



The Caperone

Volume II, Issue 10 June 2011

The Capuchin Novitiate Newsletter

Upcoming Novitiate Events

- History of the Capuchin Order
- The Capuchin Saints
- Alverno Year-end Retreat

Novitiate Oversight Committee

We recently welcomed five members of the NAPCC Novitiate Oversight Committee. Brs. Charles Polifka, Joseph English, Matthew Elshoff, Mick Joyce and Bill Hugo came to perform an on-site evaluation of the Novitiate Program. Members of the Committee met individually with each member of the community to receive and discuss their evaluation of the program. Following this the Committee met and compiled an overall evaluation which will be made available to all NAPCC Provincial Ministers.

In the next issue . . .

- **The Year in Review!**

Saint Clare presented by Br. John Petrikovic

During June Br. John Petrikovic came to deliver three classes on the life, writings and spirituality of St. Clare.

John began the first class by offering us a comprehensive overview of the socio-political situation in Italy before and during Clare's lifetime. He then shared with us the major events in Clare's life: her encounters with Francis, her night-time escape to follow him as a vowed religious, and the founding of her communities.

John explained that Clare's communities were initially obliged by the Church hierarchy to follow the Rule of St. Benedict and later other rules written and imposed by Cardinal Hugo-lino and Pope Innocent IV. However, Clare felt these Rules limited her from embracing the poverty of Francis' 'brotherhood' so defiantly she wrote her own Rule.

The last years of her life were, in fact, characterized by her struggle to have her Rule and vision of religious life approved by the Church.

She finally realized this on her deathbed in 1253 when Pope Innocent IV approved her Rule of life.



Br. John Petrikovic

During the second class we looked at three documents pertaining to Clare. The first of these was 'The Privilege of Poverty', which Clare received in 1216 from Pope Innocent III. At that time, Clare was living under the Rule of St. Benedict, however, with this 'privilege' her communities received a dispensation to live without property, something which was entirely new and unheard of for a monastic foundation.

Following this, we

looked at Clare's Testament, which she composed and rewrote at various stages between 1247 and 1253. John informed us that of all the writings of Clare, the Testament is the most autobiographical, filled with Franciscan and personal remembrances that reveal her charism. Doubting that she would ever have her Rule approved, this testament was her farewell message, her "Last Will" that would guide her sisters after her death.

The final document we looked at was Clare's actual Rule. John informed us that with the approbation of this Rule in 1253 Clare became the first woman to write a religious Rule and, in doing so, inaugurated a totally new epoch for women in the life of the Church. As we read through Clare's Rule we cross-referenced it with Francis', noting the numberable similarities.

In the final class we examined Clare's spirituality. In order to understand her spiritual development and perspective we read some of

Capuchin Ministry by *Br. Matthew Giles*

In this ministry I had a sudden reversal of what I had been accustomed to. As a postulant, and even before entering the Order, my primary ministry was with children and young adults: in the classroom, in the after-school programs, as a tutor, or on the streets. I knew walking into Vincentian de Marillac nursing home that this would be nothing like anything I had done before. These weren't the faces of children I was looking into, but the faces of the elderly, the weak, the dying.

The first couple of months of ministry were filled with a sense of crushing disappointment. At the end of each day, as the four of us novices passed out the door and

toward the car, I let out a sigh of exhaustion and hopelessness. What had I done that day? I felt like I had done nothing. So much sorrow and pain fill the lives of these people. They have lost their independence, their privacy, their friends, and their homes. Some have even lost most of their family and sit alone, "just waiting," as one 100 year-old woman told me once.

Yet at some point I realized something. There is no taking away the pain of arthritis, there is no taking away the embarrassment of needing someone to help you bathe or use the bathroom, there is no reversing the process of aging and death. But for these people, living a hidden

life of pain, loneliness, and misery, just seeing the hems of our habits skimming across the tile floors, seeing our smiles break through the sea of

the tired and overworked faces of nurses and aides, and knowing that we care enough to come back, over and over again, is more than enough. That is the only work we can accomplish, to be the presence of Christ as best as we can and to be *companions*, not *healers*. Life's difficulties are irreversible but we, for our part, can be companions for all people on their journey back to God to remind them that we too suffer and they are never alone. Our Christian and our Capuchin lives remind us that the journey is never meant to be travelled alone and part of our vocation is to share that reality with the poor, the vulnerable, the weak, the sick, the dying.



Br. Matthew Giles

continued from 'Saint Clare' on page 1...

the spiritual writers Clare would have read: St. Ambrose de Virginibus, St. Agnes of Bohemia and St. Bernard of Clairvaux. We discussed how Clare's spirituality was deeply rooted in the person of Jesus Christ and was expressed in relationship with Him and with others.

Finally, we looked at a number of representations of Clare through art, noting the common presence of her three symbols: bread (representing her love for

the Eucharist), the Cross (representing her love for the crucified Christ) and a palm (representing the moment of her conversion). John concluded by advising us to embrace Clare for inspiration in our Franciscan life. We ought to see Clare, he said, as our sister, as our co-founder; a woman who has the same vision as Francis and who can ignite within us the same inspiration as he.

We sincerely thank John for his time with us.

Recollection Day by *Br. David Nestler*

During February Br. David Nestler, the Provincial Minister of the Province of St. Augustine, led us in a Recollection Day.

The theme of David's reflections was 'Living on the Edge'. Guided by the story of St. Paul, he reminded us that the "centre" from which we structure and understand our life is, through God's intervention, vulnerable to radical change. This demands from us, he said, an awareness to be open



Br. David Nestler

to encounter our "powerful" God in the "weak and vulnerable" found among the margins of society and religiosity.

We sincerely thank David for his time us.

Many Faces of the Novitiate *by Br. Tam Pham*

I was born and grew up in the western suburbs of Sydney, Australia. My family belonged to a Capuchin parish and, in fact, it was late in life before I realized that not *all* priests wore brown habits!

I began to seriously hear my call to religious life during the 2008 World Youth Day in Sydney. The theme of the event was Acts 1:8, "you will receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses". So it happened, during the Saturday night benediction with the Eucharist in the hands of Pope Benedict XVI the Holy Spirit overwhelmed me as I felt the sure presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

The following day, during the celebration of the Eucharist, I experienced Lord's Mercy in the Eucharist; I was certain I could never forget these moments for the rest of my life. I felt the Spirit call me to a new way of life and felt excited about living my life through faith in Jesus Christ. I understood the Spirit might be calling me to the Priesthood. I initially considered the Dominican Order and then the Diocesan seminary, however, neither felt right with me. I knew the Capuchins but was

somewhat hesitant; I didn't feel they appealed to me, particularly the habit!

My journey of discernment became more serious when I began Spiritual Direction with none other than a Capuchin brother. At this time, a friend of mine, who is an Immaculata Sister, felt that I needed to read about Padre Pio and so gave me a book about his life. I came to realize that St Pio's example of priesthood was everything that I was yearning for; I had been drawn to a life with the Capuchins.

Postulancy began on the feast of the Presentation of Mary, 21st November 2009. Life with the Capuchins in the Australian Province was a very rewarding experience; I was able to spend

considerable time listening to the Lord and learning His ways through the example of St Francis



Br. Tam Pham

and through the spirituality of our fraternal, minor and contemplative life. Although Postulancy held many trials for me, it did clearly reveal to me the invitation of a vocation to religious life.

The decision to embrace the next stage of the journey at the Novitiate in Pittsburgh owes itself to the many graces I received from Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of the Americas. Once I crossed that body of water called the Pacific Ocean, I knew my life would never be the same again. Now, as I come to finish my Novitiate I know this statement to be so true. I have received graces beyond my imagination through the people I have met, places I have seen and through this year of spending time away with the Lord.

Final Novitiate Evaluations

The final evaluations have now been received. In addition to our self-evaluation, each of us was randomly assigned four brothers about whom we had to evaluate areas of strength and weakness, as well as to comment on if we would feel comfortable living and working with each brother.

On receiving these peer and self-evaluations the pro-

fessed brothers of the Novitiate held meetings from which recommendations were made regarding areas requiring special attention. These recommendations, together with the peer and self-evaluations, were integrated into written form. We have all now received these and a copy has been sent to each respective Provincial Minister and Provincial Director of initial formation.

Novice Departure

Craig McWade departed from the Novitiate at the beginning of June. Craig is remembered for his love of music and films. He has returned to Toronto, Canada where he will seek employment in the film industry.

We wish him every blessing as he continues his faith journey. May the Lord guide him in all that he does.

Revision of Capuchin Constitutions *presented by Br. Christopher Popravak*

During June we were invited by the Province of St. Augustine to take part in a one-day conference entitled, 'Revision of Capuchin Constitutions'. The conference was led by Br. Christopher Popravak from the Province of St. Conrad who, as well as serving his Province as Director of Post-Novitiate Formation and Vicar Provincial, serves on the international Commission for Constitutions and General Statutes.

Christopher began by offering us a brief overview of the history of the Constitutions and their present revisions. He informed us that the Commission, on which he sits, was established by



Br. Christopher Popravak

the General Minister in 2004, following a motion passed during the General Chapter of 2000. Christopher explained the mandate of the Commission as that of enriching the text of the current Constitutions, while respecting their content, by possibly incorporating other elements that have emerged from doctrinal,

theological and spiritual developments in recent Church teaching and from the documents of the Order (particularly the recent PCOs).

Christopher spent the remainder of the conference taking us step-by-step through a number of the chapters, discussing the background of the proposed

revisions and talking us through the new wordings.

Chris informed us that the work of the Commission will culminate with the "revised" Constitutions being presented to the forthcoming 2012 General Chapter, which will have the revision of our Constitutions as its central theme.

He urged that prior to this Chapter we familiarize ourselves with the proposed revisions and discuss our opinions about these with our General Chapter delegate.

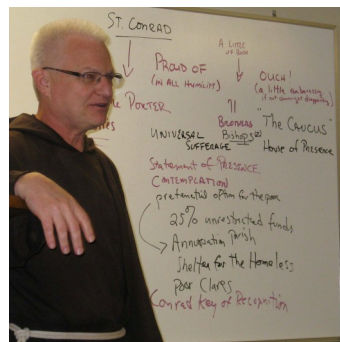
We thank the Province of St. Augustine for this invite and Christopher for his presence and sharing.

History of the Provinces

During June several friars delivered presentations on the history of the Provinces present in the NAPCC Novitiate.

The friars who shared with us the history of their respective Province were as follows: Br. Raphael Iannone from the Province of St. Mary (New York- New England); Br. Ken Reinhart from the Prov-

ince of St. Joseph (Detroit); Br. Francis Fugini from the Province



Br. Frank Grinko

of St. Augustine (Pennsylvania); Br. Frank Grinko from the Province of St. Conrad (Mid-America); and Br. Gerard O'Dempsey from the Province of Our Lady of the Assumption (Australia). All the speakers offered us wonderful insights into the origins and evolution of their Province: it's friaries, ministries, missions, trials, tribulations, joys and blessings.



Br. Raphael Iannone

We sincerely thank all the presenters for their time and effort in building up our knowledge about the history of our Capuchin family.

Special Thanks:

Brs. Tam Pham, Matthew Giles, and Liam Quinn.

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Mission Statement

The Caperone is published by the Novices of St. Conrad Friary in Allison Park, PA. It seeks to report news, happenings and events at the Novitiate. Views do not represent the views of the NAPCC.

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