



Read signs of the time and look for the future

Provincial Assembly 4 - 7 June 2012

This introduction to the Provincial Assembly 2012 is a continuation of my reflection regarding the future of the New England Province which members of the Province discussed during our heritage pilgrimage to St. Louis on October 13, 2011. Let me remind you of the theme: Look forward and make right decisions.

Let me make a theme of this Assembly 2012:

Read the signs of the time and look for the future

In a letter regarding my decision that we will have two sessions of our assembly I wrote a sentence: “Our Province, recognizing **signs of the time**, should make very important decisions regarding its future”.

Let me explain my understanding of the term “signs of the time” in a context of our Province.

In 1904 Vincentian Fathers arrived from Poland to the United States. **It was a sign of the time**. There was a great need to serve immigrants from Poland who at that time were arriving to the States. in great numbers. It was a mission to provide to those people sacraments and serve them in their native language. Later this Polish Mission became Vice Province of Poland.

In 1975 the Vice Province became independent Province and took the name the New England Province. **It was a sign of the time**. At that time there was a great hope that numbers of local vocations to our Province will grow and mission of the Province will expand.

This is year 2012. **Let’s read the signs of the time**.

Frs. Kuzia, Sledziona and Wanat are the youngest American born priests in our Province. We haven’t had local vocation to our Province for many years.

Our Province belongs to (NCV) National Conference of Visitors in the USA. This means we are an American Province. However out of 27 members of our Province 18 are from Poland. In our Province 10 members are below age 60 and all of them are from Poland. I repeat my question from our meeting in St. Louis: Due to lack of local vocations in America, confreres from Poland will be responsible for the leadership of our Province. How can we prepare ourselves for these responsibilities? How can the American Province be governed by foreigners?



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According to our Provincial Plan 2009-2012: “The Province of New England will continue to concentrate its pastoral work among Polish immigrants and the American Polish within the confines of its New England territory as well as in their established Houses beyond the territorial limits of the New England Province”.

On March 8, 2012 the Bishop of Bridgeport Diocese informed us that he will not prolong a contract with the Province and we have to leave the Holy Name Parish in Stamford by July 1, 2012. The diocese has enough priests from Poland who are able to serve in this ethnic parish.

We have asked the Archbishop of Hartford Archdiocese Henry Mansell for an ethnic, Polish parish, according to our Provincial Plan. We are aware that the Archbishop has also enough diocesan priests from Poland who serve in his diocese and he cannot remove them and give a parish to the Vincentians.

An additional **sign of the time** is that the number of Polish emigrants has drastically dropped every year since Poland joined the European Union in 2004. You have also noticed in your parishes that there is no new wave of emigrants from Poland. To the contrary many Poles decide to return to Poland for good.

This is my observation but I know that each member of the assembly would add his **“signs of the time”** which we should be aware making our decision for the future of our Province.

Reading **these signs of the time** how should we continue the mission of our Province? What is a plan for our Province for the future?

I officially open our assembly of 2012.

Our goal during this assembly is to make necessary changes in our Provincial Norms and Policies but most importantly **to read the signs of the time and try to make right decisions for the future of our Province.**

St. Vincent de Paul. Pray for us.

*Rafal Kopystynski CM
Provincial
Manchester, June 5, 2012*