

JACK'S KEYNOTE TO ABNA JULY 7, 2008 --(Rev 7/18)

1. Good morning Brothers and Sisters. It is an honor for me to speak with you at this the first Province Chapter of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America. Thank you for accepting to be a delegate. If not a delegate thank you for coming in solidarity with the delegates as invited guests. The use of your freedom to attend this Chapter is most encouraging to the entire Congregation.
2. Saturday Last marked the 49 year of my entrance into the Congregation. These years have been marked by teaching, coaching, learning, spiritual direction, and lately since 1999 in leadership positions in the Province and Congregation. Each of you has played a part in my formation as a Religious Brother and I thank you for that.
3. Francis and I have been asked to speak at the beginning of your Chapter to help in inviting you to a conversation with one another. In this first part I will acknowledge some of the current reality of this Province and then place some few thoughts before you about the wider context of the other 4 Provinces and 2 Regions of the Congregation. We will then take a wee break and Francis will follow on with some thoughts about the Chapter in Munnar, India. It is our hope that this brief introduction will set the tone for the conversations to follow during the week of the Chapter here in Cornwall. Here are a few of the current realities facing the Province.

4. One of the current realities we need to acknowledge is the Church's invitation to celebrate the Year of Paul. This year began on 29 June this past week. Paul was a passionate man about his mission and so are we. This dedicated year forms a significant part of the context of our initial conversations about implementing with passion the possibilities created by the chapter experience. What is it we can learn about the implementation of the Chapter from our study of Paul's actions and preaching? Each Province and Region is dealing with this question.
  
5. Another part of the current reality we are experiencing is the recently completed restructuring. After three years of restructuring in this Province there is still a ways to go in getting to know one another, rationalizing resources, attending to community development, situating the Province Center and caring for the elderly. However, you are not alone in this process either. The entire Congregation is dealing with this reality in its local context. The CLT too is discussing how to convene leadership and visit these newly restructured Provinces and will begin discernment for its own location as a response to the Chapter document.
  
6. A very significant dimension of the current reality of this Province is that every person in this room is committed to community and ministry. Your presence here indicates that to me. In this Province there is significant alignment about this vision within the Network. You all

have been faithful and daring disciples of Jesus in the tradition of Edmund. Those in need are never far from your consciousness and practical help.

- a. (Story of meeting the women in Ghana Who had sons in Essex Catholic High School) Here are some examples of your faithfulness: Your work in the field of education especially in schools is exemplary in following the Rice model. Your establishment of new educational endeavors over the past number of years is an obvious fulfillment of the mandate of previous Congregation and Provincial Chapters. Your dedication and professional approach to the work of Vocations and Formation is setting an example for the rest of the Congregation. Early on your work in the field of the Wider Edmund Rice Network took the lead in the Congregation. A vote of thanks is in order for the way in which you have carried out your ministry under the impulse of the charism. You have taken every opportunity to respond to the **possibilities** presented to you for ministry.
  
- b. Your vision of what it is to be brother/sister in the ministries mentioned above is clear and unambiguous. In addition there is great **passion** for this vision. As I listen to your conversation and hear your story I am touched by this passion. No matter the topic schools, the poor, care of the elderly, new missions your passion is evident. When you are engaged you are passionate.

c. You as a group embody “Dare to be Disciple: Passion and Possibility”, the theme of the Chapter.

7. Another reality is the continuing engagement with the consequences of CSA and all that that entails in hurts, anguish, shame, reconciliation and recompense.
8. Acknowledging these few current situations grounds our conversations in a context of reality. I am sure that there are others that I have not mentioned. Perhaps you can turn to one another to share some that have not been mentioned.

A. I NOW TURN TO THE BIGGER PICTURE OF THE CONGREGATION. HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE REALITIES THAT ARE TAKING PLACE THROUGHOUT THE CONGREGATION.

1. Change of Mental Models [making room for the new]
  - a. What is your mental picture of what a brother is today?
  - b. Has your knowledge of the life of Edmund changed the way you picture yourself today?
  - c. How have the last five Congregation Chapters (84.90.96.02 08) changed your picture of yourself as a vowed religious or committed layperson? Has there been any change at all in you or the province as a whole?

2. Theological Worlds
  - a. Within the Church and Congregation today there are several theologies at play (devotional, scholastic/socratic, anthropological/experiential). Sometimes these theologies keep us apart. How would you describe your operative theology?
  - b. Across the Congregation is there a lack of educated theologians? Have you noticed the lack of theological expertise within the body or yourself?
3. Divergent Prayer Sources and Styles
  - a. (Recount the story of Roman Community and the Wednesday ritual of sharing and thanksgiving.)
  - b. Recitation of the Divine Office
  - c. Use of time to prepare prayer based upon the lived experience of the day.
  - d. The presence of quality reflection time in the prayer time of the day. Is this going on in your community or in the Province?
4. Trusteeship Transfers
  - a. Ageing Provinces
  - b. Role of Lay men and women in Church since Vatican II
  - c. The creation of new Public Juridic Persons within the Roman Catholic Church to whom assets can be transferred.
5. Contemplative attitude
  - a. Growing awareness of the place of the contemplative attitude in recognizing the movement of the \holy Spirit among us.

- b. A growing balance between our intellectual gifts and our recognizing the movement of the Spirit. It is accompanied by a willingness to put the movement before our intellectual constructs of reality.
  - c. A growing desire to learn how to do discernment and the acceptance on how much time this takes.
6. Across the Congregation there is definitely a move to minister to people at the margins of society.
  7. The other members of the Edmund Rice Network are continually growing and moving to deeper relationships with the Brothers and one another.
  8. The lemon trees on the roof of the Congregation are but a small effort to make our collective carbon footprint neutral.

THANK YOU FOR YOU KIND ATTENTION. IT IS NOW TIME TO TAKE A WEE BREAK BEFORE FRANCIS TAKES TO LEAD.