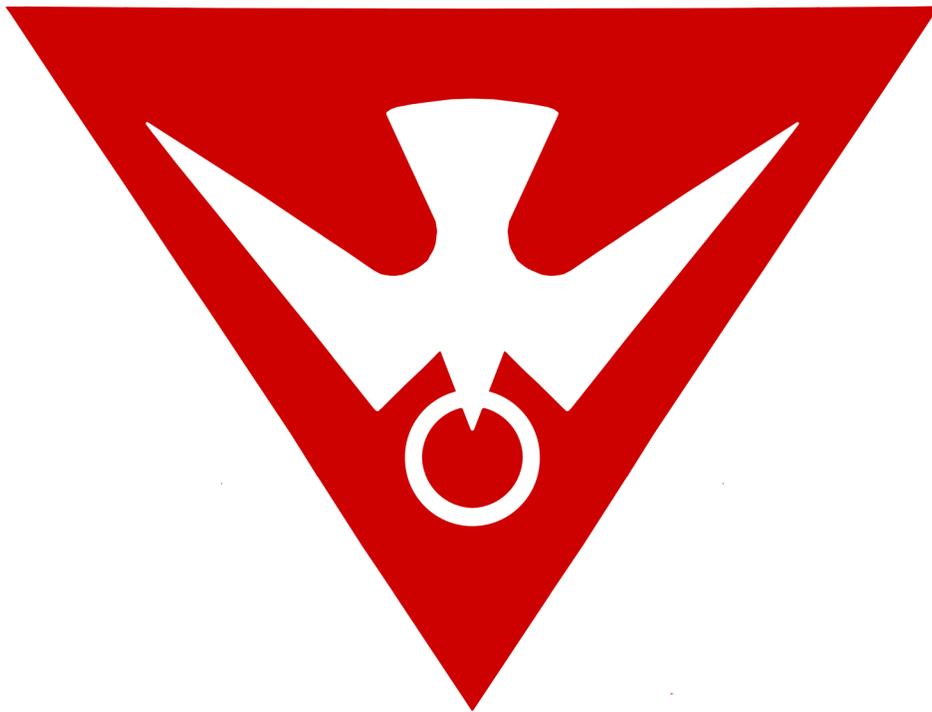


**REPORT OF THE  
GENERAL CUSTODIAN**



**TO THE XVI GENERAL CENACLE**

**June 2019**

**Michael K. Barth, S.T.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

In preparing this report I asked Steve Vesely to pull for me the report that John Edmunds gave, four years ago, to the XV General Cenacle. I was looking for the best format, some ideas to include or exclude and a general outline of how best to proceed. I was aware, as I hope each of you are, that I have provided, each August 15<sup>th</sup>, a “*State of the Congregation*” report. How should the focus of this report be different?

As I reviewed John Edmunds’ report and read his introduction, I was amazed! First, I was amazed at sharing some of the same anxiety John expressed at this same moment. Secondly, I was also struck by some of the issues he raised as they are many of the same issues that this administration has pondered; some of the questions that we have had and still try to address; some of the same challenges. Let me share John’s opening statement from four years ago:

*“Providence seems to be sending a message. Recently, the liturgy of the hours and the Sunday scripture reading for this week both cited Philippians 4:6, “Dismiss all anxiety from your minds.” It is a message I need to take to heart since I do have some anxieties. You might share them as well. Are we doing all we can to recruit good vocations? Are the formation programs fulfilling their function of preparing men to live as vowed, religious missionaries? Do the missions that we staff operate in a way that promotes the charism? Is there adequate spiritual and community support for the men in the local mission so that they can live happy and holy lives? Will our fund-raising efforts be adequate to support our missionary efforts among the poor? Are our elders provided what they need to live a fruitful senior ministry? Anxieties about the Cenacle family, the Church and the world would lengthen the list considerably. Even St. Paul in another epistle, confesses that he isn’t always able to heed his own advice: “Leaving other sufferings unmentioned, there is that daily tension pressing on me, my anxiety for the churches. Who is weak that I am not affected by it? Who is scandalized that I am not aflame with indignation” (2 Corinthians 11:28-29).”*

Does the fact that these are some of the very same questions and issues that I would raise four years later suggest that we are “spinning our wheels”, that there are no solutions or answers? I think not, for these are the exact questions that we need to constantly be asking one another and that each General Cenacle and administration must address. These are the questions that are at the core of who we are and who we strive and long to be – for the Church and especially for the people we are privileged to serve and minister with. These are the issues that do give me some anxiety and yet our taking counsel about them, especially in General Cenacle, affords us an opportunity to further conversion, corporately and individually, and to respond to these issues anew.

As I have stated in each annual *State of the Congregation* report what gives me hope and daily encouragement, is the dedication of our brothers in vocation and formation work, the zeal of the men staffing even difficult missions, the common desire to grow spiritually among the membership, the creativity and initiative of the staff at the Mission Advancement Office, the kindness, charity and hospitality evident at Father Judge Missionary Cenacle in Adelphi. Our ministry with the laity, the MCA, the imprisoned, the immigrant, the gang member, the sick and

suffering, the addicted, those hurting from the traumas of life, the spiritually lost and abandoned, searching young adults and youth are at the heart of our charism. It is estimated that Missionary Servants touch the lives of over 250,000 people each year. There is cause for rejoicing here!

Let me observe immediately that whatever good that has been accomplished these past four years is largely due to the efforts of the General Council. The counsel I received from Jesús, Guy, John and Victor reflected their profound love for you, our confreres, and a deep devotion to the charism. In addition to the General Council others must also be thanked and credited: Francisco Gomez, Chair of the VDC; Jordan Baxter, Treasurer General; Steve Vesely, Secretary General; and both Pat Regan and now John Butler in their leadership roles in Mission Advancement. I would ask you to extend a word of gratitude to them.

In this report I will follow the areas of those who have gone before me and expand, in summary, some of the questions or challenges that I feel are before us in the next four years.

## **2. NATURE AND PURPOSE / MISSION**

At recent General Cenacles there has been considerable discussion around efforts to situate all that we do, our missions and our formation, very specifically and intentionally around the charism of Father Judge. We have focused on “our chief effort” which is to develop a missionary spirit in the laity in those areas and among those people who are spiritually neglected and abandoned, especially the poor. We have refined that understanding of the “core of the charism” to include what the Rule of Life calls “our specific mission” – the preservation of the faith. To further that aim the XV General Cenacle took as a theme: “Forming apostles to preserve the faith”. What we do is work for the preservation of the faith. How we do that is by developing a missionary spirit in the laity. This emphasis, shared by the whole Church, and promoted by Pope Francis, saying the “missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity” (*Evangelii Gaudium* #15).

The previous General Cenacle in Resolution #4 stated that a Vicar for Mission be named. His task was to “guide a Mission Committee and collaborate with the Missionary Cenacle Family in order to carry out the tasks of the mission plan envisioned in the resolution and set forth goals, objectives, steps and a timeline.” John Skrodinsky was named the Vicar for Mission and Victor Machorro assisted him. John and Victor will be offering a separate report, however let me affirm the work they have done this administration in providing to the General Council insights and analysis on the submitted Mission Plans as well as advising the General Council on the opening and closing of missions. One ongoing question from John, Victor and the Mission Committee was: how can parish ministry be shaped in a way that promotes the charism? Would other ministries be able to incarnate the charism better? John and Victor have been constant in their efforts to serve at times as the “devil’s advocates” in not allowing us to simply keep doing things the way we have always done but rather to focus on the charism. They have asked the rights questions, over and over, and invited deeper reflection regarding where and how we live the charism in mission. There are challenges to any mission planning – personnel issues, the

skill sets of confreres as well as financial considerations are a constant. The role of Vicar for Mission is an important one that I would recommend be continued.

### **MISSIONS ASSUMED AND RETURNED**

In the past four years we have returned one mission to the care of the Diocese: the collaborative mission with the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity in **Chimalhuacán, Mexico** in June of 2018. Great credit must be given to all the men and women, religious and lay, who labored in this mission over the years. Much was learned and the challenges of collaboration were valuable ones.

Other endeavors opened or expanded over the last four years:

**St. James, Chicago:** In March 2016 the parish of St. James became a Missionary Servant mission. John Edmunds became the first pastor / Custodian. St. James was chosen for several reasons: it was an urban setting with a diverse population; the parish had significant social outreach; it had a note of abandonment and there was an openness on the part of the Archdiocese and the people to our charism. In addition, it afforded us adequate housing in our desire to move our US Post Novitiate program to the Catholic Theological Union.

**Our Lady of Grace, La Hoye, Haiti:** It was a desire of the previous administration, since the charism is attracting vocations from Haiti and there seemed potential for it flourishing among the Haitian people, to open a mission in Haiti. In addition, developing a work among people from Haiti would help us as we discern which young men might have a Cenacle vocation. In June of 2017 Frank Conkle and Jaime Serrano went to Haiti to begin an endeavor collaborating with the Vincentian Haitian Initiative in the Diocese of Hinche. After several months, and more than a few challenges, they returned, and a process of evaluation was done. In time, and after meetings with Bishop Jean Desinord of Hinche, a new plan was developed that would allow our return. The Bishop offered us care of a chapel, Altagrace, near the Vincentian collaborative, in Paredon. In the spring of 2018 Julien Clervil and Frank Conkle returned to Haiti, took up residence at the bishop's residence in Hinche, and began working at the mission site. In July of 2018 construction began on the Brother Andrethene Missionary Cenacle at the mission site. Guiteau Charles, on mission year, joined the team in January 2019. There are many challenges and opportunities to our presence in Haiti. The construction of the Cenacle is taking longer than hoped and yet the missionary zeal of our men is an edification. Continued attention to this mission, its future personnel needs, and funding are priorities that must be attended to.

#### **Winter Wheat Missionary Cenacle / I Thirst Program:**

The congregation's involvement in ministering to those suffering from addiction has a long history going back to Fr. Judge and the early work at the Shrine in Stirling. In more recent times, the Serenity Retreats, the work of the Hezekiah Movement, Hospitality House in Philadelphia, the ministry of many of our men in prison ministry and the Recovery Retreats at the Shrine of St. Joseph has enhanced that ministry. In early 2018 the Winter Wheat Missionary Cenacle was established in Paterson, New Jersey. This Sober Community residence also became the home of the I Thirst Program. The residence and I Thirst is a congregational response to the pressing need of the opiate crisis that has devastated many communities in the US and other

countries. Keaton Douglas, hired by the Congregation, has developed the I Thirst spiritual program and has made herself available to diocese, colleges, parishes and the Cenacle Family. Currently, Joe Dudek (taking time away with his father), Luis de la Cuadra and John Skrodinsky (filling in for Joe) are assigned to this ministry.

**St. Michael, Forest, Mississippi:** In March of 2018 we expanded our presence in central Mississippi and the Diocese of Jackson. The plan was to assign Roberto Mena to add to the team of Odel Medina and Raul Ventura and offer an area ministry to the missions in Camden, Canton, Kosciusko, Carthage and Forest with a focus on the apostolic development of the laity. Roberto, assigned not as pastor but as a sacramental minister, would be free to focus on these efforts. Developing programs for an entire area is more challenging than anticipated and the original goals have not yet been reached. Currently Odel and Roberto live together at St. Anne in Carthage and Raul lives in Camden. The hope is to assign an additional person to reside with Raúl in Camden and to focus on programs centered on the apostolic development of the laity in the entire area.

**Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mecca, CA:** In May 2018 we assumed the pastoral care of this mission as an extension of our current work among migrant people in Coachella. Francisco Valdovinos, residing at the cenacle in Coachella, provides the pastoral presence while the men in Coachella assist him.

**St. Patrick, Phoenix City, AL:** In July 2018 the ministry centered at St. Joseph in Holy Trinity was expanded to include St. Patrick. The reality was that St. Patrick, where Fr. Judge once served, had a note of abandonment about it and the people were not being served adequately. Holy Trinity, which also includes the community in Clio, was experiencing a good number of people, especially Latinos, drifting to St. Joseph for pastoral care. The team in Holy Trinity: Dave Hamm, Marco Antonio Sanchez and Rigoberto Chavez felt that offering the entire area one pastoral team and using the facilities at Holy Trinity to offer programs focused on the development of the laity was a good direction. Currently staffed by Dave Hamm, Marco Antonio and Raúl Vasquez along with Clif Marquis (Senior Ministry I). José de Jesús will join the team in June as a deacon.

**Honduras:** The ministry in Nuevo Capital, Honduras, begun by Alexis Zuniga as an Individually Initiated Apostolate, was affirmed by the Council and César Muñoz was assigned to join Alexis. Permission was granted and funds provided to construct a Cenacle, Archbishop Oscar Romero Cenacle, able to house three men thus offering further stability to this mission endeavor.

**Mobile Medical Clinic:** With Carlos Urquina acquiring his medical degree great interest was developed, through Carlos, in developing a team of medical professionals to bring those skills to the underserved areas of our missions. An initial team first went to Guamal, Colombia and subsequently to the mission in Honduras and Haiti. Carlos has expanded his team, adding additional disciplines, and has recently made a second trip to Honduras. The MAO, through the grant writing of Pat Regan, has been able to secure funding for these mission trips. Carlos is working on expanding his team, building capacity as well as funding, and expanding this ministry to additional mission sites.

**Future New Mission in Mexico:** With our leaving the mission in Chimalhuacán, Mexico we asked the Mexico Region to gather and discern a new future mission. We asked them to think outside the parish structure and to dream of a mission that would engage the entire region and focus on the development of the charism. Led by Jesús Ramirez and others, efforts began to consider this invitation. Efforts have emerged with recent collaborative efforts between Arturo Quesada and Maria Zapata, MSBT in offering retreats and workshops focused on the charism. I encourage further development of this model and consider providing additional personnel and resources as available.

**Missionary Cenacle Family:** As we prepare for our Centennial it is an opportunity to remind ourselves of the Founder's vision for the Missionary Cenacle Family. The present reality of the Family does not quite meet up to the original vision of Fr. Judge. We have not yet found the proper structures or systems which respect the autonomy of the branches while at the same time promote collaboration and communion as a family.

Collaboration and spiritual support to the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate by many ST's is greatly valued in efforts to strengthen the charism. Arturo Quesada continues to serve as the International Spiritual Director of the MCA and several others serve in Regional capacities as Spiritual Guides. In addition, many ST's serve as Spiritual Guides for the Missionary Cenacle Spiritual Exercises.

The Missionary Cenacle Family Council, the Missionary Servant Council, the Missionary Cenacle Spiritual Exercises are all vehicles that continue to work toward this end. I feel these efforts should be preserved and supported. All these efforts have not yet born the fullness of the desired fruit.

### **3. SPIRITUAL LIFE**

During my Visitations I would always ask about one's spiritual life. Everyone understands that a religious without a deep spirituality will soon find himself in trouble. Everyone also acknowledges the basic components of a spiritual life: personal and communal prayer, participation in the Eucharist, the sacrament of Penance, spiritual reading, meditation, faith sharing, annual retreat, spiritual direction, etc. The challenge comes in not letting the needs of the mission overwhelm the time and energy required to have a vibrant spiritual life. One encouraging development – men who are in isolated or at distant missions have been able to utilize modern forms of communication (video conferencing, for example) in order to have regular spiritual direction.

The Missionary Cenacle Spiritual Exercises continue to be central to the ongoing renewal of the congregation. The Exercises are, at heart, prayerful reflection on our spiritual tradition. Many have found that returning often to repeat the Exercises helps to deepen their spirituality. While some have critiqued one or the other aspect of the Exercises I am convinced that they are an essential element in the ongoing conversion in the Cenacle spirituality. The Committee responsible for their implementation (and their ongoing revision) now includes the entire Cenacle Family. Many thanks to Dennis Berry and John Seymour who headed up this effort for

many years and now to Raul Ventura who has assumed a leadership role.

The congregation's own Spiritual Life Committee, with John Edmunds as Chair, has functioned effectively over the last four year. In responding to Resolution #3 from the XV General Cenacle, Guy Wilson served as the Council liaison to the Committee. This standing Committee has provided seasonal prayer resources for Regional and local Cenacle use. In addition, they have each year planned a preached retreat in English and Spanish, as well as materials for local celebrations of Founder's Day.

Attendance at both the Spiritual Exercises and the preached retreats was robust the year after the XV General Cenacle, 2017, as this was mandated. In years since this mandate attendance at both the preached retreats and the Spiritual Exercises has diminished.

The biography of Fr. Judge, by William Portier, *Every Catholic An Apostle* has been published in English and as this report is written has been translated and is being printed in Spanish. Many thanks to Gary Banks for shepherding this effort to the finish line. Gratitude must also be given to Jaime Partsch and Fernando Rodríguez, former members, for working on the translation, and to Rafael Pisso, José de Jesús and Steve Vesely for their editorial work.

An App was designed and is now available on various platforms that allows the *Cenacle Ordo*, along with other prayers for private and communal use, to be used by all in the Cenacle Family and beyond. This App has been downloaded more than 2,400 times and has been used or opened over 45,000 times. Thanks goes to Terry Ahern, MSBT and Steve Vesely and his team from the entire Cenacle Family who continue to make the *Cenacle Ordo* available to us.

#### **4. VOWED LIFE**

The XV General Cenacle, in Resolution #5, mandated that a Vicar for Personnel / Community Life be named. Jesús Ramirez was appointed to this and was aided by Guy Wilson. Both men, Jesús full-time and Guy part-time, attempted to be present to the various Cenacles and Regions and worked diligently in aiding myself and the Council with personnel issues and changes. Jesús, with three other men, are participating in a three- year program offered through the Catholic Theological Union, entitled, "Interculturality and Religious Life". This program has and will continue to provide the team, the Congregation, and subsequently each of us additional skills and sensitivity to the cultural and generational differences among Missionary Servants.

In response to Recommendation #2 from the XV General Cenacle and the call to our being more attentive and faithful in our living of the Vow of Poverty, a document reflecting this desire was written and a time / process was set aside for communal reflection at the local Cenacle and Regional level. Counsel was also taken from the local Custodian at each of their gatherings. A final document, "*Toward a More Faithful Living of the Vow of Poverty*" was promulgated in July 2017. The impact of this document, on the local and personal level, is difficult to measure. I hope, however, that it is a source of periodic reflection and conversion as well as a useful tool to Custodians during the annual budgeting process.

## Membership

When we look at membership, I invite you to consider the large picture: those who have joined us in vowed life, those who have decided that they need time to discern their vowed life as a Missionary Servant, those who have left us for eternal life and those who have decided they no longer desire to live in religious life. Currently, there are three confreres who are in the process of leaving the congregation, seeking incardination in a diocese. All three of these have been in this process for more than five years and reside in Mexico. Two confreres are in “exclaustration”, Jener Valencia and Carlos Urquina, as they discern their vocational call with us. A member of the General Council is in regular communication with those in “exclaustration” to assist in the discernment process and assure them of our fraternal concern.

Two men, Julenord Clervil and Rigoberto Chavez, returned to the Congregation over the last four years after their time of exclaustration and discernment.

Over the last four years one Missionary Brother professed first vows; six clerics professed first vows. Eight men professed Perpetual Vows; seven men were ordained to the priesthood.

During this administration sixteen men entered Novitiate - three men left from Novitiate; ten men professed first vows, one Missionary Brother & nine clerics - three were released from temporary vows and one Perpetually Professed ordained man left the Congregation.

Ten confreres died during this administration:

Andrethene Alexander	2015
Maurice Haiss	2016
Pedro Escalante	2016
Colman Nolan	2016
Hilary Mettes	2017
Christopher Riley	2017
Jonathan Daneski	2017
Martin Pacholek	2017
John McSpirit	2018
Boris Farrah	2018
Charles Gordon	2019

The Congregation also gives special emphasis to those who have “born the day’s heat” of ministry and are now in “senior” status. Loughlan Sofield, along with the team of Bill Coombs, Gerardo Ramirez (February 2019) and Deborah Self, RN provide a healthy and prayer-filled atmosphere at Father Judge Missionary Cenacle for those in Senior Ministry II. The local Health Care Team, with whom I meet regularly, has been able to provide proper support for our senior confreres. In addition to Fr. Judge Missionary Cenacle, Sacred Heart Missionary Cenacle was established to remind us of our men who reside at Sacred Heart Nursing Home. Two men reside

at Sacred Heart: Joel Bladt and James O'Brian. Continued attention must be given to the needs of our men in Senior Ministry II and III. Senior Ministry I continues to be an important vehicle for those who are able to remain at a mission and contribute in mission as they are able.

The important and vital vocation of the Missionary Brother continued to be held up and reflected on over the last four years. While the number of Missionary Brothers, currently 16, has diminished, the vocation has been experiencing renewed interest among those in formation. The Annual Religious Brothers Day celebrated now on May 1; Pope Francis's document on the vocation of the Religious Brother as well as attentiveness to other opportunities to speak about this vocation can be credited for this renewed interest.

### **Vocational Development Committee**

After seeking counsel from the VDC members upon my election, Francisco Gomez was named Chair of the VDC. Frank has been diligent in fulfilling Resolution #6 of the XV General Cenacle in implementing the *Curriculum for Formation* that was affirmed. Frank has also completed a review of the *Handbook of Formation* so that an even application at all levels of formation can be secured. Finally, all levels of formation participate regularly in video / voice calls to encourage communication and the sharing of gifts and ideas. The VDC has had two general meetings of all members in Silver Spring, MD and the Vocation Ministers have met together once in Maryland. The Vocational Development Committee has been key in stressing that our vocation is as religious, as well as valuing and exposing our candidates to the Religious Brothers vocation. A study was done, chaired by Ray Riding, comprised of Missionary Servants and several lay people, to look at our formation programs from several angles: formation in the charism, education, finances and immigration. The insights and recommendation from the study are still being processed by the VDC and, after review, will be offered to the General Council for further review and action. Francisco will not continue as chair of the VDC, a new chair will need to be appointed by the new administration.

The Mentoring Program, under the leadership of Jesús Ramirez, works diligently to support the neo-ministers as they develop their identity as Missionary Servants. Shared prayer and fraternity on the local mission is the greatest support. Francisco Gomez will offer deeper insights in the Report of the VDC to this General Cenacle.

Vocation efforts continue to be important in thinking about our future. We have four full time vocation promoters working in Colombia, Central America, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Haiti and the United States. Many thanks to Allen Rodriguez who has shown leadership among the vocation ministers and was a major planner of our robust and successful presence at the recent World Youth Day in Panama. Thanks to Diovany, Edwin, Gerardo, Jaime and Aro for their willingness to serve in this ministry. A reminder to all of us – the most effective vocation promotion is a personal invitation from a respected priest or Brother. It is not simply the promoters' job but all of ours to invite young men to share our life as religious and missionaries. We must continue to strive to develop a culture of vocation and at each missions and Cenacles.

Profound thanks is also offered to those who have labored in formation ministry. The Council and I want to thank Rafael Pisso, Paul Michalenko, Ray Riding, Edgar Solano and

Victor Machorro, as well as Francisco Gomez. Each of these men have done an outstanding job in their respective programs in passing on the charism, accompanying our men in formation and working together for the good of the Congregation. Francisco Gomez will be leaving his role as Director of the US Pre-Novitiate program this August. A new director will need to be appointed by the new administration.

Wednesdays have been established as a weekly Day of Prayer for Vocations and a Vocation Prayer created for use by all Missionary Servants and with those we serve.

## **5. MINISTRY OF LEADERSHIP**

Recommendation #1 of the XV General Cenacle, with a realization of our geographic and cultural spread, as well as seeing a need for the Council to have a knowledge of the local realities, recommended that General Counselors reside in the Regions whenever possible.

Taking this Recommendation to heart Jesús has resided in Mexico; Guy in California, Victor in Costa Rica, John Skrodinsky in Holy Trinity, Mississippi and New Jersey and Mike in Maryland. Additionally, we have decided not to meet face to face each month but to use video conferencing as the vehicle for some Council meetings. This has been enhanced by weekly conference calls that I have scheduled with the two Vicars, John and Jesús.

We have evaluated this structure and recommend that it be continued in the future. As in all structures of leadership there are challenges, however, with diligent video, voice conferencing and email use, communication can be frequent and good counsel gotten. During the current administration language was an issue of concern. Meetings were held in English. Translation, when needed, was available with the current linguistic abilities of the elected Council. In addition, technology continues to evolve rapidly, offering online translation of good quality. Translation services have been used as needed.

### **Custodian Meetings**

The practice of holding annual meetings of the local Custodians has been of great benefit. The reality that the men on the local mission are dealing with helps in the formulation of community-wide policies and programs. The mutual interchange among the Custodians seems to be helpful to all concerned. Twice, during this administration, all local Custodians were gathered for several days of conversation and discussion. The focus for each, as well as the agenda was driven by the needs of the local Custodians. Naming the challenges they were experiencing, sharing possible solutions and receiving additional skill enhancement was effective and appreciated. These moments were also opportunities for me and the Council to seek greater counsel on several important topics. I would recommend that this continue. The regional structure is not as strong as it could be in every geographic area. This is often a function of geography. For example, the confreres in Maryland or Stirling can meet regularly because they are geographically close. I would suggest that the Regional structure be strengthened, and more opportunities sought to gather men in each geographic area.

## **Appointed Leadership**

Besides the elected leadership, the Congregation has been greatly served by Jordan Baxter as the Treasurer General, Steve Vesely as the Secretary General, Gary Banks, as the Archivist, assisted by Hilary Mettes (RIP) and Howard Piller, and Steve Giorno, as the VP for Mission Advancement, as well as the Trinity Mission lay team. The infrastructure these men have provided makes the work of the men on the missions possible. Many thanks for their generous service.

As John Edmunds shared in his report four years ago, these offices and positions will look different in the future, given our changing demographics and membership. This reality is now upon us!

Francisco Gomez has been appointed the new Treasurer General replacing the position held by Jordan Baxter for many years. This appointment will need to be affirmed by the new administration or another person appointed. I thank Jordan, on behalf of us all, for his diligent and faithful service to the Congregation and his wise and careful stewardship of our financial resources. A subsidiary of Christian Brother Services, BMT, began transitioning the TGO to lay hands in March of this year. A Comptroller, Gebrey Solomon, has been hired and Randy Kail has been named the Chief Financial Officer. The new Treasurer General will serve in his role differently than in the past yet will ensure adequate Missionary Servant oversight. The firm foundation which has been developed in the TGO will make this transition possible. The TGO will be offering a separate report.

The Mission Advancement Office, under the leadership of Pat Regan for more than 20 years, changed leadership in December 2017 as Pat retired. I am grateful for her many years of service to us and for her continued efforts in developing grant funding for many projects. John Butler was hired as the VP of Development and Mission Advancement. The challenges of fund development and mission advancement, as Pat Regan often pointed out, have been embraced by John Butler with a clear path forward. John will be making a separate report to us. Suffice it to say that for the foreseeable future available revenues will continue to be below the historic levels of the past. Happily, the foresight of setting up the two charitable trusts has helped to close the budget gap. The system of relying on direct mail for support, primarily focused on devotional giving, is gradually being replaced by a “culture of philanthropy.” Major Gifts, Planned Giving and having our benefactors come to know us and gain an awareness of our ministry as they share in our work is the future. Electronic media are a great help in this but there is no substitute for the personal touch. Thus, each Missionary Servant should be aware of the need to invite those we know and work with to support the missions. The Trinity Sunday Annual Fund, reworking of our web site, personal visits and phone calls will be vital to our future.

## **Future Leadership**

We have these past four years been attentive to seeking opportunities for our men to develop the skills needed to provide future leadership for the Congregation. Raphael Pisso has completed his studies in Canon Law. Several younger men took advantage of a program offered

each summer by CTU – *Critical Skills for Pastoral Leadership*. Several confreres are doing or have expressed interest in further studies in spirituality & spiritual direction, psychology and counseling, conflict resolution, and other disciplines. These are needed skills both for mission and for internal leadership. This should continue to be encouraged.

### **Mission Partners**

Following some previous attempts at developing a lay board of advisors Pat Regan and I, in March of 2017 in Atlanta, called together a group of lay men and women, along with Missionary Servants, to consider the development of a group called Mission Partners. Those invited included benefactors, alumni, stakeholders from mission sites, and friends who had skills and gifts to offer. The group gathered accepted this invitation, developed a Charter and several subcommittees focused on finances, fund development, creating a compelling story, future leadership development, succession planning for key positions, spirituality / charism and communications. These sub groups met to further discuss these areas and offer action steps. Emphasized in the Charter is the call to each Mission Partner Member to share their time, talent and treasure. The Mission Partners established a Mission Partner Burse and have pledged thus far \$325,000 for this effort. The entire group met again, at the Shrine of St. Joseph, in July of 2017. Addressing a concern by members of the lay Mission Partners that this effort not only be an administrative initiative but one embraced by the younger generation of ST's, the entire General Council along with several other younger ST's were in attendance. During this meeting the Charter was edited to address the concern of some of the ST's in attendance; an Executive Committee was formed, and five priorities presented by the General Council were addressed and affirmed.

The Five Priorities are:

- Through Mission Partners, increase lay participation at the Congregational (institutional) level. Expand Mission Partner core membership as well as Mission Partner Chapters.
- Build the Fr. Judge Mission Trust by 3 – 5 million dollars over the next 3 – 5 years. This has been amended to develop a Development Committee to advise the efforts of the MAO.
- Evaluate all real estate holding of the Congregation to ensure wise stewardship.
- Develop adequate funding strategies for the future in countries outside the US where we serve.
- Grow Missionary Servant vocation outreach in current countries served and reach untapped populations in the US for vocational recruitment using best practices.

Members of the Executive Committee were assigned leadership responsibilities for each of these priorities.

The Executive Committee, chaired by Patrick Thornton, continues to meet monthly by conference call. A third gathering of the entire Mission Partner group was held in Holy Trinity, AL in July 2018. The next Mission Partner retreat / meeting will be held in October 2019 in California. I strongly encourage the General Cenacle to affirm this effort and recommend its development by the next administration.

## **Praesidium**

Our concern for setting a high standard in child abuse prevention and proper boundary standards in our ministry with adults is evident in our continued participation and accreditation by Praesidium. In addition to the requirements for continued accreditation that we all participate in each year we also participate in a Review Board which meets yearly in the Washington, DC area. We continue to offer pastoral care in responding to cases of abuse by our members in the past and remain diligent in our efforts to prevent this abuse in the present and future. This administration has continued the standard set by previous administrations, ensuring that Praesidium standards be policy for all Missionary Servants in all the countries where we serve. Participating in Praesidium requires not only our financial resources but the diligent work of several. My thanks go especially to John Skrodinsky and Steve Vesely for their efforts in this area.

In February 2019, the Council and I decided to release the names of all Missionary Servants credibly accused of abusing a minor. There were nine names on the released list, all but one deceased and which span a 50 – 60-year period. This release was prompted by our desire to assist in the healing of any victims that we were not currently aware of, to be transparent, and with the realization that many Diocese were releasing lists on which our men were included. Remaining diligent, pastoral, just and transparent is a necessity for the future as we and the Church continues to respond to this crisis.

### **6. CONCLUSION / CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES / RECOMMENDATIONS**

As I end this term, I am eternally grateful. Although there have certainly been challenges these last four years I have never felt alone or without support. This is a testament to the General Council and other staff, lay and religious, as well as each of you. At one of the Custodians meetings I challenged them to have a “thick skin and an elastic heart” and to serve with “greater love than fear”. Taking this to heart I have tried to both model that myself and be grateful when I received the same from each of you. The challenges of the ministry of leadership were thus softened by the support and concern that I felt from each of you. Having said this, I also beg your forgiveness for any way in which I failed to be a true servant.

There are challenges and opportunities before us as we prepare to celebrate our Centennial. As I wrote at the beginning, voicing some of what John Edmunds said four years ago, many of these are not new questions, challenges or opportunities. Please allow me to stress a few. Many of these will require continued change and continued conversion, individually, corporately and institutionally.

- To continue to strive and develop the skills necessary to create safe spaces in our Cenacles and local communities that encourage open dialogue on the issues of community life, the sharing of faith, personal struggles and a deeper appreciation of the gifts of each.

- To be more attentive to our lives as spiritual men, steeped in Cenacle spirituality; to seek spiritual direction, take time for retreat and days of rest and reflection.
- To grow in a greater awareness of our role in creating a culture of both vocational recruitment and philanthropy.
- To embrace more fully the reality of who we are – men of many cultures and now several languages. To more fully appreciate the gift this is as we mirror the diversity of God in each other.
- To continue to open ourselves on the institutional level to the gifts of the laity as they partner with us. This would include the future of our Mission Advancement / Fund Development, care of financial resources, vocational and formation programs and Mission Partners.
- Take advantage of opportunities for leadership development for future generations of ST's.

I began this reflection by mentioning St. Paul's admonition to avoid anxiety. Let me end it by affirming the confidence that he had in God's work in your midst. "I am sure of this much: that he who has begun this good work in you will carry it through to completion, right up to the day of Christ Jesus. It is only right that I should entertain such expectations in your regard since I hold all of you dear... My prayer is that your love may more and more abound, both in understanding and wealth of experience, so that with a clear conscience and blameless conduct you may learn to value the things that really matter" (Phil. 1:6-7, 9-10).