



## Province of St. Barbara

FRANCISCAN FRIARS

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April 2, 2004

Most Rev. Jose Rodriguez Carballo, OFM  
Curia Generalis dei Frati Minori  
Via S. Maria Mediatrice, 25  
Roma, ITALIA 00165

Most Reverend and dear Father General:

A laic friar of our Province, Brother Thomas Thing, OFM, is petitioning for a dispensation from his solemn vows in the Order of Friars Minor. Brother Tom has been associated with the Order since he was fourteen years old and so this decision has been very difficult for him.

For most of his religious life, he has had difficulty living the professed vows. In his early days he had difficulty with the vow of poverty. He overextended his use of credit cards and incurred high debts; he also had a gambling problem. He also had difficulty with the vow of obedience. He was not open to various assignments that were proposed for him and always ended up where he wanted to be rather than where the Province thought he should be.

However, the biggest concern has been with the vow of chastity. His name first surfaced in the sexual abuse of minors scandal that took place at St. Anthony's Seminary High School in Santa Barbara. Although there was no conclusive proof that the allegation was true, Bro. Tom was most resistant in working with therapists the Province uses for psycho-sexual evaluation. Since there was not sufficient evidence to bar him from ministry, he was allowed to continue to his work as chaplain at the University of San Diego. However, there was another incident involving a formation student (over age 18) in San Diego. Bro. Tom admitted to this incident of a sexual nature. Soon after that we got a report from Las Vegas, Nevada, accusing him of sexual misconduct twenty years ago.

The Provincial Administration has confronted him and said that he must work with our independent review board who monitors the friars who have been accused of sexual misconduct. He has refused to cooperate with our program. And because of his refusal, we cannot guarantee the safety of the public and thus are unable to let him minister. This impasse has brought him to the decision to request a dispensation from his solemn vows.

The Provincial Definitorium has been consulted regarding his request and has given me a consultative vote in favor of his seeking the dispensation. On my part as Provincial Minister, my votum is that I, too, support his request. Because

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he is unwilling to participate in our program for offending friars, we cannot allow him to minister. Thus, he really would have no meaningful life within the fraternity. He has made the decision that the only way he will be able to get along in his life is to leave the Order. I believe that he has made the correct decision, and thus I give you a positive votum in favor of the dispensation.

I have included his own request to you as well as his curriculum vitae and a summary of his formation evaluations. I trust that this information will be most helpful in the decision to be made.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Fraternally,

*Melvin A. Jurisich, OFM*  
(Very Rev.) Melvin A. Jurisich, OFM  
Provincial Minister



Enclosures

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