

Ave Maria!

To His Eminence, Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, the Board of Directors of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Executive Director of the Shrine, Fr. Paul Check, the Shrine Staff and Volunteers, and to all the Benefactors and Friends of the Shrine,

The Franciscans of the Immaculate have been very blessed to be a part of the Shrine family and its mission since the dedication of the Shrine Church in July of 2008. Our friars – myself included – have seen firsthand the steady growth of activity and the number of pilgrims to the Shrine over the past thirteen years. More priests are needed at the Shrine and this need will only increase, especially in light of the construction of the retreat center in the near future.

Sadly, our Institute is unable to provide a sufficient number of priests who can continue serving at the Shrine, so it has been decided by the major superior of our Institute and his council to have our friars depart from the Shrine this coming August 31st. Our thirteen years at the Shrine were such blessed ones and, we pray, most fruitful ones, a gift from Our Lady and a gift for her! But now, she will have us move on to another mission.

Personally, I feel so very blessed to have served at the Shrine for six years (2010-2016) and so honored (and humbled) to have served as rector (2012-2016), succeeding the Shrine's first rector, Fr. Peter Damian Mary Fehlner (+2018) and succeeded by my confrere, Fr. Elias Mary Mills, assisted by Fr. Joachim and Friar John. I will forever cherish my time at the Shrine, its beautiful setting, the inspiring structures, especially the church, the reverent liturgies and sacred music, the opportunity to be available every day for confession, and to come know and befriend so many wonderful people, in a particular way, His Eminence and the whole Shrine family, and the local bishop of the Diocese of La Crosse, His Excellency, William Callahan, with the local clergy and laity supportive of the Shrine and of the friars. I hope to maintain these friendships and always remain a part of the Shrine family.

Thankfully, the Shrine will have a new religious community to continue the priestly ministry here. I trust that they will be warmly received, and will serve Our Lady in her Shrine most zealously. Please show them your support and keep them in your prayers!

On behalf of all our friars, to each and to all, I say: Thank you! We will certainly miss you all! I pray that I, and any of our friars, will be able to come back to visit you all each year. In the meanwhile, let us stay united in prayer, especially before the Tabernacle, and ever gathered together under Our Lady's mantle, in the crossing of her arms! God bless you all! Ave Maria!

- Fr. Jacinto Mary Chapin, F.I.

U.S. Delegate Superior

July 29, 2021