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Capuchin Vocation Update

Province of St. Joseph

The “Closer Affiliation” option in the Capuchin Candidacy Program

by David Hirt, Capuchin Candidate

(David Hirt became a Capuchin candidate last February. Because of the short time before the beginning of the next postulancy, he and his Capuchin vocation directors discerned that he and the order could benefit from him becoming a candidate in Closer Affiliation, which he did at the largely Mexican-American St. Clare of Montefalco Parish, which is staffed by Capuchins in Chicago. David wrote this Vocation Update to help other candidates better understand the Closer Affiliation option. Last Sunday, David moved into St. Clare of Assisi Friary in Chicago which houses the Postulancy Program. This Thursday, he will be officially received as a Capuchin postulant.)



David Hirt with the pastor of St. Clare of Montefalco, Capuchin Michael Sullivan (right), and the associate pastor, Alfredo Gundrum.

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Since entering into Closer Affiliation with the Capuchin Order I’ve had a few brothers roll their eyes and laugh about how we tend to over-name things these days. We have Pre-postulancy, Pre-novitiate, Closer Affiliation, Candidacy... the list goes on, and what does it all mean. I suppose in the end it’s all an easy way to know which group you are talking about at any particular time.

So, what is Closer Affiliation, and what can it do for a candidate? And not only the candidate but for the Capuchin Order?

Affiliation comes from the Latin word *affiliatus* which means “to adopt as a son” and, I would argue, gives a direction to what Closer Affiliation can do for both the candidate and the order. A candidate who is considered worthy of Closer Affiliation is one who has, at first glance, shown himself to be desirous of and fitting for Postulancy. He is someone the order thinks might be worth adopting as a son.

Closer Affiliation, then, involves placing the candidate with the order as closely as possible. In my case it involved my taking up residency with Father Mike Sullivan at Saint Clare of Montefalco Parish in Chicago. The order effectively takes on a responsibility to feed and house the young man and share their lives with him. Another reason to consider Closer Affiliation as an option is to bring the candidate closer if the start of the next postulancy class is some distance away.

This might very well be the candidate's first real experience of beginning a religious life. The candidate regularly takes part in the lived charism of the order. The candidate lives with the friars, prays with friars, eats with the friars. He gets to see how the men he hopes to emulate in his own life live. He is expected to help in whatever ways he can... to begin living that life himself and to see if this is really something he can do. He is expected to take part in vocational events of the Midwest Capuchins and to make himself available as much as possible. For me, the first part was rather traumatic, though a good part of that was being placed in two cultures I was not quite prepared for: religious and Latin American. I realized just how secular I was. It involved a radical rethinking of who I was and how I was living my life. And all for the better.

The benefits for the order are obvious. The Capuchins have already decided that the candidate is worth the effort and now gets to see first hand the way the young man reacts on a regular basis to the pressures of daily living. His character, habits and charism all become not necessarily scrutinized, but obvious. Is he worth adopting as a son in postulancy? Is he worth welcoming as a brother?

It's a lot to think about on both sides, but, in the end, makes for a stronger bond between the order and, God willing, the son-to-be.

Capuchin lingo

What are the various stages of Capuchin formation?

Candidates are inquirers who have gone beyond the initial stages of inquiry by attending an event sponsored by the Capuchins or visiting one of their friaries or ministries. There are three common ways to be a candidate:

- Most candidates are **Non-residential Candidates**. They continue to go to school or work wherever they wish and stay in contact with the Capuchins by attending vocation events, visiting friaries and ministries, and receiving regular e-mails that keep them up-to-date and in contact.
- **Capuchin College Candidates** are within 2 years of high school graduation and attend St. Joseph College Seminary on the campus of Loyola University in Chicago as students sponsored by the Capuchins.
- **Closer Affiliates** are candidates who live in a Capuchin community in order to get an insider's look. Usually, they offer volunteer work in a Capuchin ministry. However, some also have a job or go to school.

Postulants have entered the first official year of Capuchin formation. The Postulancy Program is housed at St. Clare of Assisi Friary in Chicago. Postulants are full-time participants, meaning they cannot go to school or work outside. Instead they have in-house classes about their Capuchin vocation, spend 20 hours a week in ministry, engage in reflection with each other, and totally share in the life of the local Capuchin community.

Novices spend a legally required novitiate year with others from Australia, Guam, Canada, and the United States in suburban Pittsburgh. During this year, novices learn to integrate a typically Capuchin contemplative prayer life with other aspects of a Capuchin life. They continue to study the spiritual life and the history of religious life, and other topics important to Capuchin life.

Novitiate ends with the profession of temporary vows for one year, thus beginning the period of **postnovitiate**. Capuchins in temporary profession generally go back to school to finish a bachelors degree or to begin a masters degree, including seminary studies for priesthood. This period of temporary profession lasts 3-6 years and concludes with perpetual profession of vows for life.

To read more about the different levels of Capuchin formation, visit:

http://www.capuchinfranciscans.org/sub_capuchinformation.html

Vocation Update

(David is also a published poet. He wrote this short poem to describe his personal experience of Closer Affiliation.)

Cough

And I must hack/ slash/ scour/ strip
the must/ dust/ hair
and purge my lungs
in pain and deep
to breath
again
must launder/ wash/ lave/ melt and burn
to feel that I
could fit in here
on hallowed
ground
mid foreign tongues/ skins/ hair/ songs/
hands
and find myself
not exiled/ pained
but home
again

By the end of August, three other Capuchin candidates will begin their own experience in Closer Affiliation. Kyle Birkenmeier, a recent graduate of St. Lawrence Seminary, will experience Closer Affiliation at St. Benedict the Moor Friary in Milwaukee while attending Milwaukee School of Engineering. He will be involved in that Capuchin community's Loaves and Fishes Community Meal for Milwaukee's poor.

Jesse Hofseth is leaving his job in Washington State to enter into Closer Affiliation at St. Lawrence Seminary and Friary in Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin. Jesse will be a full-time staff person in the seminary program.

Parker Tiffany, from Traverse City, Michigan, most recently arranged for Closer Affiliation. He will follow in David Hirt's footsteps at St. Clare of Montefalco Parish in Chicago.

PLEASE PRAY FOR our new postulants who will be received as postulants at 5:30 pm on August 23rd in Chicago:

Julio Gallegos
David Hirt
Suedi Murekezi
Eric Renaud

Call Bill Hugo to attend:
313-595-2182

williamhugo1253@yahoo.com



DON'T FORGET TO ATTEND the last Chicago summer BBQ: Sunday, September 2nd. Friars from Milwaukee & Chicago areas are invited to close out summer with us.

Please attend:

Contact Fr. John Holly to attend:

920-915-4400 jholly1953@yahoo.com



Kyle Birkenmeier



Jesse Hofseth



Parker Tiffany