

FRANCISCAN BROTHERS OF PEACE

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"GO IN PEACE,
GLORIFYING THE
LORD BY YOUR LIFE"

Brother Seraphim is Ordained to the Transitional Diaconate

Bishop Andrew Cozzens + Basilica of Saint Mary
Minneapolis, May 12, 2018

Devoted to the Gospel of Life

Brotherhood Update



by Brother Conrad Richardson, fbp, Community Servant



Dear Brothers, pray for us!

The Lord has truly blessed us these past months with an abundance of good things as we continue to build on the firm foundation that God established through our beloved Co-Founders; Brother Michael Gaworski, fbp and Brother Paul O'Donnell, fbp. May they have eternal rest and intercede for us as we move, "Always forward, never back." — St. Junipero Serra

"Abandoned Tabernacles"

We are humbled by the generosity of those who enable us with their finances to "Seek Christ in 'abandoned tabernacles' of the poor, the lonely." as quoted recently by Pope Francis. It is the tangible love of Christ that works through those who care for the poor and lonely, who in essence are caring for Jesus in these poor and lonely "tabernacles." The brothers are honored to minister to so many brothers and sisters in need, like the many men who have lived with us seeking asylum after escaping physical and psychological torture in their countries. (see pages 6-7) Please continue to remember us and the people we serve through your prayers and financial gifts this summer.

Time of Sabbatical

A few brothers have had the opportunity to take some time of sabbatical in recent months for personal and spiritual renewal and growth. Brother John Mary Kaspari, fbp, Brother Pio King, fbp and Brother Dominic Michael Hart, fbp have valued their time of "recharging their batteries."

A Brother Deacon

On May 12th, 2018, Brother Seraphim Wirth, fbp was ordained to the transitional diaconate by Bishop Andrew Cozzens at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis. He joined four other seminarians also being ordained who are studying for the Archdiocese of St. Paul



and Minneapolis. A year from now Deacon Seraphim is expected to be ordained to the priesthood and will serve the sacramental needs of the brothers and of those to whom we minister in our apostolates (see pages 3-5).

"We're Movin' On Up" – FBP Novitiate Transfers to Blessed Solanus Friary

Good news! We have outgrown our original formation friary in St. Paul. We recently moved out of St. Crispin Friary and are now moving into a new formation friary in the former convent of St. Patrick Church on the East Side of St. Paul (see page 8). We were blessed to receive two first class relics of Blessed Solanus Casey from the Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph based in Detroit, Michigan where the Shrine of Blessed Solanus is located. One of the relics will remain at Queen of Peace Friary for public veneration and the other will be placed in the altar stone in the chapel of Blessed Solanus Friary. Our sincerest thanks to our dear Capuchin brothers, particularly Father Michael Sullivan, OFM. Cap., Provincial and Brother Richard Merling, OFM. Cap., Co-Postulator for Blessed Solanus' cause for canonization. Blessed Solanus, Pray for Us!



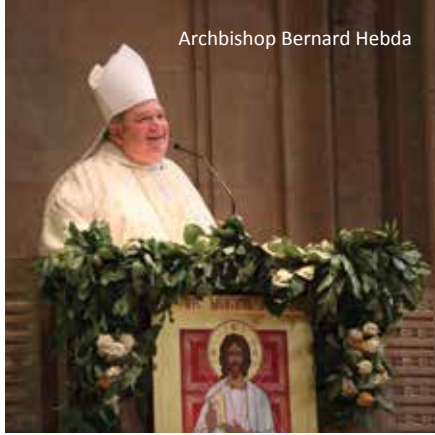
A New Chapter

On Pentecost Sunday, May 20th, the brothers convened for our General Chapter which we hold every three years. During this 2018 General Chapter we also held elections for Vicar and Local Servants of Queen of Peace Friary and our new Formation Friary. In addition to my current term as Community Servant, I was elected Local Servant of our headquarters, Queen of Peace Friary for a three year term. Deacon Seraphim Wirth, fbp was elected Vicar of the Community Servant and was appointed Vocation Director for the community. Brother John Mary Kaspari, fbp was elected Local Servant of Blessed Solanus Friary and likewise was appointed Formation Director of postulants and novices. Together, the three of us comprise the Brotherhood Council of the Franciscan Brothers of Peace and are responsible for making decisions concerning the life of the community.

Brother Seraphim is Ordained to the Transitional Diaconate + Parish and Karen Ministry

By Deacon Seraphim Wirth, fbp | Photos by Dave Hrbacek

I want to express tremendous gratitude to Archbishop Bernard Hebda, Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Father Michael Tix and Father David Blume of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis for supporting me through seminary formation. I am also eternally indebted to those at Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary in Boston, Massachusetts who are responsible for my Priestly formation, including my Rector, Father Brian Kiely and my Formators, Father Yavarone, OMV and Father Bellafiore, S.J. Last but not least, a wholehearted thank you to my brothers, my family and to all of you, our friends and benefactors, for your prayers and financial support. You will always be in my prayers.



Archbishop Bernard Hebda

Where to begin?

Many of you may already understand that a Transitional Deacon is generally ordained one year before priestly ordination. Instead of boring you with the specifics of that process I will take you through a typical Sunday experience for me as a Deacon.

While I have only been a deacon just under two months now, it has indeed

been life-changing for me in this new ministry of service. At weekday masses I assist the Pastor at St. Columba Church, preaching homilies on Tuesdays and Wednesdays — for which I am grateful because it gives me good practice. On Saturdays and Sundays I serve the Karen community at St. Casimir Church. It brings me great joy to minister in this capacity, through this long-held apostolate of our community on St. Paul's East Side.

The second Sunday after my ordination, I served as deacon at the 9:00 A.M. Mass at St. Casimir Church. I preached that day to a mixed congregation of English and Karen speakers, so with the help of one of the Karen who interpreted, I spoke in short sentences so it would be easier to interpret. To my surprise, the English speakers appreciated this format because it gave them a chance to think about what I was saying while it was being interpreted into Karen language. It can be a challenge to preach this way and I learned quickly that I needed to adapt my choice of words as I spoke, using words that are more easily interpreted into Karen for my message to be clear. This experience taught me that the Holy Spirit makes up for my inadequacy and the inconvenience of preaching this way can be a blessing to many people. It has also taught me to slow down during my preaching to give people time to process the message.

Just as Mass ended, I was immediately asked to give a blessing to an expecting mother and then asked by another Karen family to come to their home for a prayer service. These prayer services are nothing unusual for me but this was my first time serving as a deacon at this gathering. I gathered all of my “deacon stuff” which consisted of the Book of Blessings, a deacon's stole, and a bottle of holy water.

As I approached the family's home, I noticed just outside the door there were about forty pairs of shoes scattered all around, first indicating that I had found the correct home and second, that this was going to be a large prayer gathering. After sliding off my sandals I entered the small apartment finding many people sandwiched together on the floor patiently waiting for me to arrive. I remember that day being





unusually hot outside and the small apartment packed with many people was not much cooler.

There was a devotional area mounted on the wall that was filled with pictures of Jesus, Mary and several saints. It was poor and simple but what was clear to me was that it was the centerpiece of the home, and this family placed God first in their life. I took my seat and consulted with the “Tha Rah” (catechist elder) receiving my orders on how we will proceed with the prayer service. It usually consists of songs, rosary, Bible reading and a reflection by me.

The Grandmother of the home stood up as the chatter from others quickly stopped. She went on to voice her heartfelt prayer intentions for the family as everyone attentively listened to her pleadings. She also asked me to bless her home, family and to pray for a sick family member. The faith she expressed in her words was moving to all present and set the tone for the prayer gathering.

As we began with the opening song, anyone who may have been sleeping in the apartment building was surely awakened to the full-voiced hymns of praise coming from this small unit. As I was sitting there listening to the song in the roasting apartment on that hot Sunday morning, the words of Pope Francis came to my mind when he said he wanted the Priests to stay close to the marginalized and to be, “shepherds living with the smell of the sheep.”

These strong words of our Holy Father strike me. They express the humaneness of the Gospel message that Jesus is always close to His people and He was not afraid to sit with them and to enter into their world. Jesus sat with sinners, encouraged the lost and He was there in that apartment listening to the pleadings of the Grandmother and of the other faithful that were gathered. That day the words of Pope Francis became alive for me in a new way.

Everyone in the apartment was sweating and uncomfortable but we were all together and part of something sacred. A part of me wanted to complain that it was too hot, but I noticed that the Grandmother and all the people were earnestly praying. It was clear that the heat was a minor inconvenience for what this prayer meant for this family.

As the rosary went on and the reading was proclaimed it was my turn to give a reflection. I gazed out into the room and preached to the mix of Catholics and even some Buddhists who were present. Some of them may never have heard the Bible explained before and I was honored to bring the message of Jesus to them.





When it was time to end I thumbed through the Book of Blessings and quickly realized that the words would be challenging to interpret, so at that moment I needed to adapt the blessing so that it would be meaningful as well as understandable. I have to admit I was not prepared for that and as the beads of sweat ran down my face I did the best I could and everything worked out well thanks to the Holy Spirit.

After the prayer gathering and some nourishment, I was off to another house where the same process was played out again. With more intentions for a family and the blessing for children. The day finally ended with Evening Prayer and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament with my brothers and giving thanks to God for allowing me to be a part of His work.

That Sunday experience reinforced for me the importance of being a servant in the Church and the great need that people on the margins desperately have. This is where I see God asking me to serve Him. The Church is very different in many ways from what it was even twenty years ago. It is really a missionary orientated Church that is going out and finding the people and meeting them where they are at and gently bringing them closer to Jesus. Many people today desperately want the Church to be close to them, to notice them and to take the time to understand them. The Brothers experience this in all our apostolates and it is not always easy because it demands great time and energy. In this new diaconal ministry I can say wholeheartedly that God provides the grace not only for me but for all those who strive to do His will.

I humbly ask your prayers during this last year of my seminary formation before priestly ordination and assure you of mine. May Jesus, the Prince of Peace, bring peace to you and all your loved ones.



Interested in a Summer Pilgrimage?

On Trinity Sunday Brother Pascal and Deacon Seraphim led a pilgrimage and retreat to the Assumption Chapel in Cold Spring MN (right). Brother Pascal gave talks to the youth while Deacon Seraphim led the adults.

Follow the link below if you are looking for a summer pilgrimage site:

<http://www.stboniface.com/assumption-chapel.html>

Franciscan Brothers of Peace, other Catholics walk alongside victims of torture

by Jessica Trygstad | photo by David Hrbacek

Reprinted with permission by the Catholic Spirit | February 21, 2018

Throughout any given week, the Franciscan Brothers of Peace hear the rhythmic plucking of the *krar* — a lyre-like instrument from east Africa — in their St. Paul friary.

For “David,” playing the *krar* is just one aspect of his life at the friary that connects him to the east African country he fled to escape government persecution after a forced stint in the military. He asked that *The Catholic Spirit* omit his real name and other details to protect his identity. To help him feel more at home, the brothers converted a downstairs storage area into a music studio.

When David, who is Coptic Orthodox, arrived at the friary as a temporary resident almost two years ago, coordinated through the Twin Cities-based Center for Victims of Torture, his teeth were missing — evidence of the brutality he endured for 13 months in an African prison. He has since acquired dentures that fill his bright smile when he speaks of his family back home. He doesn’t disclose their names and ages because he fears for their lives.

With no official judiciary or free press, David likens the political climate of his home country to that of North Korea, but without a constitution. Each day, the brothers share in David’s prayers for asylum and reunification with his family. In the meantime, he works full time at a big-box store and attends a weekly Bible study at his church. He’s in the process of finding a place of his own, and he said he has found solace living with the brothers, who’ve given him advice.

“God bless the brothers,” he said, “and the Catholic Church.”

Road to recovery

The Center for Victims of Torture, a St. Paul nonprofit, is recognized internationally as a leader in helping victims of torture through an interdisciplinary approach of medical care, psychotherapy and social services with hopes they’ll become productive members of society, said Curt Goering, its executive director.

“When they come to us here, they have deep, physical and emotional wounds, having endured the worst that any human being can possibly endure,” he said, listing the types of torture CVT clients have undergone: being burned with cigarettes, hung upside down, electrically shocked, having their teeth and fingernails ripped out, sleep deprivation, subjection to hot and cold extremes, mock executions, forced to hear their loved ones being tortured and forced to torture their own family members.

Goering relates the story of a 24-year-old woman who was forced to be a child soldier. As a healing activity at the center, victims place stones — representing bad experiences — and flowers — representing good experiences — along a string. The woman decided to place stones on the string for every person she killed.

CVT’s work began in the 1980s when Rudy Perpich Jr., a volunteer with Amnesty International, asked his father, Rudy Perpich, then governor of Minnesota and a Catholic, how he was advocating for human rights. What followed was a rehabilitation center for survivors of torture in St. Paul. The center also does training, research and advocacy.

CVT’s outpatient clinic is a large Victorian home in a residential neighborhood. It was specially designed to help promote survivors’ healing: no bright lights that might trigger memories of interrogation rooms; only large windows with natural light. No square rooms or exits that aren’t immediately available; only rounded hallways.



Franciscan Brothers of Peace Antonio Pagba, left, and Conrad Richardson, talk with “David” at the friary. The brothers have been helping victims of torture since the mid-1990s. Dave Hrbacek | *The Catholic Spirit*

With about 60,000 survivors of torture in Minnesota — about 44 percent of all refugees in the U.S. are survivors of torture — Goering said the center has a perpetual waiting list. Only a “tiny percentage” of torture victims are eligible for resettlement; most live in refugee camps. But the center’s high rehabilitation improvement rates among survivors give him hope. Last year, the center helped around 400 individuals of 40 different nationalities.

“They’re fleeing torture and terror and the atrocities of war,” Goering said, adding that people are most often persecuted because of their faith. “With the right kind of support, people can and do heal from their wounds, and they do become productive citizens and contribute to society again. At CVT, we see this happen all the time.”

‘Received as Christ’

The Franciscan Brothers of Peace have housed male international victims of torture since the 1990s — about 70 to date, said Brother Conrad Richardson, who serves as the brothers’ community leader. Describing their apostolate as “doing whatever needs to be done,” Brother Richardson said the 12 brothers provide room and board and fulfill other tangible needs — climate-appropriate clothing, food, monthly mass transit passes and phone cards. Multicultural artwork hangs on the walls of their friary, and their kitchen is stocked with ethnic foods to help give their guests a sense of home.

“All are received as Christ,” Brother Richardson said. “Residents who live here, they know that they’re welcome to join us for any meals we have and even to join us in prayer as they like.”

The men come to the U.S. through various means. A former resident, Brother Richardson said, was a stowaway on a ship and found enough food and water to survive the journey. Another man from Iraq had served in a high-ranking military position under Saddam Hussein. He escaped through bribery. The information the brothers garner about their guests is confidential; through the men’s social workers and lawyers, the brothers only know pertinent information and what the men are willing to share, per the Center for Victims of Torture’s policies.

Knowing at least some English, most of the men were well educated and held good jobs in their home countries, giving them the wherewithal to help mobilize people, thus making them targets of their oppressive governments.

“They might be emptying bed pans at Regions Hospital, and they’ve performed brain surgery before,” Brother Richardson said. “But they’re doing it because they know that there is opportunity here, and you do have to start somewhere, and they’re just grateful for the opportunity.”

In addition to David, the brothers are currently housing an Ethiopian and a Cameroonian, who help around the friary a few hours each week. Residents typically stay for about two years, but because obtaining a work permit takes more time now than when the brothers began their ministry, the men often stay longer. The brothers average about three men at a time; the most they’ve housed was seven at once.

“One of the most urgent needs is shelter, and the Franciscans have just been phenomenal in helping out and translating their beliefs into action in ways that make an incredible difference in the lives of survivors,” Goering said.

While searching for employment, the men are encouraged to volunteer, which gives them skills and experience working with people in another culture, Brother Richardson explained, adding that the men are eager to do so. Once they find employment, they begin saving money to send to their families back home, he added, noting that the men’s families are often targeted. They also start saving money for housing, with the brothers helping them find affordable rent. Benefactors provide furniture and household items that the brothers give to the men to furnish their new residences. The brothers also operate an emergency food shelf that the residents may use after they leave the friary.

“The bonds that have been made with these men that have been with us have just been beautiful, and long-lasting friendships ... that even after they move on and are established and are reunited with their families, that the connection keeps going,” Brother Richardson said, adding that many of their former residents return for holiday celebrations.

He said a “beautiful aspect” of sharing their home with people of different faiths has been the unity they’ve found through common respect, pointing to their Muslim guests’ admiration of Mary and Jesus. The brothers try to reciprocate that respect. Brother Richardson recalled the time a Muslim guest asked one of the brothers about getting a prayer rug to use for his required prayer times throughout the day. When the brother supplied one, the man held it to his chest and tried to keep his composure.

“He said to us, ‘I have experienced peace here that I have hardly experienced even among my people,’” Brother Richardson recalled, “and that he would be buried with this rug, the gift that was given.”

Complementing the brothers’ ministry, Sarah’s Oasis, a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in St. Paul, serves female victims of torture.

Care and concern

Last year, more than two dozen Karenni refugees joined the Church at St. Bernard in St. Paul. The first Karenni refugees came to the parish around 2010, said Hsawreh Sharpohtay, 31, the parish’s refugee liaison. And all the adult refugees are victims of torture.

“We all came to this country as a refugee because we were all victims from Burma where we lived in our own village ... all of our houses were burned down and we had to flee from our homeland in 1996,” said Sharpohtay, who immigrated to the U.S. in 2009 after living in a refugee camp.

In the southeast Asian country of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, he remembers hiding in the jungle. He was too young to be a victim, but his dad and his brother were tortured. His father was forced to be a porter for the military. All adult villagers were tortured in some way, even women, he said.

However, Sharpohtay said, “In this country, we don’t have to worry about our safety. Back there, we had to run. Anytime when we hear a dog bark, we had to be prepared to run, because the military would come to our village looking for something.”

Sharpohtay, who helps Karenni parishioners navigate social service agencies and understand American culture in his role at St. Bernard, said the adults see hope in their children, who can go to school and get an education.

“The hope is in the new generation,” he said.

The Franciscan Brothers of Peace also provide pastoral care to the Karenni at St. Bernard and to the Karen people at St. Casimir in St. Paul, and have tutored adults and children.

The brothers have also partnered with the Missionaries of Charity in Minneapolis to teach catechism classes and host vacation Bible school and summer camps at St. Casimir. The brothers visit different homes to pray the rosary with refugee families.

“On the weekends, the families might gather at one apartment home, and there may be up to 30 or 40 individuals in a two-bedroom apartment

with all the living room furniture cleared out except for a couple chairs for the brothers to sit in while everyone else is on the floor,” Brother Richardson explained. “Some of the young adults in the community ... have really grown in roles of leadership in their community, bridging the cultures of our western American culture with theirs, and with their beautiful traditions of devotion and catholicity.”

In their ministry, Brother Richardson cites the Gospel of Matthew in which Jesus calls his followers to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and welcome the stranger. He wants to dispel misperceptions and labels affixed to migrants who find their way to the U.S.

“Any human being who wishes to, first of all, be free from tyranny and oppression ... how can one be illegal? How can that be illegal?” he said.

Pointing to the persecution in Myanmar, he said when refugees come to the U.S., many citizens are equipped to share their resources, but instead, people often turn their backs on them.

“Our true homeland is heaven,” he said, “and we’re on this earth. And what we do according to the Gospel of Matthew that Jesus told us is what helps us reach that true home. So, we really need to have hearts open to receiving Christ in our brothers and sisters who are treated unjustly.”

Brother Richardson encourages Catholics to become aware of why refugees are leaving their countries, which should give Americans a sense of pride and gratitude, he said.

“Try to put yourself in their shoes as an American with what we have,” he said. “Could we imagine wanting to go to another country? But what if we lived in one where we couldn’t go to Mass?”

“We are so blessed,” he continued. “And if we are to be a people that close ourselves off from others who are treated inhumanely, then what a travesty.”

Pope’s Share the Journey campaign encourages solidarity with refugees



Last July, Aid to the Church in Need, an international pastoral aid organization, issued a report identifying nations with pervasive hostility against Christians in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Catholic News Service reported.

“Persecuted and Forgotten?” — covering August 2015 to July 2017 — lists “a contiguous line of nations ... starting in Sudan, going to Eritrea and north to Egypt, then working its way through Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, India and China before winding up in North Korea.” Nigeria in West Africa also was included. As a result of violence and oppression, “the situation for Christians has declined,” the report said. The U.S. bishops heard the report’s findings last November during their annual fall general meeting in Baltimore.

To heighten Catholics’ awareness of migrants’ and refugees’ plight, Pope Francis launched “Share the Journey” in September 2017. The two-year initiative encourages Catholics to encounter migrants and refugees through prayer, reflection and action.

Share the Journey is an initiative of Caritas Internationalis, the global network of Catholic charitable agencies. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its Migration and Refugee Services, Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities USA are American partners.

A New Pentecost on the East Side of Saint Paul

Blessed Solanus Friary Becomes the New Novitiate of the Franciscan Brothers of Peace



by Brother John Mary, fbp

With the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Franciscan Brothers of Peace are excited to announce that we are transitioning our novitiate friary from the residential house we have been renting for four years to the former convent of Saint Patrick's Church, thus retaining our established communal presence on Saint Paul's East Side.

A variety of factors influence this decision to move our novitiate all revolving around the fact that our former house, Saint Crispin Friary, was too small for our needs. Unknowingly, we have been limiting the giftedness of God by restricting his space to the capacity of a three-bedroom house. This limitation prevented a novice class of no more than two brother novices seeking to follow in living out our communal life. Thanks to the advocacy of our ecclesial representative, Father Michael Tix (who in his communications gave us the title for this article), and with the blessing of Archbishop Hebda, this past Easter season the Brothers approached the Church of Saint Patrick with the offer to

purchase their long vacant convent, formerly serving as a novitiate for the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet and now receiving the new name of Blessed Solanus Friary.

This Friary on the East Side will allow us to retain our close affiliation with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate who staff Saint Patrick Church as well as St. Casimir Church at which our dear friends, the Karen Catholic Community, are based. Having been introduced at a recent Mass at Saint Patrick's, the brothers have also been highly welcomed by this parish, including by the Hmong community whom we hope to come to know and befriend more in the future.

We hope that by investing in this twelve-bedroom convent, the Holy Spirit will continue to prompt men to embrace our Franciscan calling. Brother Paschal, Deacon Seraphim and current postulants, Steven Gottsacker and John Paskiewicz, as well as myself serving as Local Servant, will transition to Blessed Solanus Friary by late this summer.

www.brothersofpeace.org



FRANCISCAN HOLY HOUR

EVERY FIRST FRIDAY AT 7:00 P.M.

Adoration + Franciscan Crown Rosary + Chanted Compline + Benediction

Refreshments and Fellowship follow.

FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE FRIARY + MEN 18-35

EVERY THIRD FRIDAY FROM 7:00 TO 9:30 P.M.

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Adoration + Chanted Compline

NEW!