General Visitation

Living Hospitality
Hopefully and Boldly

Province of the Good Shepherd in North America
May 9th to June 24th, 2016

Westville Grove, New Jersey, USA
May 24th to May 28th, 2016

Local Community
1. The Canonical Visitation in Sessenum 2012 – 2018

1.1. The Canonical Visitation Letter from our Prior General Jesús Etayo

With his circular of February 2, 2013, our Prior General announced the Canonical Visitation in the Sessenum 2012 – 2018. In his letter he outlines the objectives of the Canonical Visitation - “It is a fraternal visit, whose purpose is to gain first-hand knowledge of the real state of the Order wherever we are present”, serving primarily . . .
- to evaluate the information as objectively as possible, shedding light on the situations as they exist;
- to animate and project the future of the communities and institutions to be consistent with the “Declarations of the last General Chapter”, particularly in the lines of action and priorities for the Sessenum;
- to take the most appropriate decisions with the aim of superseding whatever limitations and constraints that may exist and improve our response in personal, community and apostolic terms;
- to enable the Visitator to inform the whole Order of the Hospitaller Family of St John of God about the lines of action and the projects being promoted by the General Curia and any other information of interest and relevance to the whole Order.

During the first Definitorium Session in Sessenum 2012 to 2018, from January 8th to 10th, 2013, Brother Rudolf Knopp was delegated with the General Visitation.

The Provincial and his Council from the Province of the Good Shepherd of North America assigned the Provincial’s Administrative Assistant, Sister Christina Marie Kazimirek, CSSF of the Felician Franciscan Sisters of North America to accompany Br. Rudolf Knopp on the General Visitation as secretary and translator.

The theme chosen for the Canonical Visitation is:

“Living Hospitality Hopefully and Boldly”

In his circular about the General Visitation, our Prior General Jesús Etayo writes:

“We have chosen this title to send out an appeal to keep faith and trust in the vocation we have received and to place our whole being and all our energies and talents, however poor and weak they may be, at the service of the mission of hospitality to which we have been sent in the manner of St John. Hospitality is at the very heart of our life and the whole of the Hospitaller Family of St John of God. It is a gift and a grace that we have received from the Spirit, it is the spirituality which drives us on day by day to become configured with the compassionate and merciful Christ of the Gospel and it is the mission to which we have been called, following the spirit St John of God our Founder. . .

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1 The Circular Letter is Appendix 1
Practicing hospitality today and making it visible demands boldness. This is not the time to cast backward glances, to be paralyzed by the difficulties we encounter at every level or fall into a passive attitude, which is typical of those who live with little hope and without energy. On the contrary, it is a time to devote the whole of our being, and all our energies to fostering hospitality, and to do so boldly. “

1.2. Visitation of the Ministry of the Province in New Jersey

A separate report has been prepared for the Visitation of the ministries of the Province in New Jersey. This Visitation Report is part of the official report on the Visitation of the Local Community as Appendix 1.

1.3. Visitation of the Local Community in New Jersey

The Visitation began officially on Tuesday May 24, 2016 with Evening Prayer. At that time, the Visitator briefly gave an outline of what the visitation is all about. The opening remarks are attached as Appendix 2.

With a community meeting held on Friday May 27, 2016, the Visitation came to close. During the concluding community meeting, the Visitator shared with the Brothers that the report of the Visitation will be available to them at a later date. During this meeting the Visitator thanked the Brothers for being faithful to their daily commitment, the warm welcome and the positive conversations with them and the staff of the ministry sites.

The members of the New Jersey Local Community are as follows:

**Brother Thomas Osorio**  
Prior, Director of Social Services

**Brother Luis Padierne**  
Full Time Ministry for the office of Mission and Values

**Brother Charles Schreiner**  
Full Time Ministry in the workshop for adults with disabilities

The Visitator conducted a personal interview with each individual brother.

As part of the Visitation, there was a meeting with Bishop Dennis Sullivan from the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey. Br. Justin Howson the Provincial, Br. Tom Osorio the Prior accompanied the Visitator to this meeting. The Bishop expressed great interest and affirmation of the ministry of the Brothers. He also asked for clarification about the merger with the Order and the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd, and the presence of the Order in North and South America.

On Friday May 27, together with the Provincial and the Prior, the Visitator had an opportunity to visit the gravesites of the deceased Brothers at St. Mary Cemetery.
Regarding the Local Community books\(^2\), it is noted as follows:

- a Book of Minutes of the monthly community meetings needs to be kept
- a Book of the Dead according to the General Statues, Article 45 is available in the Provincial Directory. There could be an extension of this information available in the Local Community chapel
- a Book of Chronicles, according to the General Statues 150 should be given more attention in recording important events and visits to the Local Community
- there are various displays of art work displayed throughout the local home of the Brothers. The art works are of significant value. Some can also be of significant value to the history of the Local Home and the Order. These are to be archived, as a requirement of the Holy See. This should be done until the Provincial Chapter of 2018 in a format approved by the Provincial
- a special feature of this Local Community is that the recorded prescribed Masses are celebrated by the Franciscans, when their own priest is not available.

It is encouraging that there is reorganizing of the existing archive in process to separate materials for the Order and for the Ministry.

2. **Life of the Order**

Regarding the spirit of the Order’s Local Community, I wish to recall some statements made by our Prior General, Brother Jesús during our last General Chapter.

Our Prior General placed a significant focus about Visitation of the Order’s community life. I would like to recall a few of these significant points:

- the renewal of community life in the Order based on developments from the previous Sessenniums up until the General Chapter of 2012
- the renewal of our religious life (vocation ministry, spiritual life, community life, education and training)
- during the Visitation particular attention should be placed on the renewal of the life of our Brothers as consecrated persons; “... we have a lot of material and documents which may be helpful to us, but first of all it is necessary that we have hope and trust in the Lord of the harvest so that we go with willingness to risk new ways of vocation min-

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\(^2\) book on the members of the local convent (transfer book General Statutes 150, of the General Curia 141)
book of the dead, Article 45 of the General Statutes, " Each province should have on display a Book of the Dead, in which the name, age, years of profession, along with ensuring that the information is sent to the proper offices of the diocese, some significant comments on the Brother, Prior Generals and General Councilor’s need to be recorded
anniversary of death needs to be recorded and referred to
a collection of the minutes of regular local community meetings and provincial chapters needs to be kept according to General Statutes 150
the book of Chronicles are to record the significant events of the local community, whether it is a community or apostolic work, according to General Statutes 150
the financial books of the local home according to General Statutes 161 and 164
istory and that we give witness of our life as Brothers, to be of mercy and joyful and faith-
ful.\(^3\)

Two factors from the theme of “Religious Life”, from the perspective of the past 68th General Chapter in Fatima, are particularly important:

- The renewal process is ongoing and the focus needs to be on the spiritual life of the Brothers\(^4\)
- There should be workshops and meetings organized to help the Brothers understand the latest documents from the Order regarding on-going formation\(^5\).

The renewal process does not mean for the Brothers to be focused on the daily schedule or the wearing of the Habit. It is to be an ongoing reflection of our lifestyle, whether we are living authentically or not. Reflecting on our lifestyle, we can be reminded of the words of Pope Francis, “Being Christian is not just obeying orders but means being in Christ, thinking like him, acting like him, loving like him; it means letting him take possession of our life and change it, transform it and free it from the darkness of evil and sin.\(^6\)”

These considerations should help you to focus your community meetings on our own religious life, but also to see the greater picture on the provincial and general level. These issues should always be part of our life and focus.

2.1. The Local Community

It is a pleasure to see that all the Brothers of this Local Community feel comfortable living together. They show great respect for each other, trying to accept the particular personality of their confrere the best way they can.

The daily schedule allows for common prayer, common meals and communication. There is a good sense of togetherness of the Brothers here. The Brothers strive to have a good spiritual life. Regular community meetings are held and the Brothers feel these are always a positive experience. The Local Community may wish to consider some amendments to the daily schedule to allow some necessary private time for each of the Brothers, especially on the weekends.

The creativity of the daily prayer books that are used is enlightening but the official prayer of the Church – the Christian Prayer should be included. The Visitator encourages that the community use the prayer and intercessions of Archangel Raphael as a sign of importance to the community.

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\(^3\) The Circular Letter is Appendix 1
\(^4\) Special requirements and priorities of the 68th General Chapter, IV.II basic education and training, 29
\(^5\) Special requirements and priorities of the 68th General Chapter, IV.II basic education and training, 29
\(^6\) April 10, 2013, General Audience, Pope Francis
Through the ministry provided at the facilities in New Jersey, many vulnerable people, mainly young children and teenagers, are cared for. Full attention must be focused on the safeguarding of these vulnerable people to prevent abuse and assaults. We, as religious must never relax from the sensitivity of this issue. This applies always in our part of the services and in the local community when inviting guests to stay with us. The regulatory requirements as put forth by our Order and the Church of the Association of Religious in the USA on sexuality and abuse must always be strictly observed.

2.2. The Local Home in the structure of the Province

The Brothers feel they are kept well informed by their Provincial about matters in the Province and the Order as a whole.

The upcoming Provincial Retreat / Assembly / Hospitality Workshop for two weeks in June is a very welcomed event for the Brothers. From the perspective of the General Curia, community life is becoming increasingly important at the Provincial level, since the Local Communities are invariably smaller now than in the past. To ensure positive Local Community life is certainly a challenge for the Provincial and his council. It is encouraging that the Provincial Council has already begun to plan on how to keep the Brothers of the Province united.

One or two of the Brothers see the union of the two orders and the recent developments in the new Province as a positive sign for the future. Not all the brothers are accepting of the new identity with the same degree. It must be noted that we cannot be happy if we are constantly looking for the negative points at the changes. We can rejoice over the positive developments and encourage the others to see the good in it.

When the Brothers were asked on how they see the Province, the Visitator found that despite being part of the Hospitaller Order there is a sense of unity as a Province. For some brothers this is difficult to understand and accept because they think in terms of their Local Community and their own ministry. This is a challenge to change as individual brothers and a Local Community but it will be a challenge for the Provincial and his council. It is also a challenge for the individual Brother to see the unity of the Province in the many supporting elements that lead to the future in a clear development process.

2.3. Vocations

During our last General Chapter there was a serious focus on our Order’s vocation ministry. It was stated: “. . . it shall be brought forcefully to focus specifically on the nature of the vocation of a Brother, mainly, to show others our life of hospitality while being dedicated to serving the poor and sick . . .”

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life published in 2015 the document on “Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the

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7 Special requirements and priorities of the 68th General Chapter, IV.I Vocation Ministry, 23
Reviewing this document individually and in our local community setting, it can provide suggestions and ongoing formation for each Brother.

Vocation ministry is not the task of one individual Brother, but the task of all in the local community to share the credible testimony of the life of the Brothers in community. The formation of a Vocations team is strongly supported by the Brothers. As a Local Community in New Jersey, they can specifically contribute to promoting vocations. There are a few vocations out there but they are worth our effort to recognize and nurture to the possibility of joining our Order.

2.4. Finances of the Local Community

The Provincial Curia operates under a central finance model for all financial matters related to the Order, whether it is the Provincial Curia or the Local Communities.

Stipend compensation is received in a Provincial bank account with the Local Communities submitting annual budgets for local living expenses to be approved by the Provincial Curia. Provincial budgets are approved for Canada, United States, England and Haiti. These budgets include administrative expenses for the Province plus insurance expenses (property, liability, vehicles, and healthcare), property taxes (city/state), property maintenance, vehicle purchase and repairs, renovations/repairs to the local community homes.

2.5. The Local Community and its Roots in the Apostolate

The Brothers of this Local Community are actively involved in the social activities of the ministry center, from the level of the children to the management level. The Brothers feel they are involved in the developments and events of this social service. The Brothers are positive about the developments in the facilities that has been made in the last 1½ years. This is a hopeful sign for the future. The Visitator believes it would be good to have all the Brothers participate as guests at future board meetings. This would be a witness to the official members of the board that the Brothers are interested and supportive of the ministries in New Jersey.

2.7. The Local Community and its Relationships

World Wide Order

For Brother Charles, newly transferred to New Jersey, sees this experience as a positive one for himself. Brother Tom and Brother Luis are comfortable with their ongoing experience here. They all believe it to be a good and positive presence in the Order.
Diocesan Level

It is a welcome sign that Brother Tom is involved in a variety of diocesan groups. His presence at meetings and events shows the unique presence and commitment of a religious Brother alongside priests and nuns. This is a living example highlighting the elements of a religious Brother as written in the recent Vatican document\(^8\).

Parish

The Local Community is closely associated with the parish of St. Patrick’s. Their presence at daily Mass and parish events enlists a good relationship with the parish community and provides support in their pastoral work.

Other Religious Communities in Momence

There is minimal contact with other religious communities in the New Jersey area. It is encouraging to know that there are plans for regular meetings with other religious. For a small community such as yours, this would certainly be an asset in having more contact and exchanges with other religious communities, especially since the other local communities of Brothers are so far away.

Neighborhood

The Local Community is well integrated into the residential area, but without any specific connections to the neighborhood at large.

3. Final Word

First of all, Br. Justin Howson, OH the Provincial deserves my sincerest thanks for the preparation and organization for this General Visitation. This includes the many beneficial discussions we had in advance.

I extend God’s blessings on Brother Tom Osorio the Prior for the warm hospitality. To the Brothers I offer my most appreciative thanks for their cordial and fraternal welcome and for the open discussion atmosphere, which gave me a great glimpse into the life of the Brothers here in New Jersey and the North American Province of the Order. This was a very rewarding time for me.

Thank you for the way each of continues to live out your religious vocation, convincingly, in your daily efforts. In today’s times of the upheaval in our Church and society, this is not an easy task, but presents many challenges. You choose not only to be re-

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\(^8\) Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Identity and Mission of the Religious Brothers in the Church, October 2015
sponsible in your daily witness of your vows but also to follow the inspiration of our Holy Father Pope Francis.

I offer sincere thanks to Sister Christina Marie Kazimirek in not only providing the necessary secretarial duties for this report but as an interpreter during the Visitation.

I'll close with a big THANK YOU for sharing fraternity with all of you. It has been a great pleasure! I truly felt at home with you.

Let us not be weary in doing good! (Gal 6:9)

New Jersey, May 19, 2016

Brother Rudolf Knopp, OH
General Councilor

Appendices:

2 Opening Remarks as given by Br. Rudolf Knopp

Distribution:

1. General Curia
2. Br. Justin Howson, OH - Provincial
3. New Jersey Local Community