower Brule would have many implications.

ACTION: Many issues were raised during discussion of the survey. The immediate concern is South Dakota. Fr. Cassidy will write a letter to the province regarding the council’s dilemma in South Dakota. Br. Presto will contact those under 70 who have not yet responded and ask that they now do so (or, presume that they are open to any assignment). Fr. Cassidy will get the word out to the wider congregation that help is needed on the reservations. The congregation places a priority on the missions. Reservation ministry certainly could fit the criteria of being mission ministry.

Outside resources should be sought to assist the council in discussing how it can help the province toward religious renewal. Religious renewal, with an examination of what the vows mean and how they are lived, should be considered as a significant topic for the provincial chapter.

L. St. Alphonsus Parish, Milwaukee — The pastor of St. Alphonsus Parish has asked the province to commit to help-out ministry at his parish for two-weeks of each month. For several reasons, including the province's own personnel needs, the council decided not to make the commitment.

V. Community Meeting — The council ended its gathering by meeting with members of the Dehon House of Formation. It was basically a time for the community and council to ask questions and share information. The council hopes to hold meetings in other community locations to do similar sharing.

Fr. Cassidy began by highlighting a few activities and concerns in the province. Members of the community asked about the upcoming chapter – in particular, how can those in temporary vows take part? Current rules only allow for those in final vows to be delegates, but it is important that those in temporary vows also have an opportunity to have their voices heard, and to hear the concerns of the wider province. Those in temporary vows are the future of the province and should be included in plans for the province's future. Rules cannot be changed for the 2008 chapter, but perhaps the chapter, once it is seated, can vote to allow those in temporary vows to have voice without vote. Fr. Cassidy will ask Fr. David Szatkowski about possibilities allowable under canon law.

The members of the formation community talked a bit about the life of the house and their own personal lives. Several of the students expressed what attracted them to the SCJs.

Members of the formation community asked about province finances — they were interested in learning how much support the U.S. Province gives to the missions. Dn. Nagel also shared some of the other current expenses, such as major maintenance items at Sacred Heart Monastery/School of Theology.

The group talked about those areas of the province where SCJs have or may in the future withdraw from ministry. It was suggested that some type of remembrance, or even a vigil service, be done to honor the ministry and those who took part in it.

VI. The council's next meeting will be by conference call on Friday, February 1, at 1 p.m.

CALENDAR

2008

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

UPDATES

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NECROLOGY

FR. JOANNES VRANKEN, a member of the Dutch-Flemish Province, who died December 17. He was born in 1926, professed in 1949 and ordained in 1956.

FR. CHARLES GIBSON, a member of the Franco-European Province, who died December 28. He was born in 1931, professed in 1952 and ordained in 1958.

FR. GEOFFREY RAYMAKERS, a member of the Dutch-Flemish Province, who died January 1. He was born in 1930, professed in 1954 and ordained in 1959. From 1961 to 1998 he served with the English-Canadian Province (now a part of the Canadian Region).

Survey on Community and Ministry

Total Number of Responses as of February 1, 2008: 62 (Please note that not all responders answered all the questions)

Compilation of the Numbers

Q.1: How many **are willing** to go to these specific priorities?

Vocations	12	19% of responders
Formation	13	21%
Elder Care	15	24%
Mission ad gentes	15	24%
South Dakota	17	27%
Mississippi	30	48%
SHST	17	27%
SMOT	18	29%
Other	5	8%
Prov Admin	3	4%
Specialized	1	2%

Q.2: Community life is ___ than ministry

More important	20	32% of responders
As important	34	55%

Q.3: How many **are not willing** to go to these specific priorities?

Vocations	25	40% of responders
Formation	18	29%
Elder Care	13	21%
Mission ad gentes	24	39%
South Dakota	29	47%
Mississippi	12	19%
SHST	14	23%
SMOT	14	23%

Q.4: SCJs and people I work with are ___ than ministry

More important	19	31% of responders
As important	33	53% of responders

Q.5: Where members have worked in the last 15 years

Vocations	7	11% of responders
Formation	12	19%
Elder Care	6	10%
Mission ad gentes	6	10%
South Dakota	13	21%
Mississippi	11	18%
SHST	10	16%
SMOT	5	8%
Special	7	11%
Other	12	19%
Texas	12	19%
In Formation	11	18%
Prov Admin	9	15%

Q.6: Living the charism is ___ than ministry.

More important	27	44% of responders
As important	21	34%

Q.7: When I turn 70 I plan

1. To Retire	3	5% of responders
2. To Retire but continue to assist in ministry	27	44%
3. I plan on continuing to work in active ministry for:		
a. Next 3-5 years	2	3%
b. Year to year basis	9	15%
c. As long as I enjoy good health	12	19%
d. RETIRED	8	12%

Age Group Demographics

70 & Older	18	29% of responders
60-69	22	35%
50-59	13	21%
40-49	1	2%
30-39	6	10%
Less than 30	2	3%