

Taking Time to Hear and Respond to His Calling...

A reflection by Victor Garcia, O.F.M. Cap.

My name is Victor Garcia. I am a late vocation with the Capuchins. I am 52 years old. I worked as an architect in the city of New York for 20 or so years prior to entering. My journey thus far has been both pleasant and challenging (the middle ground, if you will), yet neither seems to overpower the other. I feel I have been blessed by an “awareness” that continually sustains my spiritual development. As you know, this “awareness” does not come overnight. This has taken time to develop, (much as it took time for me to hear and respond to His calling), and so it continues...

I spent the months of June and July in Central America with Fr. Martin Curtin, Brothers Ernie Bedard, Salvatore Cordaro, Timothy Aller and Michelle Vricella. It was an immersion program. It was a wonderful experience. Our home base was the “Noviciado” (shared by the two Vice-Provinces of St. Felix de Cantalice and Nuestra Senora de Esperanza), in Ocotepeque, Honduras. It was here where we were immersed with the culture, politics, traditions and language of Central America. To add even more color to this immersion, we crossed borders a number of times to both Guatemala and El Salvador to get some taste of those cultures as well.



I believe that the “noviciado” provided an ideal setting for my immersion. Not only did it provide ‘facility’ for the program, it also played an ‘active’ role to my development through my interaction with the nine novices, their four formators, and their respective ministries.

Our program provided opportunities of ‘interaction’ as well, even if there may be ‘overlaps’ or duplications in ministries already engaged by our hosts. My direct experiences with these opportunities seemed to have added more depth and dimension to this cultural and possibly spiritual experience

The ‘jewel’ of all was ‘language instruction’ which served me personally as a more ‘structured’ basis for cultural and spiritual ‘interaction’. Hot-humid weather aside, this was perhaps the most taxing for me, both mentally and physically. I was exhausted by late afternoon, Monday through Friday, for four consecutive weeks. And yet through the teachers’ enthusiasm and generosity to share their language and culture (especially when local Honduran delicacies are shared with some conversation during break), I seemed to have gained partial relief and consolation from the lingering fatigue. It was actually something that I, personally, looked forward to each day. And in the end, I’ve observed that I seemed to have become (a) better-informed, culturally-graced, reader(s), listener(s) and speaker(s) of the language.

My true tests turned out to be my chosen ministry, teaching 3rd grade children English, Math, and Religion at the St. Francis Institute and my participation in meetings of the chosen base community (or 'pequenitas') of Parroquia de San Jose, on the last 4 weeks of our stay in Ocotepeque. I seemed to have performed respectably thanks to the Lord's providence and kudos to my teachers and our individual efforts.

I seemed to have some effect on those with whom we stayed briefly like the postulants in San Salvador and the post-novices in Guatemala City. Yet in those brief moments, our common bonds quickly surfaced and may have possibly been perceived or taken as 'inspiration'.

The month of August was my 'cool down' period. This started with William Graces' First Profession which was a wonderful celebration. There was time for a personal spiritual retreat for most of us post-novices before our House Orientation at Jamaica Plain. Not all took their retreats at this time, though. Some took their retreats after House Orientation or their vacations.

During orientation, we had time to get our bearings back and made special time for a focused Franciscan Reflection (especially as we intend to renew our vows). Orientation concluded with house work assignments that were probably intended to set us up for the new academic year.

We then took our planned individual vacations, leaving San Lorenzo Friary near empty once again for two weeks, until our return on August 30, giving enough time to prepare for our renewal of vows on the evening of September 1, 2009.

My journey continues...

