



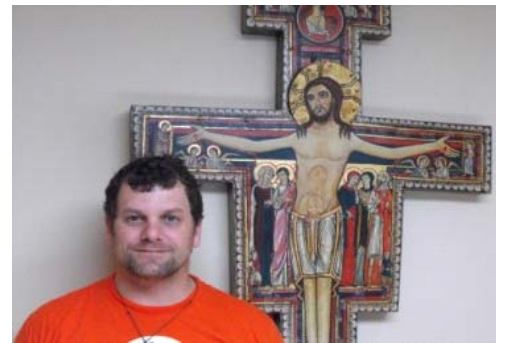
25 January 2010, #223

Capuchin Postulant Reflects upon Candidacy

by Craig McWade

(Born in Montreal, Craig moved to Winnipeg where he attended both junior and senior high school. During this time he also joined the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corp. As a young adult he worked in reforestation, in the hospitality industry, as a ski patrolman, with Parks Canada, and then with Statistics Canada. As a parishioner at St. Mary's Cathedral in Winnipeg, he was asked to be a sponsor and eventually a catechist in their R.C.I.A. program. He developed great friendships with both Franciscan and Jesuit priests. Later, he attended the Eucharistic Congress and was deeply moved when Pope Benedict XVI, during his address, challenged young men not to fear the priesthood and religious life. Craig is a member of the Canadian Capuchin Province of Mary, Mother of the Good Shepherd who collaborates with the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph for the year of Postulancy. He currently lives at St. Conrad Friary in Milwaukee and works at St. Ben's Meal Program.)

I am no saint, of that you may be sure. Perhaps, and only perhaps, I am saintly when I follow the Lord. I follow the example of Saint Francis of Assisi in his imitation of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Why not simply imitate Jesus Christ myself, one might ask, and be done with the formal process of religious life, encumbered by the rule of St. Francis, some madman from the 13th century? Why follow the rites of the church and the rule of a man who renounced all of his worldly influence and all of his goods to proclaim his way of life in minority? Indeed, why give up any advantage voluntarily, is this some sort of race to the least, in order that he who suffers most wins the prize of Heaven?



In fact I have found that there is a greater freedom living what we call "minority". To me it means being free to become fully human, unrestricted by the often competing claims of contemporary life. I am not concerned as to what car I drive, or which beer I might choose!

I had been very much like Saint Francis of Assisi. Prior to his conversion that is. A life of relative privilege led me through my youth along a path that suffered no lack. Amplitude was my channel; the country club, equestrian pursuits, sailing camp, nutritious and tasty food, a small library of my own books. I lived an upper class existence that came to me only through the arduous efforts of my father's impeccable work ethic, unaware from whence any of it came, and I suppose oblivious to the actual cost to my family this life exacted.

This pattern was of course indicative of some deeper difficulties, and indeed I drifted in despondency in an early adulthood that was marked by a dependency upon alcohol. This culminated with insolvency, for I was unable to commit reliably to any responsibilities, and therefore I drifted toward poverty, unaware of the looming crisis my life faced.

I was reflecting over the Christmas season on my vocation. I thought emphatically that it does not so much take a saint to enter religious life, rather it takes someone honest enough to realize their own frailty but endowed with a courage that seeks to integrate toward a deeper wholeness. Conversion is indeed the occupation hazard of prayer.



Capuchin Vocation Director John Holly with current postulant Stephen Greco. St. Conrad Friary is in the background.

Vocation Update

Capuchin Franciscan life is full of challenge. This has been the best opportunity to grow that I have ever encountered, though there is a real integration called for here. One important area of integration is that of interpersonal relationships. Our life in community is enriched by the variety of personalities that we are, yet this variety calls me to grow my patience, my sensitivity, and my humility. While there is a stable environment regarding life in community with its schedule of the liturgical day, classes, ministry, and recreation there is the pervasive sense that life is changing irrevocably.

Diminished are the wants and desires of my former station in life as a film technician, while greatly increased are the graces of a life lived in a community of faith. In a friary you may learn more deeply of the primacy of God. This is learned in the company of your brothers, most especially the young men in postulancy with you. I am blessed in a very real way with the company of fine young men, persons who have made a commitment to discern honestly a life consecrated to the Lord, willing to undertake such a vocation. They inspire me by their earnest love of God, by their humour they keep me grounded. They challenge me to reconsider my own biases when those biases are exposed. Once aware, why despair?

Certainly I am no saint, and that is fine. For in my humble efforts to provide for the immediate needs of our guests at St. Benedict's Meal Program, to being present in class learning of my faith and the life of our founder St. Francis of Assisi, to prayer, and to life in community, I see I am beloved by God. I used to hold this as an intellectual premise but now I have integrated this belief, so that it is in the beating of my heart. So loved, I am called to love in return. The Capuchin Franciscans offer me a place to live love. I leave you with a poem I wrote during my time as a candidate during a week that I visited the Capuchins in Toronto. The Lord bless you and keep you.

A Vocation Discernment

I found St. Francis of Assisi while I slept and dreamt,
it follows that I was not searching for him necessarily,
though there he was, smiling and strange while wearing
my clothes and taking loan of my face.

He was joking with a pretty young woman,
a who-what-where-when-why riddle he made of it,
then hand in hand with this innocent one
he walked with her outside.

He left her safely on *terra firma* and then took to the air,
for as pedestrian a thing is this walking,
without effort he took wing
and flew above the small town.

When the flight met with its first turbulence,
he flew higher still
toward the infinite excess of the sky,
I had concern for the safety of him.

Then he taught me a trick I hope I shall not soon forget,
when the stress and the strain of the exposure
became a fear, an unvoiced regret, then I learned
that letting go, letting God,
is the way to all gain.

Craig McWade



Reception ceremony for the men entering postulancy last August. The ceremony was held at St. Martin De Porres Parish next door to St. Conrad Friary.

Upcoming Vocation Weekends

Feb. 26-28 Milwaukee Ministry and Discernment Weekend

March 12-14 Pre-Postulancy Information Weekend, Milwaukee, WI

April 1-4 Triduum Retreat
St. Lawrence Friary and Seminary
Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin

Reservations are required.
New inquirers are welcome!
Contact Fr. John Holly 920-915-4400
jholly1953@yahoo.com or
Br. Jerry Johnson 773-475-6206
vocation@capuchinfranciscans.org
or visit www.CapuchinFranciscans.org
and click on <How to Begin>