



Press Release

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PROVINCE CAPUCHINS APPROVED BY POPE FRANCIS AS MISSIONARIES OF MERCY

The Capuchin Franciscans Western America Province is pleased to announce that Fr. John De La Riva (National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi, San Francisco), Fr. Mike Mahoney (Our Lady of Angels Parish, Burlingame), Fr. Matt Elshoff (Old Mission Santa Ines), and Fr. Jesus Vela (St. Lawrence of Brindisi, Watts) were recently selected by the Province, and approved by Pope Francis, to serve as Missionaries of Mercy along with several hundred other Franciscans from across the globe.

In the first part of February, Fr. John will travel to Rome to be commissioned personally by the Pope as a Missionary of Mercy. Among the liturgies and other ceremonies taking place, there will be a private Mass for all the Capuchin Franciscans with the Pope as well as a conference where the Pope will personally explain the purpose of the Missionaries of Mercy for those commissioned.

“I ask for your prayers to assist me in my spiritual preparation for this pilgrim journey in response to Pope Francis' call of Mercy. I also invite all of you to spiritually join with me in this journey of Mercy — that I pray will continue beyond the time of a Jubilee year. Let us together, begin a journey of prayerful transformation as a community of gentle compassion and mercy that can nurture true healing, reconciliation and greater unity.” – Fr. John De La Riva

In a recent letter from Bishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, he emphasized that it is the fervent desire of the Holy Father that the Missionaries of Mercy be priests distinguished for their patience, welcoming confessors who are aware of the limits of our humanity and willing to serve as living signs of how the Father embraces all those who seek His forgiveness. The missionaries are to make themselves available throughout the Holy Year, but above all during the important Season of Lent, during which time Diocesan Bishops and Pastors, from the Missionary's same country, will invite them to preside at penitential celebrations, to preach missions, and, above all, to hear confessions. This commitment to serve will require that each priest be able to break from his normal pastoral responsibilities for the minimum time necessary to celebrate and to preach, as well as participate in the celebration of the sending forth by Pope Francis.

The establishment of the Missionaries of Mercy is in direct response to Pope Francis' call for an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. This choice comes from the awareness that “the Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own

way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. [...] It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.” (Bull of Indiction, 12) The Holy Year began on December 8, 2015, with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and will conclude with the liturgical solemnity of Christ the King on November 20, 2016.

The first meeting between the Missionaries of Mercy and Pope Francis will take place on Tuesday, February 9, 2016. During this time he will personally welcome all of the Missionaries of Mercy and speak further about the sensitive nature of their service. On the following day, February 10, Ash Wednesday, there will be a solemn Eucharistic Concelebration, during which time the Holy Father will confer the mandate to the Missionaries. Also, on this occasion, the relics of Saints Padre Pio of Pietrelcina and Padre Leopoldo of Mandić (well known as holy confessors), having been brought to Rome specifically for this celebration, will be exposed for veneration by the faithful. The specific times of both of these events will be announced at a later date on the Jubilee website (www.im.va).

The Capuchin Franciscan Friars are a Roman Catholic religious order of brothers and priests inspired by the life and ideals of St. Francis of Assisi and living a life of prayer and service to others. The friars of the Western America Province seek to serve Christ in a variety of ministries throughout California and Northern Mexico and to be a joyful presence of hope and salvation to all, especially to those most in need.