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For Immediate Release

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Catholic Men's Religious Orders Celebrate 50 Years of Their Leaders' Conference; Elect New Officers; Condemn Torture

(Burlington, VT). "This milestone of the Golden Anniversary of CMSM is a golden opportunity to reawaken the Church to the treasure in its midst, the many-colored coat of men's religious life... .. to enrich our own awareness of the gifts of one another in the Church's religious life, and to share with the Church and the world the tapestry of grace God's call has created among us," began Abbot Jerome Kodell of Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas in his keynote address for the Jubilee Assembly of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men ([CMSM](#)) held in Burlington, VT, August 2 – 5.

"The theme of the assembly, *A Coat of Many Colors*," said CMSM executive director, Conventual Franciscan, Father Paul Lininger "is based on the biblical saga of Joseph from the Book of Genesis. As the central theme for the 50th Jubilee: *50 Years of Men's Religious Life as a Conference – A Coat of Many Colors*, Joseph's life is a rich symbol of the challenges and sacrifices asked of those who choose to leave all things to follow Christ. Joseph presents a rich reflection of God's presence in the history of salvation. His story speaks of God's invitation to a people and to an individual. It is a metaphor of all human growth in the Spirit through the gift of faith given by God calling forth a new **relationship** where true response rests in our ability to be instruments of **reconciliation**. In selecting this theme, the CMSM Jubilee celebration recognizes the contributions of the past, celebrates the present, and envisions hope in the future fulfillment of the Gospel mandate."

During the assembly, CMSM members listened as the Very Rev. Dominic Izzo, OP, superior of the Eastern province of the Dominican and CMSM President delivered his presidential address, encouraging members to remember their unity of purpose while celebrating their diversity of charism. The real question is, "How is our unity in Christ distinguished in a variety of ways for witness and service? In this conversation, there is no *inferior* or *superior*, only different ways of being Christ to others. These *different ways* do not need our approval. We, as religious, and as a Conference, do not have a corner on living religious life or mission. We do not give the charism but rather work to help leaders enhance the charism already given or to wear without fear the multicolored coat given by the Father. CMSM has always sought to do this and it is a hallmark of its accomplishments."

The more than 140 leaders who attended the Assembly also met in focus groups, held regional meetings, and received a further update from Dr. Monica Applewhite of Praesidium Religious Services on the progress of the CMSM Instruments of Hope and Healing accreditation process for dealing with the abuse of minors.

At the membership meeting of the Conference, CMSM members elected the Very Rev. Thomas Picton, CSsR., provincial superior of the Redemptorists of the Denver Province as President-Elect. Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB, who has been serving as the Chair of CMSM Region 4, was elected as Vice President. Brother Robert Schieler, FSC, superior of the Baltimore province of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, was re-elected as an at-large member of the National Board of Directors. Brother Schieler had been serving as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Conference. In addition, CMSM Members elected three new at-large board members: the Very Rev. Robert Scullin, SJ, superior of the Detroit province of the Society of Jesus; the Very Rev. José de Jesus Ortega Tejada, MSPS., provincial of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit; and Trappist Abbot Francis Michael Stiteler, OCSO., Abbot of Holy Spirit Abbey in Conyers, GA.

During the course of the assembly, CMSM members considered and then unanimously approved a resolution condemning torture, (<http://www.cmsm.org/justice-statements/statement-2006resolution.shtml>) stating that *CMSM condemns torture in all its forms regardless of putative justification, and encourages support and help for victims of torture throughout the world, but especially in areas under the control of the United States Government.* Members noted “the universal condemnation of torture in both International Law and religious documents,” and they resolved:

- *To condemn unequivocally any use of torture by agents of any government for any reason;*
- *To encourage its constituencies to use their resources of education, preaching and advocacy to eliminate use of torture as contrary to both natural law and human dignity, and in fundamental opposition to God’s salvific love for humanity;*
- *To join with others to work in advocacy for the abolition of torture, and to offer help and support to victims of torture.*

CMSM promotes the welfare, community life, ministry and mission of more than 20,000 vowed priests and brothers through service to the leaders of 250 Catholic religious communities of men in the United States.