ONWARD TOGETHER in Gratitude, Fidelity, and Hope

Chapter Chronicle

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9th Provincial Chapter opened, first phase begins

CEBU CITY—As the golden light of dawn embraced the city, the capitulars readied themselves for the opening of the 9th Provincial Chapter.

The day began with morning prayers, followed by the celebration of the holy mass presided over by the Prior General, Fray Miguel Ángel Hernández, OAR. In his homily, Fray Miguel Ángel emphasized the inherent risk, sacrifice, and occasional rejection that come with proclaiming Christ. He warned against the desire for worldly praise, urging the friars to remain firmly rooted in love for Christ and committed to a countercultural witness. Drawing from the example of Saints Paul and Barnabas, he underscored the importance of accompanying communities with pastoral care and accountability. True peace, he reminded the friars, does not come from the world but from a deep communion with Christ.

At 8:30 a.m., the capitulars assembled in the Chapter Hall, sang the *Veni, creator Spiritus*, and listened to the opening message of the Prior General who exhorted them: "It's not enough to simply recognize our shadows; we must also dare to dream for the Church and the Province what God wants for us and for the world." He continued, "And speaking of dreams, as Prior General, I dream of a Province… that allows itself to be embraced by the joy and tenderness of the Gospel… where all its activity flows from the encounter with the Lord in prayer… united and fraternal, one that lives in communion within itself and with the Order… whose communities are brotherly, where individualism does not exist, where we work as a team and share life together… that is Samaritan and merciful… that is less bureaucratic in its schools and universities… that is on a mission and is missionary… where initial formation in our seminaries is understood as a process, and where accompaniment is systematic…" With these words, he formally declared the 9th Provincial Chapter officially open.

The proceedings then moved to the election of four officials who, with the Prior General as Chapter President, compose the Chapter Council. Those four officials were:

Fray René Paglinawan – First Moderator
Fray Raul Buhay – Second Moderator
Fray Dionisio Selma – Councilor
Fray Jose Ernil Almayo – Chapter Secretary

Appointments were also made:

- Persons in charge of writing the Message of the Chapter: Frays Ian Anthony Espartero, Kenneth Joseph Onda, and Arnel Diaz.
- Persons in charge of the liturgy and music: Frays Anthony Morillo, Gideon Antolin Lagrimas, and Arian Josef Ocheda.
- Persons in charge of replying to the Messages and Greetings: Frays Leander Barrot and Rafael Pecson.
- Persons in charge of the communications (Chapter-related publications): the appointed Technical Working Group.

The afternoon session which started with the approval of the *Ordo capituli* (mechanics of the Chapter) set the stage for the Information-Discussion phase. The first report delivered by the Prior Provincial, Fray Bernard Amparado, and which began in the morning occupied the rest of the afternoon sessions. Discussions dealt with personnel, local communities, ministries and other emerging concerns requiring discernment and response.

As the Chapter progressed, the friars remained committed to listening, discerning, and planning—guided by the Spirit, inspired by the Gospel, and united in their shared mission.

• Homily

Called to Persevere: Love, Risk, and Communion in the Mission of Christ

Fray Miguel Ángel Hernández, OAR, reflecting on the Acts of the Apostles, reminds the capitulars that Christian discipleship comes with real risks. Paul, after being stoned and left supposedly dead, continued his mission undeterred. Proclaiming Christ is not always met with applause but often with rejection, misunderstanding, and persecution. Religious life must not be pursued for admiration or status but for a genuine love of Christ.

Fray Miguel stresses that true Christian witness runs counter to societal values. Drawing on St. Augustine's "Two Cities," he notes the opposition between worldly self-love and Gospel self-denial. If the world applauds us too easily, we must ask whether we're truly serving God or simply seeking popularity.

Paul's perseverance is not recklessness but a response to deep love for Christ. Citing Romans — "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"(Rom. 8:35) — Fray Miguel challenges the friars to examine if they, too, are moved by love, willing to endure trials without retreating.

He emphasizes that evangelization requires accompaniment. Like tending a garden, it involves care, patience, and constant attention. Founding communities is just the beginning; nurturing their growth and fidelity is an on-going duty. This process, though risky, is essential and will be a key theme of the Chapter.

Another crucial lesson is the communal nature of mission. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch to report back, showing accountability and co-responsibility. Religious life today must follow this model — no one works alone or for personal gain; all are sent by and return to the community.

Finally, the Gospel reminds us of Christ's promise: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." (Jn. 14:27). This is not a worldly peace but one born of deep communion with God. Such peace sustains us through storms, as long as we remain united with Christ, like Jesus with the Father.

Fray Miguel ends with a challenge for the capitulars: "Are we truly driven by love for Christ, faithful amid adversity, and responsible stewards of the mission entrusted to us?"

LIST OF MESSAGES RECEIVED FOR THE FOR THE 9TH PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

- Sis. Sonia Ramos
- OAR Province of Candelaria
- Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters
- Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan
- Bro. Edwin T. Ruiz, SAR