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Capuchin Vocation Update

Province of St. Joseph

Homily for Funeral of Rev. Daniel E. Anholzer, OFM Capuchin St. Joseph Parish (Saginaw, Michigan)—May 17, 2010

Isaiah 49:13-16, 26b; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10; John 14:1-6

Homilist: John Celichowski, OFM Capuchin

Dan Anholzer grew up in a part of Wisconsin's Fox Valley that was very diverse. On one side of the river there were the Little Chute Dutch; and on the other side of the river were the Kimberly Dutch, including the Anholzers. Henry Ford once said that the buyers of his Model T automobile could have any color they wanted...as long as it was black. In Kimberly and Little Chute, you could find an almost infinite variety of people...as long as they were Dutch.

But as any resident of these two towns would tell you, the people in Kimberly and in Little Chute were different. While they shared a common ethnicity, one town was clearly better than the other. Of course, determining which one was better depended on which side of the Washington St. Bridge you were standing when you asked someone that question!

Two groups of people, very similar yet seemingly worlds apart...and separated by a bridge. Growing up in Kimberly, young Daniel Elmer Anholzer was expected not to question that reality. That's just the way it was. But I'm not sure that he ever completely accepted it, because he spent much of the rest of his life building bridges, crossing them, and encouraging others to do the same.

As a student at St. Lawrence Seminary, this young man of Dutch stock and from a small town in Central Wisconsin met an African American classmate from Detroit. Dan and Andy Daniels crossed a bridge that, at the time, seemed as wide as Lake Michigan; but they became friends for life: entering the Capuchin novitiate together, and making their religious profession together.

In fact, it was while they were in Rome on a pilgrimage celebrating the 25th anniversary of their first profession that Andy died very suddenly at the age of 44. It was May 13, 1995. Fifteen years later, on the very anniversary of his brother Andy's death, Dan died very suddenly, too. God, with perhaps a little help from Andy, had prepared a spot for him in the house of many dwelling places...and Dan crossed the bridge that we all must cross one day: from this life to life eternal.

Though Dan held some prominent roles in his life—most notably as Pastor here at St. Joe's for a total of about twenty years and as our Provincial Minister for six, he didn't seek the spotlight. In fact, he preferred to be in the background.

After he made his perpetual vows as a friar and then graduated from St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, Dan did something that was rather unusual in the late 70's. Though he had a Master of Divinity degree, the one required for ordination to the priesthood, Dan decided that God had called him to serve the Province and the Church as a lay friar.

With that intent, he went down to Nicaragua. It was during the time of the revolution, a time when the villages, the church and even the friars were split into different camps. It was a painful and often even a violent time. Yet Dan continued his work of building bridges between people and within communities.



Vocation Update

The people of God in Nicaragua recognized Dan's gifts and it was they that called him to reconsider his earlier decision and to discern that perhaps God had really called him to serve the Church as a priest. Dan listened, and all of us here today are very glad and have been blessed because he did.

Divisions between people pained and even frustrated Dan. He worked hard to bring them together. He knew that, while folks may dwell in different parts of the Father's house, they all needed to learn to live together under the same roof. Here at St. Joe's, he was committed to keeping this Saginaw's "Rainbow Parish," a place where diversity was—and is—a sign of strength. Dan recognized that when we allow the light of Christ to shine through the waters of our common baptism, we are blessed with a beautiful spectrum of people and gifts, but one bow.

Over the past several years, particularly with the campaign and election of President Obama, our nation has become familiar with that phrase, Si, se puede! or "Yes, we can!" For Dan, however, that phrase was much more than a slogan, so much so that he personalized it: Si, yo puedo! "Yes, I can." In 2002, when the General Minister of the Capuchin Order appointed Dan to be our Provincial Minister, he said, Si, yo puedo! "Yes I can." He did so knowing that it meant that he would have to leave his beloved St. Joe's.



When he was asked to serve as President of the North American Pacific Capuchin Conference at a time when it was faced with the delicate task of supporting a common conference novitiate, Dan said, Si, yo puedo. "Yes I can." When that same novitiate threatened to break apart over differences in formation philosophies and provincial cultures, Dan held it together almost by the force of his own will. When others wanted to walk away from the project and say, "It's not worth it, we can't do this," Dan said, Si, se puede! "Yes we can."

When some people invited Dan to abandon his lifelong commitment to the Green Bay Packers and root for the Lions, Bears or Vikings, Dan said....Algunas cosa son imposibles. "Some things are impossible." There were some bridges even Dan was unwilling to cross. But looking at most, he said, "Yes, I/we can."

Five days ago Dan's earthly dwelling, his body, suddenly collapsed. While he tried to take care of himself, as a heart attack survivor he also understood his own vulnerability and mortality. The possibility of death was never too far away.

But our brother Daniel was more interested in life and living than in death. He loved good food; he loved good scotch; but most importantly, he loved people. He trusted that his name was written on the palms of God's hands. He walked by faith and not by sight, and he followed Jesus: the Way, the Truth and the Life. Today we feel grief over his death. May we also be grateful for his life. +

Candidate Rooftop Cookout

Sat. July 3, 2010

St. Clare Friary, Chicago

Arrival: late afternoon

Grill time: around 7 PM

Contact Br. Jerry or Fr. John for reservations
Guest rooms available for travelers

How does one begin to discern a religious vocation?

Contact Fr. John Holly 920-915-4400

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Br. Jerry Johnson 773-475-6206

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or visit www.CapuchinFranciscans.org

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