



8 April 2008, #158

Capuchin Vocation Update Province of St. Joseph

Discovering My Mission by Joseph Lindzius, Capuchin Novice

(Joe Lindzius continues our series in which the newest members of the Midwest Capuchins and those aspiring to join them describe what they seek in Capuchin religious life.)

I have had the pleasure of speaking with many of my older brothers in the Midwest Capuchins about why they joined the Capuchin Franciscan Order. A substantial number reply, "I wanted to be a missionary." As I listened to their many stories, mostly from the missions of Central America, it occurred to me that these stories could be the plot of the next major motion picture! The tales were about boating and trekking through hazardous jungles, meeting the indigenous people, building churches, and hiding from rebel gunfire. One friar even spoke about falling in love.

Also, having celebrated the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Capuchin Order in America at Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin this past year, I have heard the story of two Swiss diocesan "missionary" priests, Bonaventure Frey and Francis Haas. Our Capuchin presence in the United States is a direct result of these zealous men who burned with a missionary spirit to implant an Order to which they themselves did not even belong when they arrived. Going back even further, Francis of Assisi felt an indescribable joy within his heart upon hearing the Gospel proclaimed on the feast of an apostle. That passage told the story of Jesus sending the disciples out to preach but to carry nothing with them. "This is what I want to do with all my strength," Francis responded (L3C VII, 25).



Midwest Capuchin Wally Kasuboski has spent a lifetime as a missionary in Wacuco, Panama. Missionaries like Wally inspired Joe Lindzius to discover his own mission.

One of my desires has been to follow in the footsteps of these Christs-in-the-world and become a missionary. Before entering the Capuchins I traveled to El Salvador and Guatemala (See *Vocation Update* June 26, 2006). After my experiences viewing the obvious material poverty of the people and still seeing an incredible faith, I felt even more strongly about ministering to the poorest of the poor in the world. I continue to feel the same way today.



Panamanian Felix Herrera with Midwest Capuchins Jozef Timmers and Larry Webber who work as missionaries in Tocumen, Panama.

capuchinfranciscans.org
1-773-475-6206

Vocation Update

However, I have come to a new realization since joining the Capuchins; I am a “missionary” in my own country. The jungle of Chicago or other major cities can be quite overwhelming at times and has its own dangers—walking in the “wrong” neighborhoods at the “wrong” times comes to mind. A local paper sadly reports a murder, rape, or an assault almost daily. Gunfire spreads across the streets in areas of gang warfare. Homeless people are ignored and passed by on the streets as if they are not there. To me, something has gone terribly wrong in America—the land of plenty, freedom, and where dreams supposedly come true. Violence, greed, rampant materialism, excessive individualism, and self-centeredness are all players in this “culture of death,” as the late Pope John Paul II declared.

The number of practicing Catholics has dwindled in the United States. The Church is increasingly bringing more priests from other countries to take parishes where priests are in short supply. Many Catholics are falling away from the institutional Church, disillusioned by copious issues. For many, God has taken the last place in their lives because of busyness. Some see God as not needed anymore in their lives. Others are seeking and thirsting for a spiritual life, but find a lack of enthusiasm in their local parish.

The Gospel life to which all Christians are called is countercultural. Religious life prophetically shows that there is another way to live in this temporal world—in loving chaste relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. I hear the call of a missionary to go outside of myself and to give up my comfortableness and normal surroundings—*my everything*.

I now can see why Jesus wanted the disciples to take no possessions with them when they preached; he wanted nothing to get in the way of forming relationships. Christ had no problem hanging out with the despised people of his day, i.e. Samaritans, tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers—the sinners of



David Zywiec, Capuchin auxiliary bishop of Bluefields, Nicaragua is a missionary from the Midwest Capuchins.

society. For me he spoke about leaving behind everything, even judgments about people—not just entering a material poverty but poverty of spirit. That means I am supposed to engage people by opening my arms wide to everyone and embracing them—to see them as children of God by giving them the dignity and respect they deserve. This includes those I would not normally approach.

The Midwest Capuchins’ motto, “Transforming the World through Reverence,” has challenged me to see Christ in the normal everyday situations of life, especially in the people I meet, giving them the reverence they deserve. Paraphrasing St. Francis of Assisi, “Preach the Gospel, use words if necessary.”

I still struggle at times to live this challenging calling in my life. As I have learned from other friars, this journey of conformity to Christ is a lifelong process. My prayer strengthens me in this way of life. For example, receiving Eucharist daily plays an important role in my life—a constant reminder to become what I receive. Also the support I receive from my brothers gives me strength. Meeting so many different people energizes me because I learn just as much from the people to whom I minister as, hopefully, they learn from me. Through all this I find an *incredible* joy living Capuchin life.



Joe Lindzius hopes to profess his first vows as a Capuchin Aug. 2nd.