News





Dominican Fr. Mark Padrez, left, and De La Salle Christian Br. Larry Schatz (Photos courtesy Conference of Major Superiors of Men)



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August 24, 2017

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The leadership association for U.S. male religious elected new officers at its annual conference held in Scottsdale, Arizona, earlier in this month.

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men, whose members represent about 17,000 religious brothers and priests in the United States, elected:

- Dominican Fr. Mark Padrez as president-elect,
- De La Salle* Christian Br. Larry Schatz as vice president, and
- Josephite Fr. Michael Thompson, as a member at large on the national board.

Padrez, provincial of the Dominican Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, will spend a year learning the duties of the office before being installed as president during the 2018 assembly. The current president is Atonement Fr. Brian Terry.

Padrez grew up in Nogales, Arizona, which according to Capuchin Fr. John Pavlik, the executive director of the conference, gives him an understanding of the U.S.-Mexico border and an awareness of immigration issues, which could be helpful in the position along with Padrez's "typical intellect of a Dominican" and his years of service in California.

Pavlik said that the president is responsible for providing "overall leadership for the conference" and implementing the plans and programs that are developed by the members of the conference.

Schatz, provincial of the De La Salle Christian Brothers of the Midwest Province, will serve a two-year term as vice president.

Thompson, superior general of St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart, or the Josephites, will serve a three-year term on the national board.

Pavlik said the conference tries not to be "redundant" or intervene in religious orders, but instead addresses areas of common concern. For example, they would not "try to teach Dominicans how to pray" but would voice opinions on issues that affect the whole conference, like revisions to the breviary that most orders use to pray together.

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The executive committee, which includes the president, vice president, secretary/treasurer, and an at-large member of the board, is responsible for liaisons with the Vatican and the bishops' conference, and helps the conference act, as Pavlik said, as the "common voice of male religious in the U.S." on issues such as social justice, formation, and ministry. The national office makes them aware of current issues they might need to address.

At this year's national assembly, the conference released a statement, "Gospel Nonviolence: The Way of the Church," in which they resolved to "build up nonviolent practices and a culture of nonviolence" and invited Pope Francis to "offer an encyclical on nonviolence, which would include a shift to a just peace approach for transforming conflict."

**This story has been updated to clarify Schatz's religious order.*

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