

Capuchin Franciscans to establish community in Indiana, provide pastoral ministry to parishes, IUP

Four Capuchin Franciscan friars are coming to the Diocese of Greensburg to establish a community at a new friary in the town of Indiana, where they will provide pastoral ministry and leadership at three parishes in Indiana County, along with university campus ministry services at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Greensburg Bishop Edward C. Malesic made the announcement May 18 after two years of discussions with Capuchin Father Thomas Betz, provincial superior for the Capuchin Friars of the Province of St. Augustine in Pittsburgh.

“This is a historic and exciting moment for our diocese,” Bishop Malesic said. “The Capuchins have experienced tremendous growth in vocations in recent years and have several younger priests and brothers who will serve the people of Indiana well.”

After community discernment, the friars have accepted the invitation of Bishop Malesic to establish a friary at the rectory at St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish in Indiana, where the friars will live in community.

“Three of the friars are ordained priests. They will serve the pastoral and administrative needs of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish and St. Thomas More University Parish, also in Indiana, and Our Lady of the Assumption Parish,” Bishop Malesic said.

The friars will also oversee campus ministry at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, which is one of the largest universities in the state higher education system.

“We want to work in a university town and believe we can provide ministry that meets the needs of parishioners and college students,” Father Betz said. “The friars going to Indiana include one of the most experienced priests in our community, who happens to be a native of the diocese, and some of our best young friars.”

Capuchin Father Richard Owens will serve as pastor of St. Bernard Parish and St. Thomas More University Parish. Ordained a priest in 2014, he is currently Director of the Office of Black Catholics for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Capuchin Father Tage Danielson, who was ordained to the priesthood last September, will serve as parochial vicar of the two parishes.

Capuchin Father John Pavlik, a native son of St. Mary of Czestochowa Parish, New Kensington, will serve as pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in central Indiana County. He has served as provincial superior for the Capuchins and as executive director of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. He has been providing weekend ministry at the three parishes in New Kensington since last fall.

Capuchin Brother Thomas Choi, a native of South Korea who is a registered nurse, will also live and work in the community.

Father Andres C. Gumangan, the current pastor of St. Thomas More University and Our Lady of the Assumption parishes, is returning to the Philippines at the end of his term. Father Rodolfo P. Mejia, parochial vicar of the two parishes, will receive a new appointment this summer, as will Father Thomas A. Federline, pastor of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish.

The Capuchin Friars are no strangers to the diocese, having provided pastoral ministry at St. Mary Parish in Export until 2002.

Throughout its history, the Diocese of Greensburg has collaborated with a variety of religious communities to serve the people of the diocese. Those include the Benedictine monks at Saint Vincent Archabbey and Seminary in Latrobe, the Pauline Fathers in Kittanning, the Franciscans who formerly served in Uniontown and the Carmelite Hermits in Bolivar.

The diocese also continues to collaborate with several communities of women religious to serve the diocese, including the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, the Felician Sisters, the Benedictine Sisters at St. Emma Monastery and the Daughters of Mary in Greensburg; the Ivrea Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception in Mount Pleasant; the Sisters of Mary Immaculate in Leechburg; the Discalced Carmelites of the Assumption in Latrobe; the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden and the Sisters of Mercy, who formerly had a school and convent near Latrobe.

The Capuchin Friars trace their origins to 1528 in Italy when they were organized to live as St. Francis of Assisi envisioned. They arrived in Pittsburgh from Germany in 1873, and the Capuchin Friars Province of St. Augustine, named for the first parish they served in Pittsburgh, was established in 1882.

For information about the Capuchins, including their history, see Capuchin.com.