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Capuchin Vocation Update Province of St. Joseph

The Cross, Francis, and the Sorrowful Mother By Capuchin Arlen Harris

Every September finds three liturgical feast days that are relevant to Franciscans. The Triumph of the Cross (Sept. 14), Our Lady of Sorrows (Sept. 15) and the Stigmata of St. Francis (Sept. 17). In all three feasts, the Cross is somehow prominently featured. What significance does the Cross have for Franciscans today?

Death by crucifixion was more than horrific and violent. It was also an instrument of shame, a manner of execution reserved for the worse kind of criminals. Paradoxically, the Cross of Jesus brings all who believe in Him to new life and to a dignity that is at once restored and equal before the Father. This resonates with Franciscans who recognize that we are one of many brothers and sisters created and redeemed by God. This newness of life has personal and communal ramifications. Many in our local neighborhoods and around the world are crucified by various social, political, economic, religious structures.

Taking our Sorrowful Mother Mary as our example, we Capuchin Franciscans seek out ways to remain in solidarity with those suffering in our world today. Our hope is that the more we suffer with Christ present in the world so too do we, like Francis, come to signify the Cross on our bodies and in our life. In fact this forms part of our understanding of our religious habit, which is in the form of a Cross. Not only does it represent the simplicity in clothing that Francis wore in solidarity with people who were poor in his day, but it also defines how we are to relate to God and others.



Arlen Harris is a New York/New England Capuchin who was ordained a transitional deacon last Saturday.



This detail of Margarito d'Arezzo's *St. Francis with the Crucified* dates to the 1300's. It depicts Francis as sharing in the wounds of Christ.



Bartolomé Murillo painted his *Sorrowful Mother* in 1660 to help viewers feel their prayers were being heard.



In 1937, Pablo Picasso used Murillo's work to create his own *Weeping Woman* as a war protest.

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To attend the Detroit
Ministry Weekend for
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