

Friars Dan and Carlos with two postulants at One Conference and Jesus Youth group

On March 3 - 6, Friars Dan and Carlos, together with the two postulants, Michael and Norland, headed to Vancouver to attend the One Conference, entitled “*Father in the Year of Mercy*”. Prior to the event, Friar Dan and two postulants visited Little Flower School and Vancouver College to speak to students about Franciscan life. They participated in the One Conference several times and have also been involved in the life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Friar Carlos, the vocation director, put up an exhibit to represent the Franciscans. It was a good gathering of mostly Vancouver communities, the most vibrant Archdiocese in Canada, as they say. We can testify to that statement because in a span of three days we reached out to different groups such as: St. Mary’s Church, Immaculate Conception Parish, Little Flower School, Vancouver College students, the Secular Franciscan Fraternity from Delta, BC, and Jesus Youth. This reminds us of what Dr. Reginald Bibby shared with the friars during the February Provincial Chapter (meeting), about the changing life of the churches in Canada where immigrants play a vital role. What dawned on us during this visit was that there is an enormous population of immigrants from Asia and South America who are actively involved in the church. This gives us a good indication of the future ministry that the friars should be ready for.



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FROM THE PROVINCIAL

Well, I’m the new, but not so new, guy on the block. I’m the newly elected Provincial Minister, and I’m running to catch up and to overcome the learning curve that has suddenly beset me. That is evident by the late date of this newsletter.

So, first of all, let me wish you the Peace and Joy of Easter. For a lot of people, Easter has become a time for the family, a time to visit, to travel, to holiday, to take advantage of those days off. This is a good thing: we all need rest and relaxation in our busy and stress-filled world. But, if it’s a profound peace we’re looking for, we should remember that promise “Peace I give you, my peace I leave you.” Let’s trust that God’s Spirit at work within us can bring us through life’s challenges, perhaps in ways different from what we would choose, to a fuller, happier, more peaceful way of living. In the midst of our confusion, worry and suffering, Christ’s promise of “Peace I leave you” still stands good.

I’ve been the Provincial Minister for a bit more than a month, having returned to western Canada after living out of country for nearly nine years. As I mentioned, I’m “not so new” because I was first elected 15 years ago, at which time I served a six year term. Most of my time since then had been spent with my Franciscan brothers in Morocco, where along with diocesan priests and religious women we took care of the predominantly foreign Christian community. It was a very rich experience of a poor and multi-ethnic Church made up predominantly of sub-Saharan African students and migrants and of European residents and tourists who were sharing their lives with our Muslim brothers and sisters.

At our February Chapter, or gathering of friars from throughout western Canada, we Franciscans discussed the direction we would take over the next few years, and my brothers entrusted me with the care and direction of the Province. As you are no doubt aware, like all religious communities, we are aging and diminishing in numbers; yet our Chapter discussions were hopeful as we looked forward to renewing ourselves and to restructuring our Franciscan presence in Canada. There were two major and closely related points of discussion: our union with the eastern Province of Franciscans, and our continued presence at Mount Saint Francis in Cochrane.

For many years, the various groups of Canadian Franciscan friars have been entertaining the question of uniting and of working together so we can continue to witness to the Franciscan spirit of Gospel living throughout our country. Our Ministers General, in Rome, have been urging, and more recently insisting, that we do so. At this gathering, in western Canada, we met with representatives from the eastern Province of Franciscans, and we decided that we would do our utmost to come to a canonical union within the next three years. Effectively speaking that will have few immediate consequences for our present communities. Looking further down the road, however, and considering how we will restructure ourselves as our numbers decrease, means that we will have to envisage presences in a limited number of strategic locations throughout western, central and eastern Canada.



Friars Dennis (former Provincial Minister), Ambrose (Visitator General), and Bob (newly-elected Provincial Minister)

This task of long term-visioning also brought us to consider what sort of presence we would like to have at Mount Saint Francis in Cochrane given the poor condition of the physical structure, the small number of future friars, and possible future locations of our single Canadian Province. We agreed unanimously that an Options Committee should continue its creative and multi-faceted study of the complex situation, over the next three years, so that the brothers can be informed of possibilities and come to a good decision.

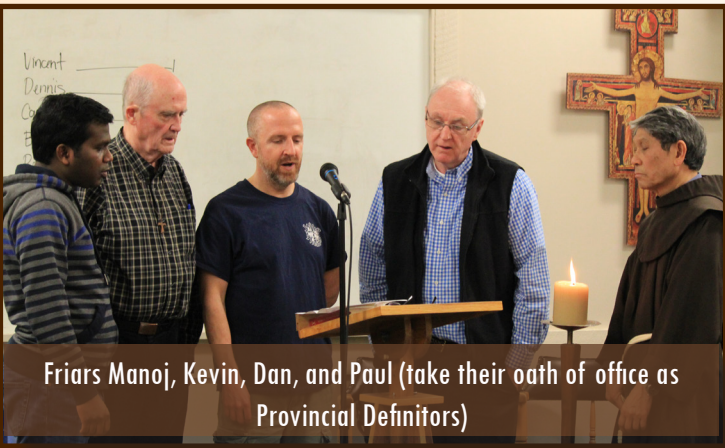
And while these weighty discussions and change of administration took place, life continued as usual among the friars. You will note that Brother Paul Voisin received the Légion d’Honneur from the Government of France in recognition of his participation in the liberation of their country during the Second World War. And our younger friars also went about their work, attending conferences, and being formed for service to the Church and the world.

While we are still in the Easter season, I wish you, as Saint Francis did, “Peace and good”. May all the joy and peace that God has given us in his Son pervade your lives.

Friar Bob Mokry, OFM



Friars Pierre (Vicar Provincial), Ambrose (Visitator General), and Bob (Provincial Minister)



Friars Manoj, Kevin, Dan, and Paul (take their oath of office as Provincial Definitors)



Friars at prayer



Friars at Chapter

Brother Paul Voisin, member of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion during the Second World War, recently received France’s Medal of Honour. Br. Paul considered his participation in the liberation of France as an attempt to do God’s will. He served to eliminate tyranny and to win peace. He recognized that the bestowal of this medal also honours the many people who died in battle and could not be recognized by France and Canada for their sacrifice; and he sees it as a way to make people aware of the importance of military and religious service in the cause of peace.



JUBILARIANS FOR 2016

Canisius Seiferling, OFM
80th of First Profession

Bonaventure Dureau, OFM
70th of First Profession

Martin Bettin, OFM
60th of First Profession

Jean-Louis Brusset, OFM
40th of First Profession

Bob Mokry, OFM
40th of First Profession

Paul Smith, OFM
30th of First Profession