



A PLACE AT THE TABLE

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED STATES SUB-CONFERENCE (ESC)

MAY | 2014

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PROVINCE (CINCINNATI) APPROVES NATIONAL PROPOSAL PROVINCE **VOTES 104-3 IN FAVOR** OF "A PLACE AT THE TABLE"

ST. MEINRAD, IN – St. John the Baptist Province met last week in Provincial Chapter at St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana. During the course of their Chapter, they took up consideration of the Proposal being deliberated currently by all seven U.S. Provinces to engage in a process of reconfiguration that will lead to the reduction in the number of U.S. Provinces.

THE FRIARS GATHERED ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL VOTING 104 IN FAVOR and three opposed. Five men in initial formation also cast a consultative vote with four voting in favor and one opposed.



St. John the Baptist friars gathered in Chapter last week

In a statement prepared by the members of the Chapter, the friars stated:

“We now take our place at the table along with the friars of St. Barbara Province. A frank discussion of the impact that a positive vote would have on the life of each person in the Province took place before the vote. **RECOGNIZING THAT A RESTRUCTURING WILL NOT SOLVE ALL OUR PROBLEMS, WE SEE THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN WITH A BROADER GROUP OF BROTHERS TO REFLECT ON OUR GOSPEL LIFE IN A PROCESS THAT COULD FREE AND ENCOURAGE US TO LIVE MORE AUTHENTICALLY OUR SHARED CALL.** We accepted the proposal trusting that a reduction in the number of Provinces can lead to an increase in the quality of our fraternal life and mission. We recognize that there is a time to expand and a time to contract. This decision reflects our willingness to flex and to adapt to the times. We enter the process with faith and trust. One friar referred to a phrase from the funeral liturgy to describe his feelings: ‘life is changed, not ended.’”

The Province of St. Barbara was the first U.S. Province to vote in favor of the Proposal deciding in March 91-4 to be part of the national conversation on reconfiguration.

The next Provinces to take up the Proposal will be the Our Lady of Guadalupe Province and the Holy Name Provinces, both of which will be meeting in Provincial Chapter next week.

REFLECTION: CALLED TO LIVE ‘SINE PROPRIO’ WITH TRUST IN GOD’S GOODNESS

BY JEFFREY SCHEELER, OFM
PROVINCIAL MINISTER | SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST PROVINCE

CINCINNATI, OHIO – Many hopes and dreams were expressed by the friars as we discussed the proposal from the U.S. Provincials. The video was very much appreciated and seemed to help answer some questions. Some found it “impressive” that the seven U.S. Provincial Ministers were on the same page, and we could not remember a time when there was a similar presentation.

WE VERY MUCH WANT TO BE PART OF THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE FUTURE OF FRANCISCAN LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES; “opting out” did not make a lot of sense to the group at large. We also acknowledged that we have been in this process for a long time; some felt that some form of future restructuring was inevitable; some were anxious to get moving.

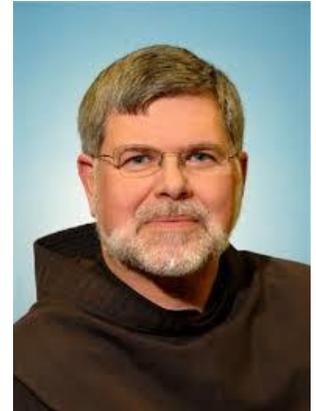
While some fears were expressed that we might just end up a little larger, but with the same issues and problems, and that there might not be any substantive renewal, (just “business as usual”), most felt like this was an opportunity to revitalize our fraternal life and public witness. One friar said it well, “We can’t go in the future, begging for the past.”

We realized that our attitudes, assumptions and usual ways of thinking about our life will likely be challenged. We also realized that this does not mean that our current ministries will receive an influx of personnel from other Provinces, and that each Province will need continue to make decisions about the best use of our personnel. The process will no doubt involve some grieving, and we need to be attentive to the feelings involved in the process of letting go of what we know and love.

There was sensitivity to the fact that some of our older friars will not have to do the work of implementing the proposal; it is the younger friars who will do that. There was also a strong sense that the process will no doubt be a lot of work, and must be undergirded with a strong sense of spirituality. Implementing the proposal will call us to live “*sine proprio*,” with trust in the goodness of God.



Provincial Minister Jeffrey Scheeler, OFM
St. John the Baptist Province



Provincial Minister
Jeffrey Scheeler, OFM

FAQ – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

NEW YORK – As a service to the brothers in this process, we seek to answer questions as they are emerging across the country. You can see all previously asked questions on our website at: <http://www.escofm.org/uploads/2/0/6/0/20604054/faq.pdf>

Friars are invited to send in any questions they may have to: exec@escofm.org and they will be answered in future additions of this newsletter.

EACH PROVINCE IS BEING ASKED TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

PROPOSAL

We, the friars of _____ Province, COMMIT TO PARTICIPATE IN A PROCESS that will reduce the current number of Provinces in the United States by creating one or more new Provinces that better serve our Franciscan fraternal life and mission.

SCHEDULE OF PROVINCIAL GATHERINGS

June 1-6, 2014

Holy Name Province, Provincial Chapter

June 2-6, 2014

Our Lady of Guadalupe Province, Provincial Chapter

June 8-13, 2014

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province, Provincial Chapter
Sacred Heart Province, Provincial Chapter

June 23-25, 2014

Immaculate Conception Province, Extraordinary Chapter

August 3-6, 2014

Gathering of Provincial Administrations participating in the continuing process
Siena Retreat Center, Racine, Wisconsin



ENGLISH SPEAKING CONFERENCE | ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR
UNITED STATES SUB-CONFERENCE
Thomas Washburn, OFM | Executive Secretary