

New Partnerships  
March 17, 2020

Fr Pat offered an opening reflection based on advice St Paul of the Cross gave to a directee, Thomas Fossi. Fossi wanted to go off and do something different with his life. St Paul told him to stay at home, be silent and take care of the responsibilities there that God has given you. Fr Pat suggests that is what God is saying to us in these days of uncertainty. Be still and pray. Listen to advise of our holy founder.

We each shared our experience of the recent spread of corona virus and how it was impacting our lives, sheltering in at home, retreat centers closed, communicating online. Tim had gone out to vote that morning and found that the poll workers had not shown up because of the crisis. The voting officials had then gone to local colleges to recruit students to come and work the polls. They came, got oriented, and did a fine job so that everyone could vote.

We opened with the question “What shall we talk about today?” Sharon had been thinking about our work as a group and wanted to clarify exactly what our responsibility is. Are we to just come up with ideas that someone else would enact? Tim confirmed we are to come up with ideas related to new partnerships and recommend where in the organization structure these ideas would be directed for implementation. We are to act as a think tank.

What if we have an idea that seems good, but the people we send it to might not want to pursue it? We will have done our job by creating the ideas and sending them on. The Accountability group will be reviewing the entire process as it evolves.

We acknowledged that we are not at the stage in the implementation process that we will be sending ideas along to the various resource groups, but rather we are developing ideas which we will report on at the Assembly in June, which will be conducted via Zoom in the same way we did the Pre-Chapter 2019.

It seems clear that the better we develop and present our ideas, the better chance they may have of being adopted. Along the way we will be sharing ideas and having conversations with other perspective teams. ALS has been meeting monthly as a community in transition and Tim reports there are common ideas he is hearing across groups which are likely to cross pollinate.

Fr. Alex had been considering our topic and had sorted it down to the concept of “accompaniment” in that what we develop would be some measure of accompaniment with like-minded or like-positioned groups. As example, the National Association of Mental Illness which deals with common suffering, often overlooked, untreated, often suppressed -- how our Charism can accompany another group in their ministry or community service.

Tim gave an example of an organization called “Impact Behavioral Health” which helped his family with the struggles of his daughter. He had reached out to them to see if he could help

– his daughter – reached out to them to see if he could do something with the belief that even a small simple thing can help. Another similar is National Organization of Restorative Justice with chapters in local neighborhoods serving victims of violence. The idea would be to contact them and find out how we could work with them as an extension of our Charism. We don't always have to create something from scratch, but can offer to walk with or accompany them in their journey.

If this idea were to prove viable, perhaps our group would define the logistics of how we could accomplish the act of accompanying another organized group in the pursuit of their mission and how this would also fulfill our mission.

Fr Pat supports the concept of accompaniment and how it would enrich the lives of others with our Charism but would also want to invite others to accompany us in the pursuit of our mission. We're very thin in the area of human resources, so it would be helpful to create new partnerships where we invite others to discover the richness of what we do and invite their help. How we do this, i.e. invite others in, is a part of visioning.

How would it look to recognize and embrace new partnerships? Do we have examples of this type of accompaniment in any location in the Province? We are hopeful of this happening in a larger scale than one person.

Would it mean working with other religious orders, (CMSM – “a concert of Charisms”) or more lay people?

Elizabeth mentioned a recent conversation with Mary Mansell, principal of Ramona Convent in Alhambra, CA, a secondary school founded and run by the Sisters of the Holy Names. Mary told of a recent change at the school in which a lay person began serving on the Provincial Council of the Sisters. Mary told of background work in which approval was sought and granted by the Church to allow this to happen. There wasn't an opportunity for full details to be shared but Elizabeth will reach out for additional information.

In the area of youth and young adults we could consider building on work already ongoing such as Passionist Lay Missioners, and Passionist International.

Sharon mentioned that Birmingham has had difficulty in the past of getting young adults involved although the idea of accompaniment rings true to her as something we should focus on. Fr. Alex knows there are issues that youth and young adults are attracted to. It's just a matter of engaging to them as leaven to the dough. Young people are interested in seeing suffering redeemed.

We intend to invite outside participants to our weekly conversation in coming weeks; i.e. Fr Jim O'Shea and Fr. Richard Burke, St Paul of the Cross Province, to add to ideas we are pursuing. We adjourned at 2:50 pm EDT.

