



**Forming a
Coast-to-Coast
Franciscan
Province**

Province of the Assumption of
the Blessed Virgin Mary
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January 7, 2021

Dear Brothers,

The six provincials (MP6) of the US-6 provinces have been meeting via ZOOM since Monday, January 4, 2021, in order to continue our discussions about the formation of a new coast-to-coast province in the United States. Although our attention has been focused on the future, we cannot ignore the demands of the present time.

Today we put aside our agenda to discuss what unfolded in Washington, D.C. during the afternoon hours of January 6, 2021. As your brothers and as your Provincial Ministers, we want to share our thoughts with you and we invite you to share them with others as you see fit.

We began our discussion mindful of our identity as Friars Minor and as citizens of the U.S. We, Franciscan Friars are called to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi. We have been in existence for over 800 years in multiple countries throughout the world. There are currently almost 900 of us living in the United States of America. As friars, we are committed to being instruments of peace and reconciliation for all of our sisters and brothers in the world. As United States citizens, we cherish the democratic values that our nation has tried to live since its foundation.

Our beliefs and our ideals do not blind us to what is experienced on a daily basis in our country. We are aware of the deep divides that have emerged between groups that hold divergent political ideologies, have differing financial status, and have different racial, ethnic, and religious heritages.

The deliberate attack of January 6, 2021 upon the U.S. Capitol building can be traced to all of these divisions. Sadly, this assault was a direct rejection of the democratic values that have held our nation together for over 240 years.

As citizens, we are angered and saddened by the actions of those who promoted and perpetrated this evil. Justice demands accountability for those who have rejected the “peaceful transition

of power” that is called for by the Constitution of the United States of America. The list of violators in this unlawful action is not yet fully known, but there is no doubt that the words and the “tweets” of President Trump were responsible for inciting his supporters to violate the law and engage in violent and riotous behavior.

Responsible government officials must act now in a legal and non-partisan manner to restore the rule of law by holding the guilty accountable and offering them the opportunity to amend their ways.

As friars, we pledge to work with all who promote human dignity, the common good, and peaceful and respectful dialogue. We reject violence as a means to achieve a desired end and want to promote non-violent means to restore justice. We will pray for all our government officials, especially, President-elect Biden, that they will work together to heal the wounds within our country.

“Our wounds” are not only political. Sadly, as a nation, we are in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. This, too, is an urgent issue that faces our governmental leaders. We call upon all people of good will everywhere to unite in prayer and in action that will help to eradicate the pandemic so that people in the United States and throughout the world may once again experience the original goodness and joy that the Lord has called us to know and love.

Fraternally,

Fr. Rev. J. George Fr. James H. Bennett, OFM Fr. Kim Mullen, OFM

Fr. Thomas Nain, O.F.M. Fr. Mark Eschwege Fr. Ronald J. Walters, OFM.