



The Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order
Office of the Provincial Minister
1820 Mt. Elliott Street
Detroit, MI 48207

On behalf of my brother Capuchins, we extend our hearts and hands in sisterhood and brotherhood to those who have shared painful recollections of negative experiences at the St. Labre Schools. As the Provincial Minister of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph, I serve as the elected leader of the Capuchins of the Province of St. Joseph, a Roman Catholic order of priests and brothers who were entrusted with the Catholic Mission at St. Labre in 1926. The Jesuits approached the province of St. Joseph in 1964 to take over their ministry on the Crow reservation, and our entire membership voted to accept the ministry. Numerous Capuchins have served both reservations since. We also minister elsewhere in Montana, Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan.

Having ministered for a number of years in Crow Agency before my election as Provincial Minister, and as a current member of the Board of Directors of St. Labre, I am grateful for the Independent Commission's work to uncover and publish the unbiased truth about what happened in our boarding schools. It was a daunting and challenging undertaking. I was heartened that the Commission found no indications that children who died while in the care of these church-sponsored schools were found to be unacknowledged. We wish to thank the independent commission for taking on this important and difficult work in pursuit of the truth. In 2012, our Province undertook similar steps seeking truth concerning clergy sex abuse, commissioning a comprehensive, independent audit of personnel files, policies and procedures. At its conclusion, the audit results were made public, including a list of friars credibly accused of sexual abuse. We believe that truth is a necessary prerequisite to reconciliation and healing.

It was important that the Commission-sponsored listening sessions allowed the courageous bringing forth of some of the painful experiences with the boarding schools of our indigenous peoples. These sad realities will be, for us Capuchins, motivation to address these and other present-day challenges in our continued ministry on the Northern Cheyenne and Crow reservations. Currently, while we no longer direct the St. Labre Schools, we serve the parishes and schools as pastors, chaplains and religious educators. We have committed to walk with and serve the Catholics and others who come to us. Our hope is that our continued commitment to ministry on the reservations can help facilitate reconciliation, in spite of the daunting obstacles that this difficult history has created.

Sincerely,

Br. Mark Joseph Costello, OFM Cap.
Provincial Minister