

Saleians Combine Two North American Provinces – Father Thomas Dunne Takes Office as Provincial

Fr. Michael Mendl, SDB
New Rochelle, N.Y. -- July 1, 2009

At a solemn Eucharistic celebration in New Rochelle this evening, the Salesians of Don Bosco celebrated the union of their Canadian Province with the Eastern U.S. Province. The combined province, under the patronage of St. Philip the Apostle, will be based in New Rochelle.

At the same Mass in the chapel of Salesian High School, Fr. Thomas A. Dunne was installed as provincial superior of the Eastern United States Province, and Fr. Steven Dumais, as vice provincial.

A barbecue dinner for some 150 guests followed. They included not only Salesian priests and brothers, but also Salesian sisters, Salesian Cooperators, Father Dunne's family, seminarians, and friends and employees of the Salesians. ▶

Thirty Salesian priests and brothers serve the Catholic Church in Canada in seven parishes, one high school, a summer camp, various chaplaincies, missionary support, etc., in the cities of Sherbrooke, Montreal, Etobicoke (a Toronto suburb), Hamilton, Edmonton, and Surrey (a Vancouver suburb).

The Canadian vice province was created in 1988 in hopes of fostering vocations among Canadian young men and greater development of the Salesian work north of the 49th parallel and Great Lakes. That did not happen. The hope of the Salesians in both countries, as well as of their general superiors in Rome, is that the reunion of the jurisdictions will "provide a more effective animation of the charism and the mission of Don Bosco for the young people of Canada."

Fr. Chavez, named Fr. Dunne provincial-elect in January. He succeeds Fr. James Heuser, who will undertake a sabbatical year at the Salesian house of studies in Berkeley, Calif.

Acknowledging the challenge that comes from declining numbers of religious vocations in both the U.S. and Canada, in a newspaper interview Fr. Dunne described the hopes resting on the merger this way: "We're looking at ▶

it more as a stimulus package than a downsizing," he said. "By bringing all of our resources together under one community heading, we might be able to do a better job at what we ought to do."

In his homily at the installation Mass, Fr. Dunne compared the provincial union to a marriage and said that this marriage should produce "greater synergy for a common purpose: extending Don Bosco's mission in our areas of North America. ... The Rector Major has challenged us to direct our greater numbers, resources, lay colleagues, and young people to be more energetic, bold, vigorous, and in the end more effective in bringing Don Bosco's mission to youth most in need."

(The full text of Father Dunne's homily is published on pp. 1-2 of this issue.)

The amalgamation is the outcome of a long process of consultation and discernment in both provinces. Following the recommendation of the provincials and their councils in both countries, the Rector Major and the general council approved the union and issued a canonical decree to that effect on January 24, 2009, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron of the Salesians. †



Photo by Fr. Michael Mendl

Mass of Transition
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Salesian High School Chapel
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New Rochelle
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July 1, 2009

(L-R)

Fr. Steven Dumais

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Fr. Richard Authier

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Fr. Thomas Dunne

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Fr. James Heuser

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Fr. William Keame