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U.S. Province Priests of the Sacred Heart

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Minutes of the 912th US Provincial Council Meeting October 26-27, 2021

PRESENT: Fr. Ed Kilianski, Provincial Superior; Fr. Quang Nguyen, Fr. Jack Kurps, Fr. Christianus Hendrik (video conference), Fr. Vien Nguyen, and Br. Andy Gancarczyk (video conference), Councilors; Dn. David Nagel, Provincial Treasurer; Br. Frank Presto, Provincial Secretary; Mary Gorski, recording secretary. Kelly Kornacki, Br. Duane Lemke and Fr. Yvon Sheehy were present for discussion of the ECS program.

I. Check-in — Councilors updated each other on themselves, their ministries, and communities. Items of note:

- Several members of the Sacred Heart Community at SHML are experiencing increasing health challenges. Added to this is an increase in tension in the community, some of which is related to the health concerns of members, but also pandemic-related unease.
- Vocation events are just beginning to open up; many were postponed due to the pandemic.
- For the most part, province schools are having in-person classes. In Mississippi, remote learning is only implemented when an entire class has to quarantine. This has not happened during the last six weeks.
- Personnel changes in South Dakota have added more energy to the community and its ministries. Frater Phong (Paul) Hoang is doing his ministerial year in Lower Brule; Fr. Thi Pham also joined the community but lives further away (Yankton) so has not been as present yet. Fr. Greg Schill is now chaplain at St. Joseph's and was recently installed as local superior of the South Dakota SCJ community. Sr. Charles Palm, OSB, retired from ministry at Fort Thompson; Sr. Deb Nelson (Sisters of the Presentation from Aberdeen) recently arrived and is learning about the area and its ministry needs. Fr. Jean Claude Mbassi seems to be more comfortable in ministry.
- There have been several events at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Houston, including the fall festival and a visit of the Cardinal.
- Fr. Jerzy Mordalski has been unable to return to the United States from Poland due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. It is hoped that he will be able to return to Houston after restrictions loosen on November 8.
- Fr. V. Nguyen has been asked to oversee a social justice component of formation at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. He has reached out to the Hunger Task Force and Catholic Charities to find a way for seminarians to interact with these organizations. He plans to collaborate with Br. Duane Lemke, province director of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation. Also, one of the SHSST professors (Dr. Paul Monson) is exploring possibilities for seminarians to participate in ministries in South Dakota.
- The Vocation Office now requires that all potential candidates be vaccinated against

COVID-19 before the office begins the discernment process with them. The province formation communities are at 100% vaccination.

II. Finance

- A. Province Development Office — The office’s audit has been completed and will be reviewed at the November 11 POSH board meeting. No concerns were cited by auditors. However, auditors did note that province entities had better cash on hand than in the previous year. Stimulus-related donations and PPP loans were helpful. As are many organizations in recent months, the development offices are experiencing shipping delays, especially regarding products from China. The offices have had to adjust some mailings, including the use of staggered mail drops (mailing items as they are available instead of as a large group). Christmas mailings will be impacted by this. The reorganization of the Province Development Office is working well; the Hales Corners office focuses on special gifts and high-end donors while the team from St. Joseph’s Indian School’s development office oversees many of the other tasks of province development.
- B. Province audit — The council voted to approve the 2021 Province Audit which was done by CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP. Auditors noted that financial records were maintained in good order, there were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies, and that there were no difficulties with management in performing the audit (full cooperation).
- C. SHSST remodeling project — The remodeling is just about complete. Glass paneling from the former formation house in Chicago is being installed on the third and fourth floors (similar to the entrance of Sacred Heart Monastery) and the HVAC units are being adjusted for their environments. The renovated classrooms are to be blessed by the Apostolic Nuncio during the “Collegial Gathering of Brother Bishops.”
- D. Pinellas Park — During the recent provincial consultation, several members of the Sacred Heart Community said that they were interested in moving to Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake, which would greatly reduce the number of retired SCJs in residence. Dn. Nagel did some preliminary research regarding the property. The province could retain it, and expand its use to serve as a retreat center and vacation residence for SCJs. The property could be sold; possible buyers include the Diocese of St. Petersburg for use as a retirement community, as well as the City of Pinellas Park that is interested in creating a park in the area. Councilors emphasized the need to get a sense of the province membership’s interest in the property. Are there SCJs planning to move there in the next few years? Councilors noted that the province is under no timeline to make decisions about the property. SCJs are invited to share their opinion regarding the property with Fr. Kilianski or any member of the council.
- E. Door County property — The province owns 40 acres of land in Baileys Harbor, WI. Until recently, there had not been a strong interest in it so the province decided to hold on to it; part of the land is leased to Waseda Farms. However, it is now one of only two undeveloped land parcels of its size in Door County. The value is up approximately \$50,000 from 2015. Dn. Nagel asked councilors if they were open to investigating possibilities for selling the property while the market is strong. They indicated that they are. Dn. Nagel will begin by asking Tom Lutsey of Waseda Farms if he (or the farm) would like to purchase the property. The council will revisit the discussion after hearing from him.
- F. Medical plan — The medical plan for SCJs in the US Province renewed on October 1. There were no significant changes to the plan; however, the monthly premium will go up on July 1, 2022, from \$1,255 to \$1,355. This will be noted in the treasurer’s letter to budget preparers early next year.

III. Administration

- A. Province Election Assembly — Fr. Carlos Luis Suárez Codorniú and his council approved the slates of eligible names for the 2022 Province Election Assembly. The US council is moving forward with the assumption that the province will be able to gather in person for the assembly, though will be mindful of the continuing impact of the pandemic. The assembly is scheduled for January 3-7, 2022. Six proxy votes have been requested and approved. SCJs who are considering a request for a proxy are asked to make that request soon; they are due to Fr. Ed Kilianski by November 23.

Br. Presto shared research that he did regarding the possibility of electronic voting if a surge in the pandemic would make it difficult to hold an in-person assembly. The US Province Election Assembly does not appear to meet the criteria for electronic voting.

Br. Frank Presto, Fr. Jack Kurps, Sr. Cathy Bertrand and Fr. John van den Hengel are to meet via video conference on November 3 to discuss the facilitation process of the assembly. Fr. van den Hengel will be the facilitator; Sr. Cathy will not be present at the assembly but will share some of her experience as a facilitator of previous province gatherings, as well as discuss recent experiences facilitating other religious communities at their assemblies and chapters.

The Province Jubilee Celebration will take place on Monday evening of the assembly. At another liturgy during the week the SCJs who have died during the current administration will be remembered.

Br. Presto noted that most of the written reports for the State of the Province have been submitted. The province video team is collecting submissions for the accompanying video. Similar to the last State of the Province video, it is meant to be a “mood setting” piece, giving SCJs a quick view of the province, its members and ministries, before a reflection on the nuts and bolts of the report to be delivered by Fr. Kilianski.

Br. Presto said that information regarding housing will go out in the next few weeks. It was noted that a preaching conference at SHSST is going on at the same time as the assembly. Most likely, there will be no guest space in the student wing.

- B. Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology — Fr. Raúl Gómez Ruiz, president-rector, was unable to be present at the council meeting, but he did send a written report. Among the items he noted: 1) SHSST has moved to Phase 4.5 of its COVID response plan (this means that masks are optional for students and staff); 2) during the week of the council meeting SHSST is hosting the second gathering of bishops organized by Bishop Robert Coerver of Lubbock and Archbishop Christophe Pierre (Apostolic Nuncio); 3) the September 29 Dehon Lecture was well-received; 4) SHSST is looking at possibilities for utilizing money in a restricted fund for seminary scholarships (it was noted that this would be helpful for rural dioceses who find it to be less expensive to send seminarians to Rome instead of seminaries in the United States); 5) the sixth edition of the Program of Priestly Formation has been delayed and most likely will not be ready until the fall of 2023; 6) SHSST’s Executive Committee is considering a simplification of the school’s mission statement in hopes of making it more memorable while continuing to honor the Dehonian charism; 7) Fr. Charles Brown will visit with the Dean of the Gregorian in Rome during Thanksgiving break to further discuss a possible affiliation with the pontifical university; and 8) Fr. Gómez is organizing a pilgrimage to Spain to take place during Holy Week of 2022.

Fr. Kilianski said that he was grateful for the written report from Fr. Gomez and expressed his thanks for his continued ministry for the province.

- C. Local leadership, Pinellas Park — The council voted to finalize its approval of the local administration of the Sacred Heart Community in Pinellas Park, FL: Fr. Vincent Suparman (local superior, 2nd term), Fr. Pat Lloyd (1st councilor), Fr. Greg Speck (2nd councilor), and Fr. Steve Pujdak (treasurer). The new administration began its term on October 1.
- D. Youth ministry — Fr. Kilianski had been in contact with Bishop Joseph Kopacz regarding the possibility of the SCJs taking on pastoral ministry in Oxford, MS, which would allow the community to also do campus ministry at Ole Miss (the University of Mississippi). Bishop Kopacz appreciated the province’s interest, but informed Fr. Kilianski that a number of diocesan priests are interested in serving at the parish. The idea of developing youth and/or young adult ministry has been discussed on several occasions in the province. The council plans to establish a committee to develop initiatives aimed at young adults. This could take many forms. Although campus ministry had been discussed several times, campus ministry does not take into account the needs of young adults who are not in college. After receiving the sacrament of Confirmation, many young people walk away from the Church until they get married or have children. Could the province develop ministries or programs aimed at young people in this age range (between Confirmation and marriage/children)? The committee would not necessarily need to be involved in such ministry full-time but could develop programs that would be implemented

throughout the province.

The council encourages SCJ parishes to send participants to the next World Youth Day to be held in Portugal, August 1-6, 2023. The age range for participation at WYD is 16-35. The Portuguese Province plans to organize gatherings for youth from SCJ entities.

- E. Preparing International Students for Ministry in the USA — Fr. Yvon Sheeny, Br. Duane Lemke and Kelly Kornacki met with the council to discuss ways to help prepare international SCJs (and others) for life and ministry in the United States. International ministers must learn about the area where they will serve, as well as the Church in general in the United States, while continuing to respect and celebrate the cultures of their home countries. There is also the need for a “life skills” class for life in the United States that would cover some of the basics that many take for granted.

Some of the “introduction to the US” needs to take place outside of the ECS program. Should SHSST offer classes on the history of the Church in the United States which are geared to international students preparing to serve in the US? How can the province help to better assist international SCJs in their transition to living and serving in a culture which is new to them? This includes not only the culture(s) of the country itself (and the province), but of the style(s) of church and worship experienced in the United States.

- F. Insurance for non-SCJ students — A question was raised regarding health insurance coverage for non-SCJ students in the ECS program. It should be made clear that non-SCJ students must provide their own healthcare coverage. The province will cover the medical costs of SCJ students in the United States, but not those of students from outside of the community.

G. Membership

1. Fr. Bob Naglich — Fr. Naglich wrote a letter to Fr. Kilianski asking to begin a process that would allow him to return to ministry, as well as drive. The council and Fr. Kilianski agreed that Fr. Naglich’s health concerns following organ transplants do not allow for him to safely drive, nor to be assigned to ministry. He is to remain in retirement status due to medical concerns.
2. Fr. Guy Blair — Fr. Blair has been renting at a discount an apartment owned by friends. That situation has changed and he asked for permission to move to a new residential development near his ministry that would require him to pay market value for rent. The council is in favor of Fr. Blair’s request.
3. Frater Henry Nguyen — The council reviewed a midterm program report on Fra. H. Nguyen, who is in his final vows program. Fr. Jan de Jong has been his final vow director; he began his program in July, 2021. The council expressed its appreciation for the report and cited no concerns. Fra. H. Nguyen would like to make plans for his final vows celebration on January 8. Approval for final vows will not be finalized until the December council meeting but Fra. H. Nguyen will be informed by Fr. Kilianski that he can make tentative plans for the celebration, including travel arrangements for family.
4. Fr. Tom Westhoven — Fr. Westhoven has been hospitalized for tests and observation.
5. Fr. Joseph Mukuna — Fr. Mukuna has received permission from his provincial superior (Fr. Albert Lingwengwe in DR Congo) to remain in the United States for two years following the completion of his doctoral studies. He is to gain teaching experience at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. Fr. Kilianski will work with Fr. V. Nguyen to put Fr. Mukuna in contact with the necessary people at SHSST to allow for his transition to teaching.
6. Fr. Jean Claude Mbassi — The council voted to begin the petition for Fr. Mbassi’s transfer to the US Province.

- H. Vietnamese Community at St. Martin of Tours — Fr. Joseph Quang Tran has remained in his assignment as associate pastor of St. Martin of Tours for 1.5 years longer than planned; he would like to return to Vietnam. Fr. Kilianski supports that

request. However, his replacement from the Vietnamese District has not yet been able to get a visa to travel to the United States. Initially he was to get a student visa and study in the ECS program. He would apply for his R-1 visa once here in the United States. He has been denied the student visa for English because his language skills are already quite good. Attempts are now being made to request an R-1 visa for him while he is in Vietnam. However, documents that he sent via FED-EX seem to be stuck at the company's transportation center in Memphis. Br. Presto is working with the district to get new copies of the documents.

Fr. J.Q. Tran would like to return to Vietnam in mid-November. Fr. Kilianski plans to write a letter to the three Vietnamese-speaking SCJ priests in the Milwaukee area to ask them if they would be able to cover the Vietnamese Masses until Fr. J.Q. Tran's replacement arrives. Councilors noted that beyond covering the Masses, Vietnamese-speaking clergy would also be needed for marriage and baptism preparation, as well as pastoral visits and funerals. Someone would need to serve as a point-person, someone whom Vietnamese speakers would contact when they needed a priest. Would any of the three have time to adequately serve in this role?

Discussions are to take place between Fr. Kilianski and Fr. J.Q. Tran, as well as among the Vietnamese-speaking SCJ priests, and between the Vietnamese speaking priests and Fr. J.Q. Tran. There should also be dialogue with Fr. Terry Langley, pastor of St. Martin of Tours.

Frs. V. Nguyen and Q. Tran agreed to work out an arrangement with Fr. Joseph Thien Dinh to serve the Vietnamese community at SMOT until the arrival of Fr. J.Q. Tran's replacement.

- I. General Visitation — Fr. Carlos Luis Suárez Codorníu and Fr. Stephen Huffstetter are tentatively planning on a visitation of the US Province (17-21 days) to take place sometime between May 1 and June 5, 2022. The visitation will be paired with a visitation of the Canadian Region. Fr. Huffstetter asked Fr. Kilianski if the US Province has a preferred time for the visit. The US council suggests that the visitation take place during the first three weeks of May, perhaps ending with a short assembly that could serve as a kick-off to a year-long celebration of the 100th anniversary of the start of ministry in Lower Brule, SD. It was noted that discussions regarding a possible assembly are tentative until the new US provincial administration is in place. It will be up to that administration to approve and implement final details of the visitation.

Other discussion items: The JPR Commission has offered to organize portions of an upcoming assembly. At some point during the visitation — either during an assembly or at some other moment — it would be nice if Fr. General could address province employees. This could be done via livestream. Fr. Kilianski will write to Frs. Huffstetter and Suárez Codorníu and share the council's discussion.

- J. Christmas gathering — All of the councilors will be in Milwaukee for the December meeting, with the exception of Br. Gancarczyk who will be on sabbatical. Assuming that the pandemic numbers continue to decline, the council would like to return to the tradition of a Christmas dinner with province staff on the first day of its December meeting. Dn. Nagel will talk to Kevin Stanke, who generally organizes the dinner.

- IV. Next meeting — The council will next meet by conference call / video conference on Tuesday, November 2, at 1:30 pm (central).

CALENDAR

December 14-15:	Provincial Council meeting
January 3-7, 2022:	Provincial Election Assembly (Province Jubilee Celebrations)
January 7:	Brief Provincial Council meeting with new administration
February 1:	Combined Provincial Council meeting of out-going and in-coming administrations
February 2:	Installation of new provincial administration

NECROLOGY

+ **Fr. Tarcisio Rota**, a member of the North Italian Province, died on October 17. He was born in 1940, professed in 1958 and ordained in 1968.

+ **Fr. John Gaul**, a member of the British-Irish Province, died on October 18. He was born in 1934, professed in 1953 and ordained in 1958.

+ **Fr. Jan Kania**, a member of the Polish Province, died October 29. He was born in 1931, professed in 1950 and ordained in 1957.