

WHAT DOES IT TAKE
TO BECOME A
CAPUCHIN FRANCISCAN?



FROM OUR CONSTITUTIONS

“ST. FRANCIS, A TRUE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST AND AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE, TAUGHT HIS OWN BROTHERS TO FOLLOW THE FOOTPRINTS OF THE POOR AND HUMBLE JESUS CHRIST JOYFULLY THAT, THROUGH HIM, THEY WOULD BE LEAD IN THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE FATHER.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #2:1

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

- St. Francis of Assisi founds his order of priests and brothers in 1209.
- Capuchin Franciscans are a reform movement founded in 1528.
- Our name originates from our long pointed capuche, Italian for “hood.”
- Over 90 Capuchins have been declared Saint and Blessed throughout our history.

ABOUT THE CAPUCHIN FRANCISCANS

In the United States, the Capuchin Franciscans are organized into seven regions or “provinces.” Worldwide there are more than 12,000 Capuchins, making us the fourth largest men’s religious order in the world. Capuchin Franciscans are well known for simplicity of life, warmth, deep prayer and dedication to the corporal works of mercy.

ABOUT THE PROVINCE OF ST. MARY

The Province of St. Mary serves communities in New York and New England, where there are 150 Capuchins in numerous and varied ministerial sites. The Province of St. Mary also sends our friars to service in mission territories in Latin America, the Pacific, Japan, and Africa.

PRINCIPAL PROVINCE MINISTRIES

Mission Ministry: Serving our brothers and sisters in faith in the environment where most people come to experience church. Besides the local parish churches in New York and New England, friars live and serve in Central America, Guam, Japan and Africa.

Chaplaincy Ministry: Friars serving those who find themselves in hospitals, jails, drug programs, etc.

Preaching Ministry: Friars serving the wider church through retreats and missions carried out in different parishes and retreat centers.

Youth & Family Ministries: Recognized as a leader in youth and family ministry, Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries (CYFM) works in the spirit of St. Francis to rebuild the Catholic Church by reaching out to young people and their families through retreats, parish ministries and service to the poor. The CYFM community nurtures faith, develops leaders, takes action through service to those in need, and magnifies God’s love in the world.

“Hello!
My name is Brother Tim.
Welcome to our
journey of discovery.”



My name is Brother Tim Aller of the Capuchin Franciscans. I am currently a student at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, together with several of my brother

Capuchins and more than 300 other students. Like Capuchins around the world, we live together in small communities for fraternal support. We gather for prayer two or three times each day, we take all our meals together, and we share all our possessions in common. Each friar’s unique talents are recognized and used for the common good, and important events in brothers’ lives are celebrated by all.

Like Jesus Christ and St. Francis of Assisi, we are both contemplative and active. We serve the needs of all, with special emphasis on the poor and marginalized. Capuchin Franciscans serve in inner city, suburban and rural parishes; teach in elementary schools, high schools and colleges; are social workers and counselors; are involved in youth and retreat work; serve the poor in soup kitchens and in assisting them with clothing, housing and immigration issues; serve in outreach programs for day laborers; and minister to HIV/AIDS patients.

We minister throughout New York and New England, in Central America, in the Ryukyus, Mariana and Hawaiian Islands, and in Okinawa and mainland Japan. We are presently exploring ways that we can address the many challenges that the continent of Africa offers.

Where there is a need, we are there... always keeping in mind our call to brotherhood, prayer in common, and service to the poor.

“Did you know that it takes anywhere from five to eight years of study, prayer and training to become a Capuchin Franciscan?

I began my journey in 2004. In the next few minutes, you will understand how I and each of my brothers are hearing our name being called... and how we are answering.”

FROM OUR CONSTITUTIONS

“AFTER HE HEARD THE WORDS OF THE SENDING FORTH OF THE DISCIPLES, ST. FRANCIS FOUNDED THE FRATERNITY OF THE ORDER OF MINORS WHICH WOULD BEAR WITNESS TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD BY A SHARING OF LIFE AND BY PREACHING PENANCE AND PEACE THROUGH EXAMPLE AND WORD.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #3:1

THE FORMATION OF A CAPUCHIN

DISCERNMENT WEEKENDS

Men between the ages of 18 and 40 are welcome to attend up to five “Discernment Weekends” each year. These non-resident events allow those interested in learning more about the Capuchin way of life to get to know other candidates, meet many Capuchin Franciscans, and witness various ministries of the brothers.



POSTULANCY

Postulancy is a resident nine-month program at St. Michael Friary in Brooklyn, New York, beginning in August each year. Postulants live in a friary with professed Capuchin Franciscans, attend daily Mass and share in daily prayers, meals and fraternal functions, attend classes on religious life, and minister to the poor.

COLLABORATIVE POSTULANCY

After the nine-month program in their home province, postulants from around the North American and Pacific Capuchin Conference gather for a three-month interprovincial postulancy program held during the summer months in Victoria, Kansas. The emphasis of this phase of postulancy is on building a strong collaborative fraternal bond among the brothers who are preparing for Novitiate.



FINDING GOD, SERVING

FRANCISCAN

NOVITIATE

The Novitiate is a one-year intensive spiritual program in Pennsylvania for brothers from across the United States, Canada and Australia. During this year, brothers study Sacred Scripture, Franciscan writings and the vows, and receive the habit, cord, rosary and sandals. During this year, a novice decides if he is called to life in the Capuchin Franciscan Order. At the conclusion of the year, temporary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are professed.



ADVANCED FORMATION

After a period of at least three years, a brother may request perpetual profession or permanent commitment as a Capuchin Franciscan. Brothers who seek to serve as priests are first ordained deacons, continue their theological studies and minister in local Church settings. After the diaconate year, these brothers are ordained priests and are prepared to join the many parochial communities throughout the province.



STUDIES

Over three to five years of study, brothers continue to live together in community in Boston while pursuing undergraduate degrees and post-graduate studies in theology. Each brother is also actively involved in a variety of ministries. The period of time in studies will vary, depending on an individual's prior academic experience. Brothers who already have completed undergraduate studies pursue professional degrees in theology or in areas that will assist them in their future ministerial endeavors.



OTHERS AND DISCOVERING YOUR BEST SELF

A DAY IN THE FORMATION OF CAPUCHIN

DISCERNMENT WEEKENDS

“Everyone is looking for something. Our Discernment Weekends give people who are searching a little taste of what it’s like to live as a Capuchin, and to consider whether they are truly called to a life of simplicity, community, prayer and service. It’s a no-risk, no-obligation offer. Worst case, you go home on Sunday knowing yourself a little better than you did on Friday. Best case, who knows, you might have the makings of a Capuchin!”

— BR. TIM



Men who are considering religious life approach it from many different walks of life, and gather their initial information about choices and options in many ways, most commonly via the Internet. As soon as an individual contacts the Capuchins, he receives a response from director of vocations Br. Tim Jones, O.F.M. Cap., who makes it a point to reply to all inquiries promptly, usually within a day or two. This initial contact is followed by a personal visit.

“Discernment Weekends” are typically the next step on the journey toward a vocation as a Capuchin Franciscan. Held several times each year from Friday evening through Sunday, these events are open to interested Catholic men 18 to 40 years in age who are actively considering their future in religious life.

Each weekend experience becomes a new opportunity to get to know other candidates, to meet Capuchin Franciscans, and to witness the various ministries of the brothers. A weekend program may feature visiting friars who share their life stories and their ministries with our guests. It is not unusual for men considering a life as a Capuchin to attend more than one weekend as they discern the right path forward.

Between Discernment Weekends, candidates visit various Capuchin friaries for prayer, fraternal gatherings and ministerial experiences. They are also encouraged to seek out spiritual direction, and to participate in parish life. Most importantly, they are urged to attend Holy Mass and receive the sacraments frequently. Participation in a ministry to the poor is also strongly recommended.

When the time is right, those inclined to continue the journey ask to be considered for Postulancy.

FRANCISCANS



SUPPORT REQUIRED
FOR ONE
DISCERNMENT WEEKEND:
\$3,000



FROM OUR CONSTITUTIONS:

“CANDIDATES SHOULD PREPARE THEMSELVES INTERIORLY FOR THE FUTURE RENUNCIATION OF GOODS AND CONDITION THEMSELVES FOR THE SERVICE OF ALL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE POOR.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #18:4

A DAY IN THE FORMATION OF CAPUCHIN

MORNING: POSTULANCY



“Postulancy gives you the experience of living in fraternal community with your brothers. Mornings are for study, after-

noons are for ministry, and prayers and meals are in common. But there is plenty of time for some serious thinking about what you really want to get out of life, and what you are willing to give.”

— BR. ERIK

FROM OUR CONSTITUTIONS:

“THE FORMATION OF POSTULANTS AIMS PRIMARILY AT COMPLETING THEIR CATECHESIS IN THE FAITH AND INCLUDES AN INTRODUCTION TO LITURGY, METHODS OF PRAYER, CAPUCHIN FRANCISCAN INSTRUCTION AND AN INITIAL EXPERIENCE OF APOSTOLIC WORK. IT MUST ALSO REINFORCE AND PROMOTE HUMAN MATURITY, ESPECIALLY EMOTIONAL MATURITY, AND AN ABILITY TO DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #28:2

Postulancy is the first formation experience of a candidate who continues to discern the Capuchin way of life. For nine months beginning each August, postulants live in community with professed Capuchin Franciscans at St. Michael Friary in Brooklyn, New York. By participating in daily Mass and daily prayers, sharing meals, and joining in a variety of fraternal functions, postulants begin to understand how the Capuchin charisms translate to a daily life of prayer, fraternity and service.

The daily schedule is regular without being regimented. Each morning begins at 7:15AM with a communal meditation, a uniquely Capuchin experience of prayer. This is followed at 7:45 AM by the Liturgy of the Hours, prayed worldwide by all Capuchins every day. This is followed by Mass either at the friary or at a nearby parish. After breakfast, the morning is given over to small-group study of scripture and the Franciscan way of life.

After lunch, each postulant heads out to a chosen ministry, which can vary from tutoring high school students in a local public school to visiting the sick at a nursing home in downtown Brooklyn. By 5PM, everyone has returned to the friary for evening prayer and a communal dinner. Two professed Capuchin “formators” help to structure the experiences of postulants, who also work with their own spiritual directors to make progress in discerning their life’s work. Throughout the nine months of postulancy, the entire community visits a number of other friaries in New York, New England and in other parts of the U.S. in order to get to know many other Capuchin Franciscans and their ministries.

SUPPORT REQUIRED
FOR ONE YEAR
OF POSTULANCY FOR
ONE BROTHER:
\$28,400

FRANCISCANS

MID-DAY: COLLABORATIVE POSTULANCY

After their nine-month program in their home provinces, brothers preparing to enter the novitiate from the United States, Canada, and Australia continue their postulancy program, participating in classes, workshops, ministerial experiences and many occasions for prayer and reflection. Over this nine-week collaborative program based at St. Fidelis Friary in Victoria, Kansas, brothers have the opportunity to get to know one another, and to build the strong fraternal bonds that hopefully will last a lifetime.



FROM OUR CONSTITUTIONS:

“INSPIRED BY GOD, ST. FRANCIS INITIATED A GOSPEL FORM OF LIFE THAT HE CALLED A BROTHERHOOD, ACCORDING TO THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES.... FOR THIS REASON, UNITED BY FAITH IN GOD AND NOURISHED AT THE TABLE BOTH OF THE DIVINE WORD AND THE EUCHARIST, WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW WE ARE CHRIST’S DISCIPLES.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #83:5, #83:7



A DAY IN THE FORMATION OF CAPUCHIN

AFTERNOON: NOVITIATE

“I was working all hours as an architect in New York City. But something was missing. I used to go to St. John the Baptist parish church on West 31st Street. I met Br. Salvatore there, and he told me to slow down. Actually, I think he saved my life.”

— BR. VICTOR

FROM OUR CONSTITUTIONS:

“THE FORMATION OF THE NOVICE SHOULD BE BASED ON THE VALUES OF OUR CONSECRATED LIFE AS KNOWN AND LIVED IN LIGHT OF THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST, THE GOSPEL INSIGHTS OF ST. FRANCIS, AND THE SOUND TRADITIONS OF THE ORDER. LET THE RHYTHM OF THE NOVITIATE RESPOND TO THE PRIMARY ASPECTS OF OUR RELIGIOUS LIFE, PARTICULARLY THROUGH A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE OF FAITH, CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER, FRATERNAL LIFE, CONTACT WITH THE POOR, AND WORK.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #29:3, 4



The novitiate is a year-long intensive spiritual program, pursued at the North American novitiate located in Allison Park, Pennsylvania. Brothers from provinces in the U.S., Canada and Australia receive the distinctive Capuchin habit, cord, rosary and sandals as they live in fraternal community and pursue spiritual growth, especially through spiritual direction. The study of scripture, Franciscan writings, the vows and similar subjects is accompanied by ministry to the poor and workshops with other religious groups. During this year, the novice seeks to discern if he is called to life as a brother or a priest in the Capuchin Franciscan Order. At the conclusion of the year, temporary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are professed.

SUPPORT REQUIRED
FOR ONE YEAR OF
NOVITIATE
FOR ONE BROTHER:
\$28,000

LATE AFTERNOON: STUDIES AND MINISTRY

San Lorenzo Friary is located in the Boston neighborhood of Jamaica Plain, roughly equidistant between downtown Boston and the Newton campus of the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. A community of Capuchin brothers living at San Lorenzo pursue a challenging program of undergraduate and graduate studies, and minister to the poor in a wide range of apostolates, as they continue progressing through the advanced stages of formation.

Under the direction of Formation Directors Jack Rathschmidt and Martin Curtin, and Guardian Joseph Yakimovich, this Capuchin band of brothers pursues a common path, even though everyone appears to be headed in different directions every day.

Br. Michele from Bensonhurst in Brooklyn studies history and religion at Emmanuel College, and is thinking of becoming a lay brother. “We train to be brothers first, because we don’t identify ourselves by what we do, but by who we are.”

Brothers Salvatore and Stephen are also theology students at Boston College. Br. Sal, from Jersey City, is thinking about parish work. Br. Stephen, from the Central Canadian province, is interested in concentrating on spiritual direction and formation after his ordination.

Br. Tim Aller calls the Boston College School of Theology “one of the best schools of theology in the world, an excellent environment for studies with a great library.” Before joining the more than 300 students there, he completed his undergraduate degree in philosophy at Emmanuel College. Br. Tim’s ministries have taken him from working with prison inmates to visiting the sick in local hospitals. “Fraternity is a very important value for us,” he says. “When you pray together, morning and evening, you cannot fake it. We strive to live a life of authenticity.”



FROM OUR CONSTITUTIONS:

“THE POST NOVITIATE IS THE PERIOD IN WHICH THE BROTHERS, PROGRESSING FURTHER IN MATURITY, PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THE DEFINITIVE CHOICE OF OUR GOSPEL LIFE THAT IS UNDERTAKEN THROUGH PERPETUAL PROFESSION.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #30:1

A DAY IN THE FORMATION OF CAPUCHIN

SUNSET: ADVANCED STUDIES AND MINISTRY

“I was born in Peru, grew up in the U.S., even worked in Japan for five years. In the end, I was drawn inexplicably to the Capuchins. Something resonated within me. I believe that every situation



that occurs in our lives is a stepping stone toward greater growth.”

— BR. RICHARD

FROM OUR CONSTITUTIONS:

“LET THE BROTHERS, ACCORDING TO EACH ONE’S GIFT AND GRACE, APPLY THEMSELVES TO A MORE PROFOUND STUDY OF SACRED SCRIPTURE, SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY, LITURGY AND THE HISTORY AND SPIRITUALITY OF THE ORDER; LET THEM ALSO EXERCISE VARIOUS FORMS OF THE APOSTOLATE AS WELL AS DOMESTIC WORK.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #30:3



Br. Richard spends his days in class at Boston College’s School of Theology, and then teaches religious education to adults in the evenings. Now working toward his Master of Divinity degree, he is looking forward to his Perpetual Profession of vows in the not-too-distant future. After serving as an ordained deacon for one year, he will then be ordained a priest, and return for a fourth and final year of theological studies.

Br. Richard’s educational path is typical for all those called to priesthood who complete an advanced degree in theological studies. Those called to become consecrated brothers pursue studies in the areas where they and the province feel they could best serve God’s people and the brotherhood.

Regardless of the path chosen, every brother strives to develop the skills that will help him live a common life in a contemplative way, while serving the Catholic Church with its many needs, and particularly while serving the poor in body, mind and spirit.

SUPPORT REQUIRED
FOR ONE YEAR
OF ADVANCED STUDIES
FOR ONE BROTHER:
\$48,000

EVENING: ORDINATION AND PERPETUAL PROFESSION

PRAYER

“DESIRING ABOVE ALL THINGS THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD AND ITS HOLY ACTIVITY, PRAYING ALWAYS TO GOD WITH A PURE HEART, LET US OFFER PEOPLE A WITNESS OF AUTHENTIC PRAYER IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY MAY SEE AND SENSE IN OUR FACES AND IN THE LIFE OF OUR FRATERNITIES THE GOODNESS AND KINDNESS OF GOD PRESENT IN THE WORLD.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #45:8

MINISTRY

“THE SON OF GOD WAS SENT INTO THE WORLD SO THAT, ASSUMING OUR HUMAN CONDITION, WE MIGHT BRING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE POOR, HEAL THE CONTRITE OF HEART, PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO PRISONERS, AND RESTORE SIGHT TO THE BLIND.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #144:1

FRATERNITY

“INSPIRED BY GOD, ST. FRANCIS INITIATED A GOSPEL FORM OF LIFE THAT HE CALLED A BROTHERHOOD, ACCORDING TO THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES....FOR THIS REASON, UNITED BY FAITH IN GOD AND NOURISHED AT THE TABLE BOTH OF THE DIVINE WORD AND THE EUCHARIST, WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW WE ARE CHRIST’S DISCIPLES.”

CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS #83:5, 7



A DAY IN THE FORMATION OF CAPUCHIN

Everyone Has a Vocation. The Trick is Discovering Yours!

“Our job is to help you discover what God has in mind for you, whatever that may be. We are blessed to have so many good men interested in our way of life, and to have the support of so many good people who make our work possible.”

— BR. TIM JONES, O.F.M., CAP.,
VOCATION DIRECTOR

The Province of St. Mary is blessed to have anywhere from 20 to 30 brothers in various stages of formation at any point in time. This figure reflects the enduring interest in St. Francis of Assisi, a saint whose personal humility and poverty appeal to many today.

The large number of brothers in formation also reflects the outstanding work of Br. Tim Jones, O.F.M., Cap., who has 15 years of experience directing the vocation development effort for the province. His work and the commitment of all the brothers in the province to development and formation have contributed to a steady stream of vocations.

“We generally receive several hundred inquiries per year through one channel or another,” Br. Tim Jones explains. “The Internet is actually the most popular tool for finding out about us.” From this large pool of possible candidates,



Visit capuchin.org or vocationsplacement.org for more information.

FRANCISCANS

COULD YOUR VOCATION BE TO SUPPORT CAPUCHIN VOCATIONS?



anywhere from 100 to 150 individuals seek to learn more over a period of time. It is important to note that many individuals seeking to learn about the Capuchins are simultaneously researching other religious orders such as the Jesuits or the Dominicans, as well as the diocesan priesthood. As many as 50 are deemed to be serious candidates, who are then invited to join one of the Discernment Weekends held throughout the year.

Tim Jones credits a “vocation culture” in the province for whatever success he has been able to achieve. “Our friars are all committed to this work in a very serious way,” he explains. “We have a local contact friar for vocations at each Capuchin house. Visitors are welcomed by the brothers at all times for prayer, meditation and discernment.”



A Message from Walter Osterman

Chairman,
Capuchin Franciscan
Leadership Council



Dear Friends of the
Capuchin Franciscans:

I grew up in St. Anthony’s Parish in White Plains, New York, and attended Archbishop Stepinac High School and Siena College. Along the way, I met several inspiring Capuchins, and came to believe deeply in the Capuchin way of life.

That is why I do everything I can to support the work of the Capuchin Franciscans. Not everyone can become a Capuchin, but anyone can become part of the Capuchin family. You can become a real part of the work of the Province of St. Mary by encouraging and supporting the outstanding men who are following their journey of discovery as they train to become priests and brothers.

I am a businessman, so I recognize Capuchins as people who are in the business of giving. In terms of service, Capuchins are amazing. They go where no one else goes, and do what no one else is willing to do. Just as St. Francis of Assisi was more than 800 years ago, Capuchins today are counter-cultural in the way they live out the Gospel.

As you can see, the cost of training our future priests and brothers is significant. Consider joining me and thousands of other men and women who have made it their life’s mission to support the work of Capuchins here and around the world.

I look forward to working with you, and we thank you in advance for your support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Walter Osterman". The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with overlapping loops and lines.

Walter Osterman



CAPUCHIN FRANCISCANS
PROVINCE OF ST. MARY

210 WEST 31ST STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10001-2876

CAPUCHIN.ORG

