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Capuchin Vocation Update

Province of St. Joseph

Commitment: the choice to be someone by William Hugo, Capuchin Vocation Director

Perhaps the most common comment vocation directors hear from young inquirers is that they worry they are too young to make a commitment. Often, they want to have more experiences before making a choice that will limit them. Most of the time, the critical choices for young inquirers pit celibate religious life against a sexually active life; the detachment from material things that is part of religious life against a desire to have every gadget possible and the best of big ticket items like cars; and the modest economic return of a helping profession like religious life against a more lucrative profession that will make one rich.

This process of collecting experiences to help make a choice is normal and appropriate for young adults. When a young person engages in the process with the goal of making a choice, he or she is doing what every young adult is suppose to do at that stage of life.

However, often enough, a large number of young adults experience a difficult time making that ultimate choice. Vocation directors are used to hearing from them, "I want to keep my options open." When this "openness" is prized without end more than making a choice, it can be an indication that a young adult is not moving toward the commitment that is considered the goal of youthful exploration. Often, a young inquirer will think an older person is at a more appropriate age to make a decision.

Sometimes, those older inquirers will testify that they simply weren't ready to make the choice for religious life earlier. But that should not be confused with saying that they weren't testing choices all along. Testing choices is different from avoiding choices. When young adults think they have found what they want to be, they test it. Testing requires a person to move in the direction of that choice while pushing other choices to the side, at least momentarily. Testing the choice is the only way to know whether or not it is for you. So, in my experience, the older inquirers generally have explored one or more choices and found them lacking in some way or other.

Many believe a test that turns them away from a choice is a failure. Frankly, if done thoughtfully, I consider it a *success!* Think of it. If someone thinks he or she wants to do or be something, tries it, and learns that is not for them, they have *succeeded!* The failure would be to risk nothing by *never* testing any choice or to continue down a vocational path that really isn't for them. I have worked with many young men who tried the Capuchin vocation and decided it wasn't for them. Often they were afraid to tell me what they learned, because they thought I would be angry or think they had failed. But I have always thought they succeeded and celebrated their decision to test something else.



Bro. Zoy Garibay's hands at his recent first profession of vows as a Capuchin



The sad pattern in my opinion is when young people are so afraid of making the decision to test a certain direction that they never make a choice. I believe that many young inquirers look at the older inquirers and think, "They took their time and didn't close off options too early." In fact, I have heard quite a few older inquirers remark after their decision to try Capuchin life, "Why did I wait so long?"

In my experience, *fear* is the single biggest reason young people don't identify a vocation goal and test it. Too often, they are afraid of what they will miss. Instead of focusing on what they might be, they become paralyzed by what they might not be. "Will I miss the independence of doing whatever I want whenever I want?" "Will I regret not being rich if I join religious life?" "Will I someday wake up and wish I had chosen a one-on-one relationship?" These are some of the fears young inquirers typically express.

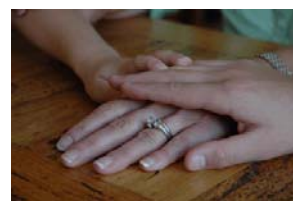
Often, these fears drown out the consideration of other possibilities. "I wonder what the feeling of fulfillment is like when you help others by giving them *everything* you have? "What are the mystics talking about when they describe their relationship with God in such sexual and erotic ways?" "What is it like to have a sense of accomplishment by making something special out of your life?"

Every now and then, I meet someone who has made no major choice in her or his life. Often, they say they don't want to close anything off, so they keep everything open as a possibility in their

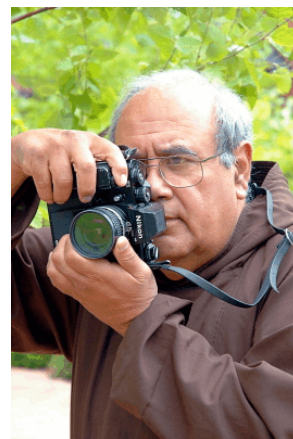
lives. They correctly perceive the nature of commitment: when one makes a choice to be or do something, he or she closes other doors that are precluded by this choice. "I want to be open to everything," many tell me.

But in making a choice to be open to everything, people are actually choosing to be nothing. To be something, you have to choose to be it. And choosing anything means closing off other options. This is the nature of commitment.

Especially when we are young, we choose things tentatively, but then we test them. Once a choice has passed the test of our ongoing lives, most of us are able to make that definitive choice that points us in a specific direction. This is commitment, and it is the appropriate thing to do in adulthood. When people choose to marry a specific person, they choose not to marry others. When they select one profession, they decide not to pursue a different profession going in a totally different direction.



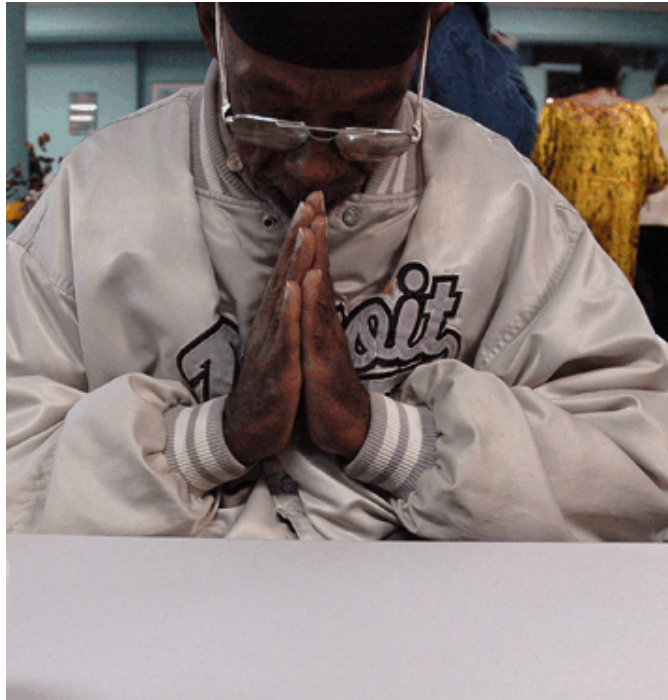
Bro. Vince Reyes often shoots pictures for the Capuchin Vocation Office. This issue of *Vocation Update* uses a collection of his photos entitled "Hands that speak of commitment." Vince also works with a group of professional photographers who sell their pictures to benefit the hungry-poor of Detroit. To see their *Visions of the Sacred*, visit <http://www.visionsacred.org>.



Vocation Update

Young adulthood is the time of testing the most likely choices in our lives. Mature adulthood is choosing to close off a host of other options in hot pursuit of the one thing we really want to be or do.

These types of reflections have caused the Midwest Capuchin Vocation Office to change its approach to dealing with candidates. Until recently, this province's practice has been to strongly encourage young men to wait before considering a vocation to our Capuchin way. But the experience of the past several decades seems to suggest that approach might have discouraged some from truly testing their possible Capuchin vocation to learn if it is for them. In the process, many might have floundered among the seemingly infinite choices available to young



people today. Certainly, most moved in other directions given the absence of seriously testing their possible Capuchin vocation.

Today, the Midwest Capuchins want to give their youngest inquirers the freedom to learn about all the options that are available to them. But we also encourage those who, after a year or so, still believe that the Capuchin way is a real possibility to seriously test it as a postulant. To learn that the Capuchin life is not for you, is not to fail. To gain this knowledge is to succeed, because one important possibility can then be put to the side in favor of others. But if you discover the way for you, then what a blessing to make the choice that helps you become the person you want to be.

On May 27th our 7 Midwest Capuchin postulants joined 19 others from North America, Guam and Australia in Victoria, Kansas to prepare to begin their novitiate on July 29th. Here is the group's official photograph.



37 people attended the first summer candidate BBQ. We'd like to see you at the next one!

Chicago Candidate BBQ
Supper served at 5:30pm on Sunday, July 22nd

Please make your reservation with
Vocation Director Bill Hugo

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