



# Conference of Major Superiors of Men

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Media Release

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## Religious Men's Leaders' Annual Assembly Focuses on the Year of Mercy and Installs a New President

COLUMBUS, OHIO (August 5, 2016). The annual assembly of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men ([CMSM](#)), whose leaders represent more than 17,000 Catholic religious brothers and priests in the United States, was held August 2–5, 2016, in Columbus, Ohio. At the opening event participants heard the first of four spiritual reflections presented by Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., Bishop of Lexington, Kentucky, who provided daily spiritual reflections on the theme of the assembly, “Consecrated Life – Rich in Mercy.”

In the first of the two keynote addresses at the assembly, the Rev. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, President of the Oblate School of Theology, began a presentation entitled, “*Religious Vows—Exquisitely Calibrated to Incarnate God’s Mercy.*” But he quickly narrowed his theme with the question “*What kind of vision might we have for religious life today in North America?*” and he pondered “from where can we draw HOPE, VISION, AND ENERGY to live our vows today and to have the strength to invite healthy young men to join us and our vision?” His answer: that it is “drawing vision and energy for a vowed life in a time of receding transcendence,” stating that while it is “not an easy time to be a religious,” it is “a good time” because “the vows speak.” And “more than ever, the world needs this prophecy.”

Sr. Donna Markham, President and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, was the second major speaker at the assembly. Her talk was entitled “*Religious Leaders as Witnesses to and Ministers of Mercy*” and she recalled that “many of you have heard me repeat the old adage from organizational behavior that groups will risk no more than their leaders are willing to risk.” And she went to say that “the mandate for any one of us in leadership is that we hold ourselves clear-eyed in Jesus’ words, ‘Go and do likewise’ as we call our communities to tend to those who are broken, poor, bereft or vulnerable.”

Using the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example, Sister Markham emphasized that “three underlying themes coalesce in this parable. These themes serve to infuse our encounters with a mercy that reflects justice: *compassion, inclusion and accompaniment.*”

In his address to the assembly as President of the Conference, the Very Rev. James J. Greenfield, OSFS, reflected on the theme of the Assembly by saying that “our confreres are hungry for those words, insights, visions and dreams that speak of the mercy of God. We bring our confreres into this powerful force: the passionate, unconditional, unreasonable, and excessive love of God. We keep this mystery primary and draw them into it even through our monthly email communications, our letters of assignment, our preaching at professions and funerals, and most of all through our prayer life. But we must be convinced to deliver the message.”

On Tuesday, a pre-assembly workshop was held entitled, “2016 Revised Standards of Accreditation – A Practical Application.” Later, at the membership meeting of the assembly, the members heard a summary of revisions in the Standards that are a part of the *Instruments of Hope and Healing* program and which fulfill the pledge of all the CMSM member institutes to make the protection of children and young people the number one priority of all men religious. At the same meeting, the members learned of the final report of CMSM National Advisory Council and its findings of commendable actions and results by the conference and its member institutes, as well as opportunities for improvement and general recommendations for actions to continue in the efforts to protection children.

During the elections which were held at the membership meeting of the assembly, CMSM members elected one new At-Large member of the National Board: Adam Gregory Gonzales, OCD, Vicar Provincial (1st Councilor) of the Discalced Carmelite Friars, California-Arizona Province.

On the last day of the assembly the members gathered for a session entitled “Animation for Mission: How some of us are reaching out to the periphery.” Through videos highlighting the mission of at last four separate institutes, participants viewed some daring, bold, and radical initiatives rooted in the charisms of the institutes, and then participated in facilitated discussions on how to develop similar new, daring initiatives in their own institutes.

At the a Mass following the conclusion of the membership meeting, the Very Rev. Brian Terry, SA, Minister General of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, was installed as President of the Conference for a two-year term. Prior to his profession as a Friar of the Atonement in 1990 and for ten years after it, he performed various parish ministries at St. Luke’s Parish, Mclean, VA, in the Deaf Community at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, and at Holy Cross and St. Joan of Arc parishes in Toronto, Canada. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1997. In 2003, he went on to be Mater Ecclesia Instructor at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome (Angelicum). This was followed by several posts as instructor in various capacities both at the Angelicum and at the Pontifical North American College in Rome as well. He served as Novice Director for his community from 2005 until 2014 until he was elected as Minister General.