



29 Jan 2008, #150

capuchinfranciscans.org

1-773-475-6206

## Capuchin Vocation Update Province of St. Joseph

### A second career Capuchin vocation

by Mark Carrico, Capuchin

*(Many inquirers into Capuchin life and ministry are in their 30s and 40s, having enjoyed successful careers in a great variety of professions. Capuchin Mark Carrico entered the Capuchins after a career as a traveling entertainer and then working for a large Catholic publisher. Today, he is director of the Capuchin House of Peace in Milwaukee.)*

On a sweltering hot night in a southern Missouri barroom it was going on midnight when a lean fellow came in wearing work boots, jeans and a dirty t-shirt. He walked right over to the bar where he lifted up a lady, slung her over his shoulder and walked out with her kicking and screaming the whole way. I saw the whole thing from the bandstand and just kept singing. That was my job. Of course, that was before I was a Capuchin.

When I graduated high school I went right into my passion at the time: playing country music. The freedom of being on the road was great. I got to meet a lot of people and traveled year-round. Throughout my years in entertainment I played everything from cowboy bars in Montana to dives in southern Missouri to showrooms in Las Vegas. I worked with some country music stars of the time, did some recording and TV, and even got fired from a gig or two where my music was too country, or too loud, or too whatever. For the most part, though, I did OK. It was a nomadic existence that was never dull.



**\* MARK CARRICO \***  
Bro. Mark during his first career

But after a few years of it I started missing home and everything that was happening in my family. I missed my sister's wedding because I was playing in Nebraska that week. My niece was six months old before I got the chance to get home and meet her. Christmases consisted of a phone call to Mom and Dad and watching TV in a motel room. Being a stranger everywhere I went, I began to grow old and lonely. So by and by I moved back to my small hometown, got a job, bought a house and quit the music business.

From the time I had left home to play music I had never cast a shadow on a church step except for an occasional Easter or Christmas. But being back home and working and reconnecting with friends with whom I had grown up meant sharing a lot of our lives together. One thing they shared that I didn't was church. We worked together, recreated together, and socialized together all the time. But when it came to Sunday Mass I wasn't there with them. I don't know if my friends missed me at church, but I didn't like the feeling of being left out.

# Vocation Update



Mark at the House of Peace today

I like to read and started reading about our faith and our church. Out of the curiosity that had been piqued by what I was reading I started attending Mass. It was a whole different experience as an adult than it had been as a child who was “forced” to go. Over time I was welcomed back to the church by the pastor, became a daily communicant and active in my parish. I liked the fact that my friends and I worked together, played together, and now worshiped together. It made sense and made me feel whole. It felt right.

Too, I found that I felt thoroughly alive when I was involved in parish activities. I looked forward to that part of my life and I resented and rued the time I had to spend at my ‘day job.’ It paid very well, but it gave me no life. Recognizing this, I began to wonder about priesthood and religious life. I couldn’t imagine that God would be asking that of me. Priests and religious had always been like saints and heroes in my mind! I knew I wasn’t good enough to be one of them.

It is a fact that if you are a single young man who goes to Mass, someone will eventually suggest to you that you should be a priest. Once they tell you that, they then tell others what they said to you. Others will mull it over and then they, too, will make the same suggestion to you. It just does happen that way, and it happened that way to me. Of course, it was happening at the same time that I was pondering such a vocation. I started writing and talking to a variety of vocation directors about religious life.

When I entered the Capuchins I was what was then called a late vocation; I was in my 30s. I was nervous and afraid, but made a conscious leap of faith based on a conviction that God was calling me to do

something with my life different than what I had been doing. I wasn’t 100% sure, of course, that God was calling me to be a Capuchin, but I was 100% sure that I needed to start the search for whatever it was to which God was calling me.

But why the Capuchins instead of another Order? I had a hometown familiarity with them. They used to have a novitiate there and still had a pastorate at one of the two Catholic churches in town. But more than that was the feeling of relaxed fraternity whenever I was with them. I remember meeting the Provincial Minister of the time and being impressed with how he was just ‘one of the guys’ instead of a figure who instilled fear and deference. I liked the way I experienced the brothers praying together and I found the Franciscan charism of working with the poor to be spiritually satisfying and challenging. Also, instead of being an Order that was specifically focused on education, health care, etc. as the ministry of the Order, the Capuchins asked that you bring your gifts with you and use them in a ministry to which you felt called.

I started the journey to becoming a Capuchin at a later age than most. There is nothing that I ‘gave up’ that has not been replaced tenfold and more. I don’t mean to imply that every day as a Capuchin has been easy; many have been very hard. But there has never been a day, a time, or even a moment that I have regretted my decision to join this band of brothers. I marvel every day at how God has blessed me beyond measure in making me a Capuchin, and I am still as much in awe of the Capuchin brothers and priests as I used to be; they are still my heroes, still my saints. How I was able to sneak in through the back door and sit at table with them I’ll never know. But I thank God for the privilege. There’s nowhere else I’d rather be.

Meet Bro. Mark Carrico during the  
Wisconsin Capuchin Ministries Weekend  
15-17 February 2008.

Learn about Capuchin ministries in Milwaukee and  
at St. Lawrence Seminary.

Reservation required. Contact:

Fr. John Holly

920-915-4400 [Jholly1953@yahoo.com](mailto:Jholly1953@yahoo.com)

The next *Vocation Update* will appear Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>.