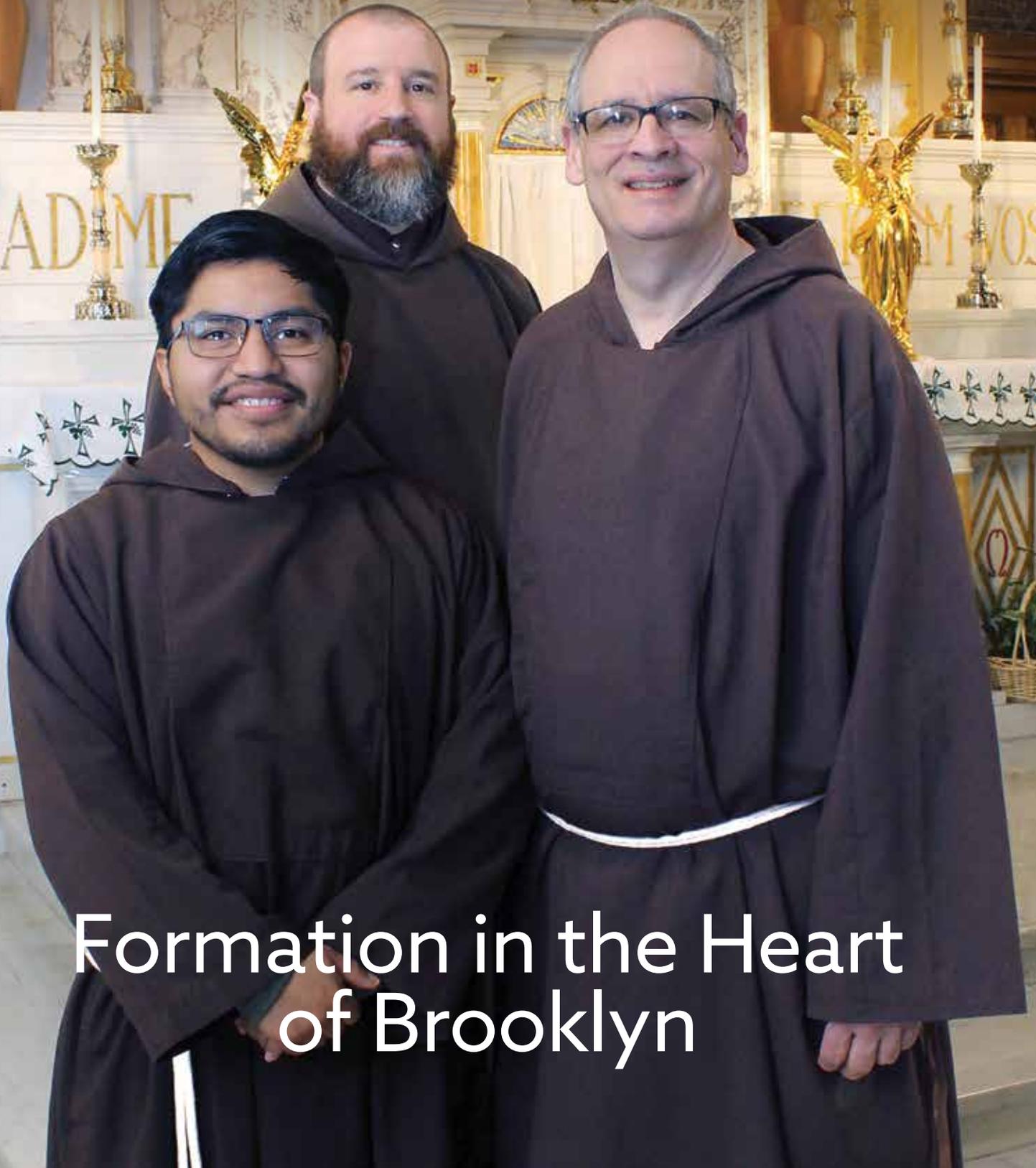


the Capuchin Journey

Magazine of the Province of St. Mary of the Capuchin Order



Formation in the Heart of Brooklyn

From the Provincial Minister



Pace and all good things to you, your loved ones and your friends! Ashes. Fasting. Sacrifice. Alms-giving. Prayer. Humility. Penance. Confession. Abstaining. Silence. I suspect for many of us, these are words we often associate with Lent. These are words that may describe our past yearly experiences of Lent, especially for those of us who were students in Catholic schools.

While these disciplines certainly resonate with the penitential spirit of Lent, they are not the only lenses through which we might view and participate in this holy season.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, with the proclamation from St. Matthew's Gospel (6:1-6; 16-18) and the imposition of ashes on our foreheads, we are invited to make this annual Lenten journey with the Church throughout the world. Of course, we are not alone. It is not a new journey for us. But because we've celebrated the season of Lent before, there can be the temptation to approach this special time somewhat half-heartedly. A "been there, done that" attitude doesn't really help to set the stage for that interior conversion we're invited to during this penitential season. Remember that it is the interior attitude of Ash Wednesday, rather than the exterior mark with ashes, that is most important. And we must remember that Lent is not a one-day event.

And so I invite you to enter into the spirit of Lent with renewed enthusiasm, with great expectation, and with joy. Yes, joy! Lent is a time for us to prepare ourselves joyfully for the hope and new life which Easter and resurrection bring us. I encourage you to invite the Lord into your heart once again—even more completely this year than last year; even more completely today than yesterday. Allow the Lord to do

great things in you and for you. Expect great joy in your spiritual life when you allow the Lord the space to make his dwelling within you.

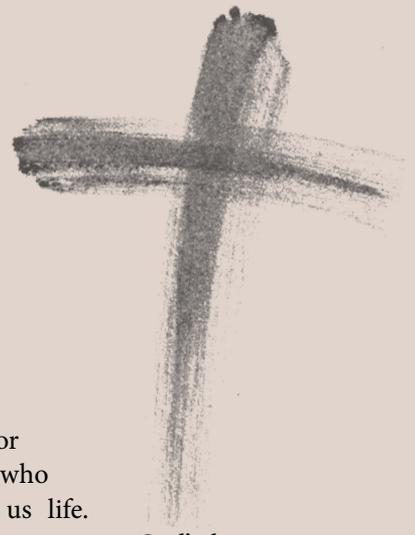
Lent is a great opportunity for our ongoing conversion, which is a life-long journey. It is a time for turning once again to God who is love, to God who gives us life.

Ongoing conversion is our response to God's love, not an attempt to make God love us. The Scriptures teach us that God already loves us; He loved us first! Therefore, Lent can be for us a joyful response to God's unconditional, overflowing love for us.

In addition to the words I listed above that we may often associate with Lent, please consider adding these additional words as well for your prayer and reflection during this holy season: journey, healing, hospitality, compassion, faithfulness, generosity, courage. Not only do these words identify different aspects of the Lenten season, but they also remind me of the ministerial service that our friars offer each and every day. And that makes me so grateful for the friendship, prayers, good example, and financial support you offer to the friars in the Province of St. Mary. May God bless you in abundance for your many acts of kindness to us. May the hope and new life promised us by the celebration of Easter be yours in abundance!

Fr. Robert J. Abbatiello, OFM Cap.

Fr. Robert Abbatiello, OFM Cap., Provincial Minister



Capuchin Charisms

FRATERNITY calls the friars to promote genuine relationships among all people and nations so that the world may live as a single family under the gaze of its Creator.

MINORITY enables them to walk with the people they serve and be accepted as one of their own.

CONTEMPLATION requires they give priority to a life of prayer, especially contemplative prayer, to listen to God's guidance in their mission.

MINISTRY promotes the apostolic dimension of Capuchin life in proclaiming the Gospel and assuaging the hunger, despair, and loneliness of those among whom Christ would have walked.

JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION are uniquely Capuchin because an essential part of the mission of St. Francis was to strive for all of God's creation to live in peace and harmony.

Province Mission

The needs of the poor and the demands of justice shape our every ministerial endeavor. We attempt to promote equality for all people within our fraternity, in the churches dedicated to the gospel of Christ, and in the larger world. Capuchin friars minister in a wide variety of settings. Service to people of a variety of cultures in North America and around the globe allow us to witness God at work in countless ways.

Here in the Northeast United States, the Province of St. Mary serves through any number of institutions dedicated to the service of real human needs and the proclamation of God's love. Urban, suburban, and rural; poor, blue collar, and middle class; Latino, Asian, and English-speaking—the friars can be found living amid all these diverse circumstances.



CAPUCHIN FRANCISCANS
PROVINCE OF ST. MARY

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Cover: Br. Yovani Salas, Br. Shawn Natola, and Br. Miguel Ramirez in the sanctuary of St. Michael Church in Brooklyn.

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The Capuchin Journey is our way of letting you know how the Province of St. Mary fulfills its mission. You, as part of our community, share this vision of service to those in need. Through this publication, we want you to see how we use the resources you so generously provide to us. We hope the contents of *The Capuchin Journey* will convey a sense of the work we do and how valuable your contributions are to this work.

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Around the Province



Providing Relief in Wake of L.A. Wildfires

The Province came to the aid of our fellow Capuchin friars serving in Los Angeles after the city and county were devastated by the wildfires that broke out in January.

We held a Mardi Gras-themed dinner with live jazz music on Feb. 28 at Dunwoodie Golf Course in Yonkers, N.Y. Over 100 people gathered for an evening of Cajun cuisine, music, and games of chance in the spirit of carnival. The dinner grossed \$70,532.80.

Net proceeds from the Mardi Gras dinner went to the Capuchin friars of the Province of Our Lady of Angels, who serve western America. The friars have a presence in several California cities. When the wildfires broke out, the brothers who reside at St. Francis High School in La Cañada-Flintridge were temporarily evacuated and stayed at the Pasadena Convention Center.

In spite of their displacement, the friars came to the assistance of their fellow neighbors. The Capuchin Family Kitchen, a food truck that feeds the homeless of Los Angeles, was serving hot meals outside the evacuation center in Pasadena. On Jan. 8, the truck served more than 200 people in just a couple of hours. In the days that followed, the friars continued to feed displaced families and first responders. Then, with the help of World Central Kitchen, they set up a food distribution site at St. Francis High School. The friars also sent supplies like personal protection equipment,



Thank You to Our Mardi Gras Sponsors

Letter Concepts	\$5,250
Knights of Columbus	\$5,000
Paul L. Martin Charitable Trust	\$5,000
PKF O'Connor Davies	\$2,000
Whalen & Ball	\$1,000
Belfor	\$500

coveralls, booties, respirators, goggles, and air purifiers to people returning to their homes to survey the damage.

“In a country that’s so divided and so polarized, when something like this happens, you can see people of different faiths, different walks of life, different political backgrounds, all working together to help people out,” said Fr. Christopher Iwancio, who runs Capuchin Family Kitchen.

The Province has donated tens of thousands of dollars to our Capuchin brothers in California who are providing relief to survivors of the Los Angeles wildfires.



Br. Sal Patricola, 91, Devoted His Third Act to Religious Life

His was a Capuchin journey like few others. **Br. Salvatore Patricola**, who died at the age 91 on Feb. 3, was a father and grandfather before becoming a friar late in life.

Our brother was born in New York City on Aug. 30, 1933. He dreamed of being a Capuchin from an early age, attending Glencliff, our high school seminary in Garrison, N.Y. He entered the novitiate on Aug. 31, 1952, one day after his 19th birthday. As a clerical candidate he completed his philosophical studies at St. Anthony Friary, Hudson, N.H., in June 1957, but he left the Order that month without making his perpetual profession of vows.

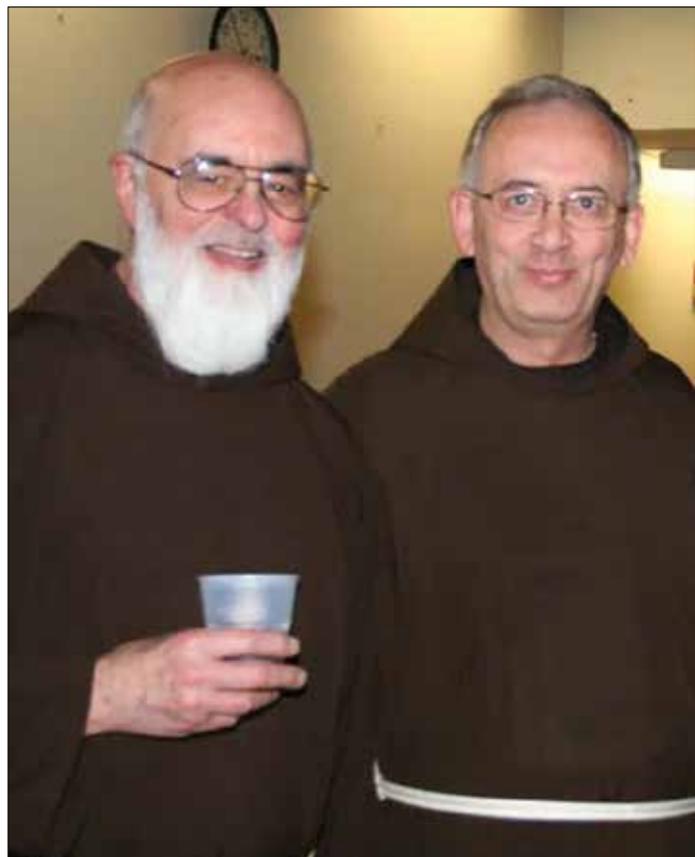
He became a teacher in the Archdiocese of New York, serving at Rice High School in Manhattan and then Cardinal Farley Military Academy in Rhinecliff, N.Y., among other places, until 1970. For the next 20 years he was a guidance counselor at M. Clifford Miller Middle School in Kingston, N.Y., then Millbrook High School, Millbrook, N.Y. Meanwhile, he earned master's degrees in history and guidance counseling from Fordham University, New York City.

After leaving the Capuchins, he courted Marie G. Viola, who was born in 1938 in Benevento, Italy, and migrated to the Bronx, N.Y., at age 9. They married on July 15, 1961, and had three sons and one daughter, settling eventually in Stanfordville, N.Y.

Marie died on June 27, 1999, which prompted Sal, at age 66, to petition the Province to rejoin the Order. By now he had been a permanent deacon for over 21 years, having been ordained in the Archdiocese of New York on Feb. 11, 1978. He had also been a hospice chaplain for 10 years in Dutchess and Ulster counties. He was readmitted on May 6, 2000.

After an abbreviated postulancy at St. Michael Friary in Brooklyn, N.Y., Brother Sal was invested as a novice on Aug. 19, 2000, and resided for one year at St. Felix Friary, Mt. Calvary, Wis. After his first vows on Aug. 5, 2001, he was sent to the Church of St. John the Baptist in New York City. He made final vows on Sept. 29, 2004. Except for five years at St. Joseph Friary in New Paltz, N.Y., from 2010 to 2015, Brother Sal would spend the next two decades in parochial ministry at St. John. Instantly recognizable with his great white beard and stately voice, he was a well-known, well-loved doorkeeper, manager of the parish gift shop, preacher, spiritual director, spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscans, food pantry volunteer, director of the Blessed Solanus Guild, director of the Singles for Christ young adult group, and successful vocation contact (bringing several men into the Capuchin Order).

"Like his Capuchin brother Solanus Casey, Brother Sal was a greeter, a listener, a confidant," said Barbara Brandes, a



Top: Brother Sal (left) with the late Br. Roger Deguire. Above: Brother Sal (back row, second from left) and the novitiate class of 1952.

longtime parishioner at the Parish of Holy Cross-St. John the Baptist. "Whether it be in the rear of the church after Mass, in the pews during daytime visits, in the gift shop, standing on the steps of St. John's to acknowledge passers-by, or even when walking the streets of Manhattan in the friar's habit he called his witness, Brother Sal was always available. People in all stages and avenues of life benefited from his conversations and guidance."

Advancing age required Brother Sal's retirement to St. Clare Friary for recuperation in July 2021, followed by a brief stay at Cabrini of Westchester in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., before Sister Death reunited him with his beloved Marie, his parents, all the angels and saints, and Jesus Christ.

A Midwinter's Gift for Capuchin Mobile Ministries

Against the stunning backdrop of Boston's snowy winter landscape, over 100 Capuchin Mobile Ministries volunteers joined Br. Paul Fesefeldt and Br. Francisco Serrano for a fundraiser walk for our homeless outreach.

Winter Walk is an organization that works to end urban homelessness by raising awareness and funds for organizations that serve the homeless community. Its year-round work in education, outreach, and advocacy is capped with a 2-mile walk every February. Boston held its ninth annual walk on Sunday, Feb. 9.

Winter Walk chose Capuchin Mobile Ministries as a partner project for the 2025 walk. One hundred percent of the funds we raised for our team of walkers came directly to us. Thanks to our generous volunteer walkers and their congregations, we recruited well over 100 people to join our team and smashed our fundraising goal of \$10,000. We have collected \$18,000 to date and will be eligible for additional funds that will bring our total to about \$25,000.

"Wow! Winter Walk is a testament to the transformative power of collective action, fueled by the tireless efforts of our



Dozens of Capuchin Mobile Ministries volunteers came to the Winter Walk fundraiser in Boston on Feb. 9.

incredible team and supporters," said Amanda Grant-Rose, director of stewardship, on Feb. 9. "We're thrilled to have exceeded our fundraising goal, and we're deeply thankful to each and every one of you who contributed to this remarkable achievement. For those who couldn't join us today, don't worry—we've got you covered with extra Winter Walk hats waiting for you at our next gathering!"

Donate to Capuchin Mobile Ministries today at www.capuchin.org/support-us/.

A Postulant Retreat With Blessed Solanus

All the postulants and their formators of the North American and Pacific Capuchin Conference gathered at Capuchin Retreat in Washington, Mich., Feb. 2-7 for a retreat based on Blessed Solanus Casey and the evangelical counsels.

The participants included the three Capuchin postulancy programs serving North America: Milwaukee, where there are

8 postulants and 2 formators; San Francisco, where there are 4 postulants and 2 formators; and Colorado Springs, where there are 2 postulants and 2 formators. Fr. Dan Crosby of the St. Joseph Province; Fr. Alex Hostoffer of the St. Augustine Province; and Sally McCuen, director of hospitality at the Solanus Casey Center, Detroit, were the main presenters. Wednesday, Feb. 5 included a tour of the Solanus Casey Center, a tour of the Capuchins' Detroit ministries, and a social and dinner hosted by the fraternity at St. Bonaventure Friary.

"The retreat allowed the postulants to meet before they enter the novitiate this summer; to learn about Blessed Solanus; and to discern more deeply the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience," said Br. Lake Herman, director of postulant formation in Milwaukee.



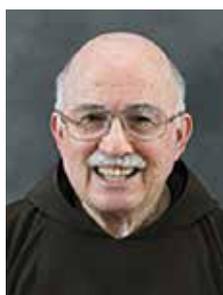
Capuchin postulants and their formators went on retreat in Michigan in early February.

Guam Catholics March for Life

Our brothers **Br. Jason Chargualaf** and **Fr. Eric Forbes** joined the annual march for life organized by the Guam Catholic Pro-Life Committee. They assembled at the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral Basilica, Agaña, on Friday afternoon, Jan. 17. They heard an address from Fr. Harold Prieto, administrator of Our Lady of Carmel Parish in Hagat.

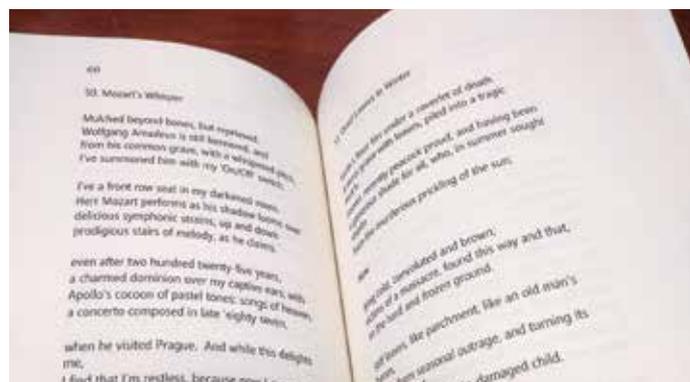


New Book of Poetry



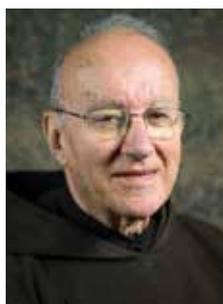
Fr. Robert Phelps, poet laureate of the Province of St. Mary, has published his latest book of poetry, which is titled *100 Pictures*.

Father Bob will have copies of his book available for sale and signing at St. Marianne Cope Parish in Cornwall-on-Hudson, N.Y., on Sunday, March 30, after the 12 p.m. Mass, which he will be celebrating. There will also be copies for sale of his previous book of poetry, titled *godinmind*.



St. Marianne Cope Parish is located at 340 Hudson St. in Cornwall-on-Hudson.

Friars of Note



Fr. Regis Armstrong has made his translation of a major work of Franciscan theology available in a student edition. *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (Into God) is a work of mystical and historical theology by Saint Bonaventure, a doctor of the Church who was a general minister of the Franciscan Order in the 13th century. Father Regis,

an emeritus professor at The Catholic University of America, has been responsible for the definitive English translation of many early documents of the Franciscan movement. His book is available through Catholic University of America Press.

On Friday, Feb. 28, our provincial minister, **Fr. Robert Abbatiello**, gratefully received our Capuchin brother Bishop Paolo Martinelli, Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia, and the bishop's secretary, our Capuchin brother Br. Darick D'Souza. They enjoyed our hospitality at Our Lady of Sorrows Friary in New York City. One of our brothers, **Fr. Victor Garcia**, currently ministers in the Capuchins' General Custody of Arabia at a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic parish in the United Arab Emirates. We thank Bishop Paolo for welcoming Father Victor to the Emirates.



From left: Br. Darick D'Souza, Bishop Paolo Martinelli, and Fr. Robert Abbatiello.

Br. James Donegan was appointed a member of the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Capuchin Order. The commission advises the Order's global office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation, which animates the friars' works worldwide advocating for human rights and integral ecology. Brother Jim is currently serving as a liaison officer of Franciscans International in New York City and is also a member of our provincial council.



Making Christ Visible to Others

Fr. Fred Nickle, 60 Years a Priest

Nobody who has been a part of the retreats and service programs offered by Capuchin Family Ministries over the last 20 years could ever forget Fr. Fred Nickle.

In a way, Father Fred has become synonymous with our youth evangelization ministry. He embodies the joy of the Gospel for the teenagers, young adults, and parents whose lives have been changed by their encounters with Christ at our programs. St. Francis of Assisi was called the Christ of Umbria, because he had such a deep love for Christ, and people could see Christ through him. In his own way, Father Fred has made Christ visible to others through his love for God and neighbor.

“At Capuchin Family Ministries, we give a definition of a Christian: a Christian is someone in whom and through who Christ lives. So when I first heard that, I said that was the heart of it, if we could all live that way,” Father Fred said. “And St. Francis did that so wonderfully.”

In prayer, fraternity, and ministry, Father Fred has been imitating Christ for decades, including 60 years as a priest this year.

A Calling Stirs

He remembers two priests who visited his parochial school in New Hyde Park, N.Y. In sixth grade, there was a priest from the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity. They had a high school in Alabama for boys who were thinking of becoming priests. The priest showed young Fred slides of some “very happy young men” playing softball and basketball. In eighth grade, a Capuchin came, Fr. Aidan Neenan, who was the vocation director for the Province. He offered to take Fred to Garrison, N.Y., to see Glenclyffe, our own high school for priest candidates. Fred went up with a couple of friends, saw the softball field and basketball court, and was sold! Soon after, as he was going to bed one night, he said a prayer and asked God which high school he should attend. When he woke up, he chose Glenclyffe and the Capuchins ... although he was still not sure what a Capuchin was!



He would find out in time. The high school was on one side of the property, and across the way was Mary Immaculate Friary, our house of theological studies. “And I saw these men in these brown robes, and I was very impressed,” he said. Fred learned that these young friars were getting ordained, and only a month later some of them were being sent to Guam, Honduras, or Okinawa.

Their dedication inspired Fred. He marveled that they were willing to leave their families and not see them again for years. He was amazed that they would go so far from home so soon after being ordained.

That was it. He wanted to be a Capuchin priest. He graduated from Glencllyffe in June 1957 and entered our novitiate at St. Lawrence Friary in Milton, Mass., that August. He was given the religious name of Theophane, after the French missionary martyr, St. Theophane Venard. After one year in Milton and four years in Hudson, N.H., to study philosophy, he returned to Garrison as one of those men in brown robes that he once admired from the high school. He was ordained on Nov. 13, 1965, after which he resumed the use of his baptismal name.

Formator, Pastor, Youth Chaplain

Father Fred would never serve in a foreign mission, but he brought a missionary zeal to all his assignments.

His first destination was Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Manhattan’s Lower East Side at a time of high poverty in the neighborhood. “I wish I kept a diary. It was a wonderful experience. It was a very exciting parish to live in.” He counseled a teenager at the parish school who was contemplating suicide. Years later, he celebrated her wedding. She has kept in touch with Father Fred ever since, as have so many others who experienced the healing and forgiveness of Christ through him.

After this taste of parish ministry, Father Fred returned to the friaries where he received his religious training. He was the assistant director of novices in Milton for six years, then guardian at the house of philosophy in Hudson for five years. He embraced the routine of religious life being modeled for the younger friars. “I loved it. I liked the regular prayer life. They were large communities. We had the gift of community.”

Two assignments as pastor followed: first at St. Joseph Parish in Portland, Me., from 1987 to 1995; then St. Pius X Parish in Middletown, Conn., from 1995 to 2002. Father Fred cherishes the hikes he took in Maine and the robust parish community at St. Pius. He said, “I have met some wonderful people who have helped me the best possible pastor I could be with my limited gifts and talents.”

In 1981, Father Fred was first assigned to Capuchin Family Ministries. This brought him back again to Garrison, where his

Capuchin journey began nearly 30 years earlier with that first visit to Glencllyffe. He served until 1985 and returned in 2002 after his term at St. Pius X. He has remained a youth chaplain ever since.

“I love the youth ministries. I love the energy. I love working with the young people,” he said. Far and away, Father Fred has attended more of our retreats than any other friar. “On the retreats I think the high point for me was just to see the young people growing in their relationship with Christ in a matter of days on a weekend.” Seeing them come to understand the devotion of Eucharistic adoration has been a blessing. And while some people fall away from their Catholic faith when they go to college, Father Fred remains committed to bringing young people to Christ by simply welcoming others as Christ did.

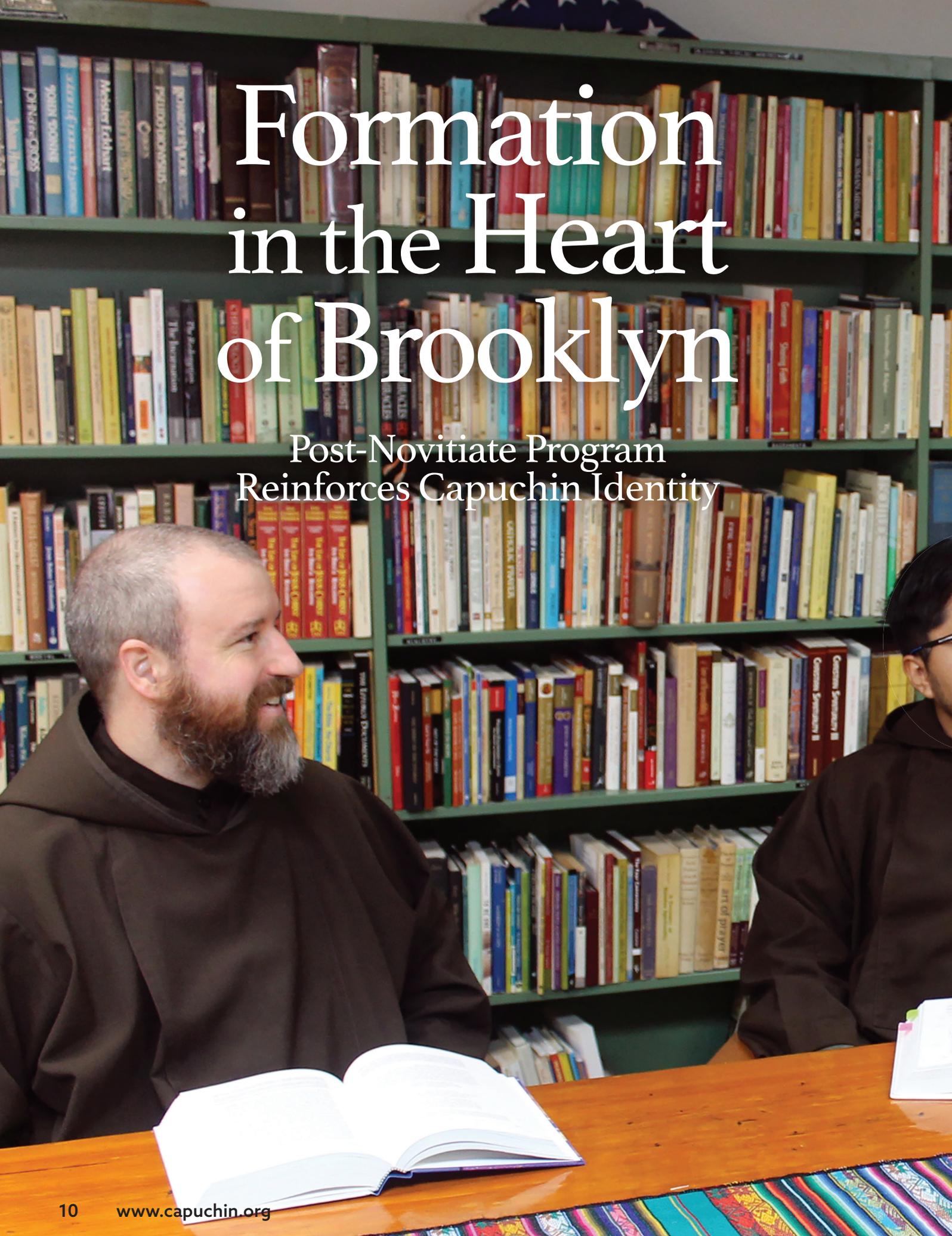


A Priest for Life

How does being a Capuchin shape Father Fred’s priestly ministry? “Living in community is very important to me. It’s a tremendous help. We can share our ministry experiences. In the community I live in now, we can share with each other. As a friar, we pray regularly in community. We have our office every day, we have our Mass together, and that is a real source of strength for me in religious life.”

To this day, Father Fred continues to be inspired by the old missionary priests who, during their return to the United States once every three years, always visited the houses of formation in Garrison and Hudson to give talks. Their fidelity to their vocation gave him courage and strength to move forward as a young friar.

“Usually, whatever bothered me was nothing major and would always pass. I never had any real trials that made me want to leave religious life or priesthood,” he said. “I remember making my final vows, and the other guys said I did it with such confidence that it helped them. I had no doubts that this was for me. Once I made my final vows, I felt stronger because I said this is it for life. There was no temptation to leave after that.”

The image shows two men in brown Capuchin robes sitting at a wooden table in a library. The man on the left has a full beard and is smiling towards the man on the right, who is wearing glasses. An open book lies on the table in front of them. The background is filled with green bookshelves packed with books of various colors. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

Formation in the Heart of Brooklyn

Post-Novitiate Program
Reinforces Capuchin Identity

In eastern Brooklyn, where the neighborhood is rapidly growing and changing, our young friars are taking their time to grow into their Capuchin identity.

Last summer, our Province and the Province of the Stigmata began a collaboration in post-novitate formation. After the novices of our Province and the Stigmata Province made their first profession of vows, they moved to St. Michael Friary in East New York. St. Michael has been the setting for initial formation in the past. For many years it was the house of formation for our postulants.

This year, two young friars are in residence with their formation director. Br. Shawn Natola is from the Province of St. Mary. Br. Yovani Salas is from the Province of the Stigmata, and so is the formation director, Br. Miguel Ramirez. Brothers Shawn and Yovani are discovering more deeply what it is to be a Capuchin friar as they work, pray, and live together.



St. Michael Friary, Brooklyn.

Migration and a Redirection

Post-novitate is the third phase of initial formation into Capuchin life. It follows immediately after one year of postulancy and one year of novitiate. From 2002, our Province sent its new post-novices to San Lorenzo Friary in Jamaica Plain, Mass. There, our friars immediately began academic studies in preparation for pastoral ministry and ordination to priesthood.

Beginning in 2022, our Province decided to defer putting post-novices into studies so that they could focus first on integrating the Capuchin charisms into everyday life. “In the past, goals for post-novitate were different than they are today,” explained Br.

Lake Herman, the provincial director of initial formation. “We focused more on integrating novices into a more active ministerial program and on education.

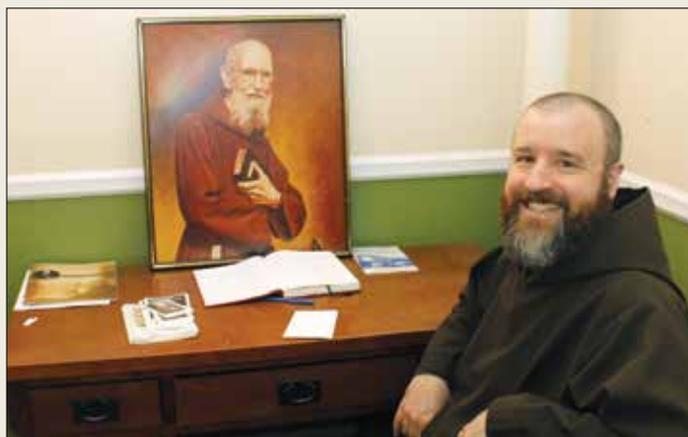
Now the Capuchin charisms are more in the forefront.”



Br. Shawn Natola, Br. Yovani Salas, and Br. Miguel Ramirez read from early documents about St. Francis of Assisi in the classroom at St. Michael Friary.

Two of our post-novices, Br. Gabe Conlon and Br. Leo Rojas, did their years of integration in Jamaica Plain. Now we have taken the further step of moving the year of post-novitiate integration to Brooklyn.

After Brooklyn, Brother Shawn and Brother Yovani will advance to theological studies. But first things first, said Brother Miguel: “The seminarian identity seemed more important before, but in this new model, the identity is of a Capuchin first—developing spirituality and formation as a Capuchin.” Brother Lake added: “Before, when the guys studied theology, they had the identity of a student. After completing our current program, they will go into their studies as Capuchins first, so they know who they are. They can be doing their college studies from a distinctly Capuchin perspective.”



Brother Shawn takes a break at the same porter’s desk where Blessed Solanus Casey once greeted visitors to the friary.

Brother Miguel agreed. “Capuchin identity is important. The new model changes the focus to ‘I am a Capuchin!’ ”

For Brother Shawn, the post-novitiate is his first experience of living the Capuchin life in his home province. He completed his postulancy in Milwaukee, Wis., and his novitiate in Santa Ynez, Calif. Now he has the opportunity to develop his Capuchin identity within the provincial fraternity. By delaying his formal studies, he gains more opportunities to form lifelong relationships with his fellow friars of the Province of St. Mary.

Provincial Collaboration

Brother Miguel and the Stigmata Province have experience with this model of formation through the Capuchin charisms and so were the perfect choice for collaboration with the Province of St. Mary.

Fraternal collaboration between provinces in Capuchin formation is not new. The novitiate program in Santa Ynez is a collaboration of all the English-speaking provinces of the North American and Pacific Capuchin Conference. There are three interprovincial postulancy programs in the United States, including the one we participate in, in Milwaukee. Fraternal collaboration in post-novitiate is the next frontier. “We are

responding to the general minister of the Capuchin Order in Rome, who asked that all North American provinces consider a single post-novitiate,” said Brother Shawn.

Brother Miguel said, “The collaboration is an inspiration in the sense that all the provinces are now advocating for collaboration, taking their signal from Rome.” The guidebook for the program is called the *Ratio Formationis*, which sets norms for the provinces in how they create and execute their formation programs. It provides guidance on the overall objective of post-novitiate, while allowing provinces latitude in the specifics of their programs. “This document was written many years ago but is more charismatic than juridical,” says Brother Miguel. “The *Ratio Formationis* lays out the values and important ingredients that must be included in every program. Each formation program does not have a dictated schedule; the important thing is that the foundational values are expressed and lived. Like a recipe, the final product might have a different flavor and taste.”

Local provincial leadership also does not adopt a heavy hand. “The provincial council is only involved at a higher level in terms of what formation classes they should be teaching,” says Brother Lake. “How they do it is up to the post-novitiate director.”

Stages

Brothers Yovani and Shawn reflected on the formation process so far.

“Every stage of discernment has its own objective,” said Brother Yovani. “Postulancy was a time for me to know the friars and for them to know me. It gave me a better understanding of religious life. In my own experience I had different, sometimes unrealistic, expectations of what religious life is.

“Novitiate was to prepare me for vows. More time was given to prayer and study. Being in a community of 15 guys, we had a real-life fraternal experience.

“In post-novitiate, we take what we learned in postulancy and novitiate and apply it. There is not the intense formation that there was before. but now we are expected to go into the world and practice what we learned. I find myself now really living the life of a Capuchin and maneuvering the challenges that come with life as a Capuchin. And it is preparing me for solemn vows.”

Brother Shawn said, “Canon law dictates a minimum of three years of temporary vows for all religious orders to ensure that they can commit to solemn (perpetual) vows. It is a deepening of relationship with Christ and with the order. The post-novitiate is within the Province to help the simply professed determine whether they want to become a ‘forever friar.’ ”

A Day in the Life

To get to being a forever friar requires hard work, introspection, and a life structured around prayer and service. “We are



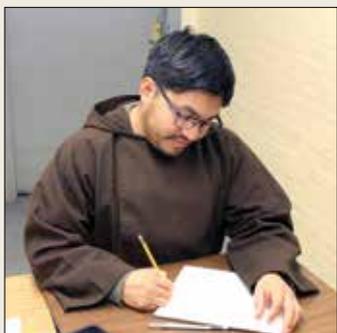
Brother Yovani prepares music for a liturgy at St. Michael Church.

called to pray always, but we also structure prayer around the Roman Liturgy of the Hours,” said Brother Shawn. “We begin at 7:30 a.m. with morning prayer followed by Mass, then we go to ministry or class from 9 until about 2 or 3 p.m.” His day continues with evening prayer at 5:45 p.m., dinner at 6, and night prayer at 9.

Worked into this schedule are in-house studies that cover the Capuchin saints, Franciscan spirituality, the Capuchin Constitutions, and Scripture. “We go by a two-year cycle, Year A and Year B,” said Brother Miguel. “Year A might be Capuchin saints. Year B might be more about the writings of the Capuchin Order, for instance. This yearly cycle is not in use among all provinces, but it is being encouraged by the general minister.”

Time to Minister

Ministerial formation is a significant part of the post-novitiate program, but it is not the primary focus. “20 hours maximum per week is allowed for ministry,” said Brother Miguel. “We must have an active presence where we serve, but [ministry sites] cannot depend on us. We are not meant to be relied upon, because we must be able to change the schedule to attend to other things.” As Brother Shawn adds: “Our schedule works around the life, not the life around the work.”



Brother Yovani checking in clients at St. Michael’s food program.

Brothers Shawn and Yovani serve in several ministries at St. Michael-St.

Malachy Parish. They teach catechism classes on Sundays. Twice a week they work at the parish meal and clothing program, begun in 2022 by Br. Francisco Serrano to serve migrants from Venezuela seeking asylum. “At its height, we served almost 120 people in a day,” said Barbara Garcia, who now manages the program with her daughter Vanessa. “So the brothers are a really big help to us!”

The brothers also serve meals twice a week at Neighbors Together, a local community organization that fights poverty, hunger, and homelessness in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, and Ocean Hill, three of the poorest neighborhoods in New York City.

Personal Goals

As they fulfill the formation objectives of the Order and their province, the post-novices are encouraged to set their own personal objectives. For instance, says Brother Lake, “When they first land, in Brooklyn, they don’t know the lay of the land, but they are free to suggest ministries.”

Brother Shawn came away from his novitiate resolved to deepen his contemplative life. “I came away from novitiate believing that each of us novices had a different experience. There was a subjective quality to the experience which made it richer. For me post-novitiate is a time of recommitment to a life of prayer and fraternity, so I am asking myself, what does this mean today and what does this mean tomorrow?”

“What does it mean for Brother Shawn to be a prayerful fraternal brother? The Lord seems to be speaking to me through these charisms in particular.”

Both Brother Shawn and Brother Yovani are embracing this time to reflect specifically on what God is calling them to in their Capuchin vocation. “Now that I am back in ministry in a more regular fashion, I realize how much I enjoy fixing things. I find it satisfying,” Brother Shawn said. “Also, I have been involved in men’s ministry, and I have helped organize men’s conferences. The more I am exposed to life in the parish, the more I feel the Lord may be speaking to me in the desire to see men flourish.”

For his part, Brother Yovani has discovered that his love of music may be one of the ways in which God is calling him to serve. “Since the beginning, formation has been a time to



Brother Shawn organizes some of the items donated to St. Michael’s clothing program.



discover my talents and gifts,” he said. “I have discovered a love of music, specifically playing the guitar.” He plays for Masses at St. Michael-St. Malachy and has also been given responsibility for liturgical music in the Stigmata Province. “That is among my own personal goals—to use my gift of music in my prayer.”

Brother Yovani, who comes from Chiapas, Mexico, is discerning a call to serve across linguistic and cultural borders. “My parents moved here when I was three, so I grew up bilingual,” he said. “Another goal of mine is to strengthen my Spanish so that I can expand my opportunities to serve in anything the Lord calls me to. Opportunities have already come to me, as the friars have already asked me to translate documents.”

To ensure that the post-novices are staying on track, there are periodic assessments by the Province. There are mid-year and year-end evaluations. There are monthly meetings during which goals and concerns are reviewed. Brother Miguel and Brother Lake review feedback from other friars from their partners in ministry. Brothers Shawn and Yovani also conduct peer evaluations and self-evaluations.

This kind of self-evaluation yields fruit. “My discernment recently has been a realization that in order to live in poverty we have to be detached,” Brother Shawn reflected. “I am even learning to detach from my ideas and what I want to achieve. We even have to detach ourselves from the good things to let the Holy Spirit guide us.”



Pictured from top: Brother Shawn and St. Michael pastor Fr. Martin Curtin with clothing program volunteers Vanessa Garcia (left) and Barbara Garcia; Brother Miguel sorts pantry items for the food program; Father Martin with three of the parish food program volunteers.

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To do this work, our friars depend on the compassionate support of people like you, who join in their efforts to serve those most in need by contributing to the Province of St. Mary. In so doing, you become part of our Capuchin community, an ally in our efforts to care for all of God's children, wherever

they are and whatever their situation.

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A Season of Gratitude

by Fr. Michael Greco

The final two months of 2024 were both busy and exciting for the Capuchin Development Office. We enjoyed the company of so many of our friends and supporters at our recent events and humbly rejoiced in the support of so many of you who contributed to our end-of-the-year campaigns. You have all made a great impact on the work of the Province of St. Mary.

In November, our Capuchin Mobile Ministries team hosted a “Grateful Gathering” at St. John the Evangelist-St. Paul Collaborative in Wellesley, Mass., to thank our many volunteers and supporters. The parish graciously supplied the venue, which Br. Francisco Serrano and his team decorated magnificently! The evening was filled with words of gratitude; a salute to one of our original volunteers, Gary Riccio; and a wonderful talk by Jim Greene, director of the Boston Emergency Shelter Commission. We raised \$40,000 to keep our ministry in Boston thriving.

Farther south in New York State, over 300 of our friends in Westchester County attended our Christmas party at the Pelham Country Club on Dec. 12. The atmosphere was light

and festive, and all of the guests contributed generously. They allowed us to net over \$150,000 to support the work of the Province and our men in formation.

The year closed out with our joyful Advent breakfast, held annually at St. Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y. The chapel, atrium, and refectory were decorated regally in anticipation of Christmas. We took full advantage of the atmosphere, beginning with a morning Mass celebrated by Fr. Erik Lenhart. A delicious breakfast followed. Our speaker was Fr. Gerard Mulvey, who reflected on the 800th anniversary of the Stigmata of Saint Francis. It was a delightful morning and a perfect way to prepare for the feast of the Nativity!

In the final months of 2024, the faithful who worship at the parishes we serve contributed to our annual Capuchin Campaign, graciously sending checks to our office in gratitude for the friars who have walked with them all their lives. Finally, many of you who receive this magazine also donated to our end-of-the-year appeal letter. Thank you!

The Capuchin friars never forget how fortunate we are to have friends like you supporting our lives and our ministries. We could not do the work of the Gospel without you! Please enjoy these pictures and know that you and your loved ones remain in our prayers.

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The Capuchin Development Office funds the domestic and international mission of the Province of St. Mary. That mission ranges from supporting our own provincial members ministering here in the United States to providing assistance to Capuchins serving worldwide. The Province of St. Mary is a leader in supporting the works of justice and mercy undertaken by Capuchin friars across the globe.

**If you are interested in supporting our mission, please contact
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or visit our website at www.capuchin.org.**