

the Capuchin Journey

ISSUE 4 · 2022



**Ministry
in Middletown**

Province Mission

The needs of the poor and the demands of justice shape our every ministerial endeavor. We attempt to promote the equality of 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 have allowed 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 Charisms

FRATERNITY of the friars joins them in their common goals and taps into their unique talents to most efficiently operate their own community as well as the communities they serve.

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

CONTEMPLATION requires they set aside time to reflect upon the progress and direction of their mission and to listen to God's guidance in their mission.

MINISTRY has led the Capuchins to appeal to and often allay 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.



CAPUCHIN FRANCISCANS
PROVINCE OF ST. MARY



From Our Provincial

By the time this issue of *The Capuchin Journey* arrives, we will find ourselves in the middle of the Advent season. What a wonderful time of year! The season of expectation.

As we all know, human beings can take important events and important people for granted. Thus in the four weeks of Advent, the Church provides us the opportunity to cultivate enthusiasm for the coming of the Christ child. By proclaiming a liturgical season, the Church gives us ample time to make space in our hearts and homes for Jesus to enter.

During this time, I think about one of the most intriguing Gospel passages, though it is not typically connected with Advent in the popular imagination. Jesus commissions seventy-two disciples, sending them out two by two.

“Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household.’ If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.” (Luke 10:3-6).

Christ is our peace. He was born into the world as the Prince of Peace, and he desires to enter our hearts and homes today as he did when he sent the original seventy-two disciples with the same mission.

Bring peace to the world—not alone, but two by two. The Capuchins take this age-old mission very seriously. Spreading peace rather than discord is always our

goal, and we prefer to do it side by side with our brothers.

The best example of this is our team for CYFM Mobile, Fr. Erik Lenhart and Fr. Fred Nickle (see Page 6). These two itinerant preachers are all over New York and New England warming people's hearts and sharing Franciscan peace. The best part about this team is their intergenerational solidarity. Father Erik is 39 and Father Fred is 84, and yet there they are, side by side, preaching to teenagers and grandparents alike! They certainly open the doors to the hearts of so many souls, through which the Prince of Peace may enter.

We can take inspiration from the example of these committed friars. In spite of all the social, political, and civil unrest in the world, we can make room for God's peace in our hearts. And not only that: we can commit ourselves to sharing that peace as the seventy-two disciples did. It's so simple. In the morning, as we open our eyes, we can say, “Peace to this house.” When we enter someone's home, we can say quietly or aloud, “Peace to this place and these people.”

Advent is the beginning of a new year. Let us imagine a year of peace.

Pax et Bonum,

Fr. Michael J. Greco, OFM Cap.

Fr. Michael J. Greco, O.F.M. Cap.
Provincial Minister

the Capuchin Journey

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of the Capuchin Order



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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Cover: Fr. Martin Curtin distributes communion during the Easter Vigil at St. Pius X Parish in Middletown, Conn., on April 16.

Opposite: Fr. Fred Nickle and Fr. Erik Lenhart, chaplains of CYFM Mobile, were honored for enriching the lives of the students of Maria Regina High School at the school's anniversary gala in New Rochelle, N.Y., on Oct. 27.

Features

8 Hope and Inspiration in Capuchin Vision
Br. Terence Taffe Witnesses Miracles in Adoption Ministry

10 Ministry in Middletown
People of St. Pius X Find Mission in the Capuchin Way

14 Hospitality for Refugees in Brooklyn

16 A Search Fulfilled
Discovering Beauty, Peace, and Truth as a Capuchin

18 A Thank-You From Capuchin Mobile Ministries

Departments

4 Around the Province

19 Directory

Around the Province



Welcome to Our New Affiliate!

Affiliation with the Province of St. Mary of the Capuchin Order is a formal acknowledgment given by the Province to persons (lay, religious, clerical) who have given faithful service to a local Capuchin fraternity or to the Province. That service is expressed by a generous giving of time, talent, or support of any kind to foster the life and ministry of the local fraternity or the Province.

At its meeting in May, the provincial council unanimously supported the proposal of the Saint Clare Fraternity in Yonkers, N.Y., to appoint Benjamin Glasser an affiliate.

Glasser has been a member of the Sacred Heart parochial community for nearly 60 years. During these years, he has been generous in service to Sacred Heart Parish and a friend to many friars of the Province, especially the senior friars at St. Clare.

Glasser has blessed us with his gifts of carpentry. Using the former wooden altar rails, he built a magnificent shrine honoring the Sacred Heart in the back of Sacred Heart Church. It is dedicated to Fr. Bernard Smith (d. 2010), who had a special, personal relationship with Glasser and his family.

He has applied his craft in many other projects. He restored the original refectory tables at Sacred Heart Friary. He constructed the altar of sacrifice, the altar of repose, and the ambo in the Blessed Solanus Casey Chapel. And he refurbished a large shrine crucifix now situated in the Capuchin cemetery.

Glasser is also helping us care for creation and live out the Church's *Laudato Si'* Action Platform. He built several raised beds on the Sacred Heart property for the friars' vegetable garden.

A Yonkers resident, Glasser has been married for 59 years. He has four children and eight grandchildren. A veteran of the U.S. Navy, he also served for 32 years in the Yonkers Fire Department, retiring with the rank of captain.

With his wife Ann, his family, and many friars of the Sacred Heart and St. Clare fraternities present, Glasser received his certificate of affiliation from **Fr. Michael Greco**, the provincial minister, on Sept. 17. It commemorates in a special way his generous contribution in preserving our patrimony and supporting our Capuchin Franciscan charisms.

Thank you, Ben, for your wonderful presence among us. May God bless you and your family, for you are a blessing to all of us and all who know you!

Fr. Michael Greco and Br. Roger Deguire present Benjamin Glasser with his certificate of affiliation at Sacred Heart Friary, Yonkers, on Sept. 17.

Capuchins Mark 75 Years in Okinawa



Fr. Maxim D'Souza, Bishop Emeritus Berard Oshikawa, Bishop Wayne Berndt, and Fr. Claver D'Souza at Asata Catholic Church, Naha, for the celebration of 75 years of the Capuchins in Okinawa.

September 5 marked the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Capuchins in Okinawa.

Fr. Felix Ley, soon to be bishop as apostolic administrator of the Ryukyu Islands, and Fr. Raymond (Alban) Bartoldus were the first two Capuchins to arrive in Okinawa after

World War II. Prior to the war there were about 100 Catholics in Okinawa. After the war, only five Catholics survived. Fathers Ray and Felix soon went to the island of Amami Oshima to the north of Okinawa to begin their mission work. As there had been no land battles on Amami Oshima, more

Catholics there had survived the war.

At that first Mass celebrated on Amami Oshima after the war, there was in attendance a young diocesan seminarian, Peter Baptist Ishigami, who in time would become a Capuchin and the bishop of the Diocese of Naha, Okinawa. Also at that Mass was a six-year-old boy, Berard Oshikawa, who would later become a Conventual Franciscan priest and eventually the successor to Bishop Peter Baptist. Both of them remembered vividly how the people cried at that first Mass after the war, as they were so happy.

After much research and compilation of letters and documents, Bishop Berard has published in Japanese a complete history of the Church in the Ryukyus. It includes many letters of Bishop Felix and Father Ray.

Keep us in prayers! God bless.

Bishop Wayne Berndt

Candidates Come and See Our Way of Life

The vocation ministry held its latest discernment retreat on Nov. 4-6 at San Lorenzo Friary in Jamaica Plain, Mass. We welcomed three candidates for prayer and fellowship.

It started Friday evening with meditation, evening prayer, and then dinner. **Fr. Michael Ramos** gave a talk on the vows we live as Capuchin friars. The evening ended with night prayer and a social with the candidates.

On Saturday, we began the day with silent meditation and morning prayer. **Fr. Will Tarraza** gave a talk on Franciscan spirituality and our life in poverty and minority. Father Will also celebrated the morning Mass and continued his talk within his homily. After the Mass, **Br. Gabriel Conlon, Br. Christopher Woods, and Br. Anthony Zuba** each took one of our candidates on an hour-long Emmaus walk to share their vocation stories and faith journeys. During the long afternoon break, our candidates visited the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston. Before evening prayer, **Postulant Shawn Natola** shared his vocation story and his experience in the formation program in Milwaukee, Wis. Brother Gabriel cooked a wonderful Italian meal for the evening, and we ended the night with an hour of Eucharistic adoration and night prayer.

Sunday began with meditation and morning prayer. Brother Gabriel gave a talk on one of our beloved holy Capuchins, St. Conrad of Parzham, presenting him as a source of inspiration for vocation discernment. After Mass, I gave a talk on the stages of initial formation and offered insights on candidacy and discernment. After lunch, candidates and friars made preparations for Capuchin Mobile Ministries' Sunday afternoon outreach trip. They made dozens of sandwiches and assembled drawstring bags filled with hygiene items and religious articles to be distributed to our friends who live on the streets.

I thank all the friars who gave talks and were present to our candidates on the November retreat. The next vocation discernment retreat weekend is Jan. 20-22 at St. Michael Friary in Brooklyn.

Please encourage young adult men to discern God's call with us. If you know of anyone who is interested in discerning with our Province and wants to attend a vocation event, please have them e-mail vocations@capuchin.org. Thank you for your prayers for vocations to Capuchin life.

Fr. Marvin Bearis



CYFM Mobile Strides the Hudson Valley

Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries (CYFM Mobile) came into fall strong after a robust summer of ministry.

We spent September planning for 2023: namely, for our summer programs. Summer Outreach Week will be held June 25-30; Capuchin Appalachian Mission will be July 8-16; and the Catholic Literature & Arts Summer Program is July 30-Aug. 5.

CYFM Mobile held two sold-out women's retreats at St. Lawrence Friary, Beacon, N.Y. We also celebrated Mass and led hikes with local men's groups.

Recently relocated to St. Joseph Parish in New Paltz, N.Y., **Fr. Erik Lenhart** has partnered with the campus ministries at SUNY New Paltz and Culinary Institute of America.

He gave the keynote address at Beauty Ever Ancient, a conference on the arts for Hudson Valley Catholics, held Oct. 15 at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Middletown, N.Y. He has also collaborated with the Archdiocese of New York to make presentations to local parish directors of faith formation on special topics for youth.

During October and November, we led three parish retreats for 8th graders in the Hudson Valley: St. John, Goshen; Sacred Heart, Highland Falls; and St. Mary, Marlboro. We conducted a parish mission at Our Lady of Fatima in Plattekill, N.Y.

CYFM Mobile's ministry with Catholic schools is bearing fruit. **Fr. Fred Nickle** and Father Erik celebrated Mass on a visit to the

students at School of the Holy Child in Rye on the solemnity of All Saints. Each student invited a saintly mentor in their life to attend. The gym where we celebrated the Eucharist numbered upwards of 550 students, parents, and faculty.

A highlight for us and our ministry was the 65th anniversary gala for Maria Regina High School in Hartsdale, N.Y. We were honored with the Student Enrichment Award and a proclamation plaque from the City of Yonkers, declaring Oct. 27, 2022, as Father Erik and Father Fred Day! It was a beautiful moment of gratitude. We were pleased to share this acknowledgment with our fellow Capuchins and our friends in ministry at the girls' academy.

Fr. Erik Lenhart and Fr. Fred Nickle

Fr. Erik Lenhart (center) and Fr. Fred Nickle celebrate Mass at School of the Holy Child, Rye, N.Y., on the feast of All Saints.

Capturing the Catholic Imagination

What is the Catholic imagination all about? **Fr. Robert Phelps**, a published poet, and **Fr. Erik Lenhart**, a producer of Catholic musicals, sought inspiration, meaning, and solidarity. They traveled to Texas for the biennial Catholic Imagination Conference held at the University of Dallas Sept. 30-Oct. 1.

There, they experienced the richness of creative minds like poets Dana Gioia and Paul Mariani, who, with other artists, examined the idea of beauty in both its secular and sacred dimensions.

“There are literally thousands of Catholic artists in the United States: visual artists, both in film and theatre, painters, and other visual artists; writers

of fiction and non-fiction, poets, and memoirists; producers and directors. Each of these artists has the ability to produce beauty, but also works of truth, in a society in need of truth,” said Father Bob. He said that an aim of this year’s conference, “The Future of the Catholic Literary Imagination,” was to organize this talent into an intentional group of artists intent on sharing, through the works of beauty and truth they produce, the Gospel and the Gospel values that their work features.

“The speakers at the conference not only defined beauty but demonstrated its importance in understanding ourselves and the world,” he said. “Ultimately, they demonstrated that the rehabilitation of beauty as both a

concept and a value is necessary to rebuild our culture, our churches, and society.”

Of course, rebuilding the Church and society has long been a Franciscan project. Saint Francis of Assisi used beauty as a means to rebuild, but he also celebrated beauty as an end in itself, holy and good. “Our father Francis cultivated beauty because he saw in the created world around him the fingerprints of his Lord,” Father Bob noted.

He and Father Erik were greatly impressed by their fellow attendees, describing them as gifted, wonderful artists. Friendships were formed. “It was truly a worthwhile experience,” he said.

A Blessing for the Hispanic Community



Fr. Robert Abbatiello offered the invocation and benediction at the City of Yonkers’ first-ever raising of the Salvadoran flag at City Hall on Sept. 15. He did so at the request of the president of the Yonkers Hispanic Cultural Foundation. Father Robert, who is pastor at Sacred Heart Parish and president of Sacred Heart High School, has

recently begun working with the foundation to develop stronger ties between the Hispanic community and Sacred Heart High School. In attendance at the ceremony were Mayor Mike Spano and numerous members of the Yonkers City Council; Daniel Erazo, consul general of El Salvador in New York City; and several Salvadoran residents of Yonkers.

Fr. Robert Abbatiello with city leaders and members of the Salvadoran community at Yonkers City Hall on Sept. 15.

HOPE AND INSPIRATION IN CAPUCHIN VISION

BR. TERENCE TAFFE WITNESSES MIRACLES IN ADOPTION MINISTRY



If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.” If this old Yiddish proverb is true, then the journey of Br. Terence Taffe must be giving our Lord quite a chuckle.

There were many things Terence did not know as a young college student in 1977. But there were two things that he did know: he did not want to be a religious, and he did not want to be a social worker. Studying with the Jesuits at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, N.Y., he was seeking a purpose (or perhaps just something to do), and so he signed up for the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. There, he was assigned to Downey Side, an adoption agency dealing especially with older children, founded and operated in 1967 by Fr. Paul Engel, a Capuchin. Terence lived in the house that Downey Side owned, and he worked with Father Paul and other friars who introduced him to Capuchin life. Father Paul was to become a friend, mentor, and “older brother” to Terence. It was not long before this friendship and working relationship called him both to a life with the Capuchins and to a life in social ministry.

Forty-five years later, Brother Terry has learned a few things about living as a Capuchin and about social work.

And so, after Father Paul passed away last May, Brother Terry became executive director of Downey Side to steward his friend and mentor’s vision. “Because Paul Engel was a Capuchin, he could see the child welfare system for what it was,” said Brother Terry. “He could see its deficits as faults in the system, not in the person. We are able to talk about the system, not just the kids who are a product of the system. He was a visionary—a prophet. He saw things in the late Sixties and early Seventies that others did not see.”

Seeking ‘Forever Homes’

Brother Terry helps the agency fulfill its mission of finding adoptive homes to those “unadoptable” older or troubled children who have spent years in the foster care system never knowing the security of a “forever home.” In addition to managing the marketing, IT, and other logistics of an active adoption agency, he continues to deal with a child welfare landscape that is ever-changing. “The system has changed, in some ways for the better, in some ways for the worse,” he says. But he is encouraged by the positive change in the public’s knowledge and perception of child welfare.

Br. Terence Taffe, executive director of Downey Side Inc., an adoption agency for older children, with Dominican Sr. Liz Engel.

“The general public is more aware of issues surrounding child welfare. In 1977 you just did not talk about how children were bounced from home to home to home.”

Even with this improvement in public education, Brother Terry observes that workers in an overburdened and underfunded child welfare system still don't have the time or resources to give the necessary attention to individual cases. “The child welfare system, in my opinion, is underfunded by a factor of 3-4 times,” he says. “Judges in NYC have cases in the hundreds, and social workers, usually very young people, often juggle 12 or more, which has them dealing with over 100 people at any given time.”

In this difficult landscape, Brother Terry estimates that, over the years, Downey Side has placed about 2,000 children into adoptive homes, with an average age over 11 years old—twice the national average. He credits the Capuchin vision of the human person for providing him with strength and inspiration to continue to meet such a challenge. “Human beings are deserving of love, whether they have mental health issues, are homeless, or are children of people with substance addiction. They all deserve love, and when the community says these children are unadoptable, what they are saying is that no one will love this child,” he says. “One of the things the Capuchins can do is to look at the situation and say, ‘Wait a minute, there IS someone who can love this child. I may not know who, but I can find them.’”

He went on: “We Capuchins often go in where angels fear to tread, attempting the impossible on behalf of the poor. We have been called the Marines of the Church, because we are the feet on the ground. We often go out and do something even if we don't know how to do it right away.” Brother Terry also observes that it is no coincidence that many, if not most, Capuchins have a “side gig” of a very personal outreach to people on the margins of society. “It's normally quiet, unsung,” he says. He himself has devoted some of his precious spare time to another non-profit he started, the Children Need Parents Campaign. The organization's goal is mainly to further educate the public on the issues and needs of older children in foster care.

Miracles

Brother Terry derives the hope and inspiration to do this work from what he calls the “miracles” he witnesses in his ministry. He speaks first about the kids. “The ultimate prognosis for most of our kids when they come in is that as adults, they will end up in residential treatment facilities, in jail, or just living miserable lives.” But Brother Terry has seen kids let go of their pain. “They start behaving. They go to school. They go to college, they get married, they work and pay taxes,” he says. “Normally, a child that has been in 10 different placements and been physically or emotionally abused, to let go of that requires up to and including medication, therapy, all the dimensions of a

treatment plan—plus a little help from God.”

He also sees God's hand guiding the families who are dealing with tough kids. He likens parenting to athletics. “There is no such thing as easy parenting, but if being a parent is like being an athlete, foster and adoptive parenting is like being an Olympic athlete.” But whether fostering or adopting, parenting one of these children requires the same level of commitment. He observes, “At times, they first say they can't do it or don't want to do it, but when they change their minds and honor their commitment, that is divine intervention.”



Brother Terry discovered his calling to be a Capuchin and to a career in social work after meeting Fr. Paul Engel and volunteering with him at Downey Side.

Divine intervention, helped along, perhaps, by the screening and after-adoption support Downey Side offers. Brother Terry speaks of the level of trust this builds with the adoptive families. This includes the sharing of “war stories” with prospective families in the beginning of the process to ensure that those who remain are fully informed and more likely to fulfill their obligations to the adoptive child. “We trust our families, because we first screen them and make sure they are exposed to other families that have been there so they know the real story. If we establish a relationship of trust, we will get the best from people. If you don't have a relationship of trust, you don't have a relationship.”

This relationship Downey Side builds continues even after a child's custody transfers to the adoptive parents. They provide support to the adoptive family as they continue to develop their relationship with the child. “We have to,” says Brother Terry, “or we would get all the kids back.”

Despite all of the challenges of his ministry, Brother Terry is hopeful. “I remain optimistic primarily because of the families we work with and the power of Love. The Church is about fellowship and Eucharist, which I see alive in the people taking in our kids. That power will always win out in the end.”

You can make a donation to Downey Side Inc. at downeyside.org/donate.

MINISTRY IN MIDDLETOWN

PEOPLE OF ST. PIUS X FIND MISSION IN THE CAPUCHIN WAY

In the spring of 1956, the Province of St. Mary needed a home for the novitiate of its lay brothers. The friars looked to Connecticut. In the process of discussions between the friars and Bishop Bernard Flanagan of the Diocese of Norwich, the Province also agreed to take custody of a parish to be established in the burgeoning Westfield district of Middletown.

The following year, Fr. Walter O'Brien (d. 2013) was appointed pastor of that parish, which was named St. Pius X. The parish as yet had neither a church building nor parishioners! But Father Walter had a bold, direct, and uniquely Capuchin solution to the challenge of starting up. He simply walked the surrounding community, knocked on doors, and invited all who

would listen to be part of this new parish family. Under Father Walter's stewardship, the parish built a church and rectory on 16 acres provided by the diocese. And today, 1,200 families attend Mass.

Much has changed in the 65 years since Father Walter took that long, fruitful walk. But one thing has not changed: the commitment to outreach that was a founding principle of the parish. And no wonder: after all, every pastor who has shepherded the parish has been a Capuchin.

"The world has changed, but what remains consistent here are the friars," says Carol Butler, coordinator of faith formation at St. Pius X. "Something about that rope they wear around their waist changes the game," she joked.

"They each bring their own styles, their individualism—but each shares the same code of living: a common energy and a spirit."

The current pastor, Fr. Martin Curtin, agrees. "Because we are friars and live together as brothers, there is an expectation of collaboration. Capuchins created the parish from the ground up in response to the local bishop's request that we start a parish. The history of this place is the people of the parish being energized to do things that we friars might not have been able to get to."

Many groups common to other parishes have been established at St. Pius X over the years: CYO, Men's Club, RCIA, and Rosary Altar Society, to name a few. But its outreach

The Capuchins have served the people of God in Middletown since 1957, when St. Pius X was established.



Fr. Martin Curtin, current pastor of St. Pius X, praises the collaboration between the friars and the parishioners.

ministries distinguish St. Pius X from other Catholic communities. Many people have come to the parish through these ministries, and they are why many people continue to make St. Pius their home.

Butler discovered the Capuchins when she became a catechist with Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries. “I did not have a particular knowledge of my own faith, but when I turned 32, I said, ‘It’s time to learn,’” she said. She started working with children through CYFM’s retreat programs.

“That first weekend I worked with them simply changed my life. It really set me on a path to the Capuchin way—connecting what Jesus had to say to your everyday life. Only sweat the important things, the meat and potatoes of Scripture,” she said.

Butler credits the “Capuchin Way” and her involvement with CYFM with enriching her faith. And through CYFM she was introduced to the parish that would become her home. “At that time, I didn’t really know St. Pius X,” she said. “I would pass by or come here for meetings. But then I got to know some of the people, and finally, one day in 2006, I ran into Fr. Bob Abbatiello, the pastor at that time, who I knew through CYFM.” In 2008 she left her former parish and came to St. Pius X.

An Appetite for Giving

Since then, Butler has been among the everyday saints who serve the poor of

the parish and the community beyond. As a founding and sustaining member of Amazing Grace Food Pantry in Middletown, St. Pius X takes up a food collection during the offertory at every Sunday liturgy. A recent weekend collection garnered 237 pounds of groceries for the pantry and soup kitchen. The parish also planted a vegetable garden on the property. Currently, half a dozen parishioners tend the garden; everything they harvest goes to Amazing Grace. “What doesn’t go to the deer gets gathered up and sent directly to the soup kitchen,” Father Martin said. “There is a real appetite to serve here. There is actually a sense of competition now over who will cook the Sunday night meal at Amazing Grace!”

How hungry are the people to help? Father Martin continued: “Another interesting example of how St. Pius X punches above its weight is in our parish giving tree. A committee within the parishes reaches out to see how we can help those outside of our parish and diocese. It’s a sense of spreading out and seeking opportunities to serve those who will not necessarily come through our doors. The appetite for giving is impressive.”

Butler shared another example. “After Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico in 2017, it was announced that we would be gathering needed supplies. A large truck showed up that was going to make some pickups.” But as it turns

out, St. Pius X was the only stop that truck had to make: “We filled the truck. People just kept dropping things off!”

Longtime parishioner Flo Flechner has run another parish ministry called SHARE (Sharing, Helping, and Reaching Everyone). Founded in 1998, SHARE hosts receptions for the bereaved in the parish hall following their loved ones’ funerals. “We also invite bereaved families who have lost someone in the past year to come and share a hot meal together to celebrate their loved ones,” she said. Covid-19 has put a temporary hold on this ministry, but they are looking to start up again soon.

Outreach goes beyond keeping folks fed. Another passion some parishioners share is keeping people warm both physically and emotionally, which they do through the prayer shawl ministry.



Blankets knit by members of the prayer shawl ministry.

“I am pretty involved with the prayer shawl ministry,” said Fr. Ernie Bedard, the parochial vicar. “It’s a great ministry with a wonderful group of ladies who knit shawls to benefit those in need. My role is to bless the shawls before they go out. Often, they go to parishioners who are sick. They make small white blankets for children registered for baptism. We even sent one to Texas for a little girl who is battling cancer. The ladies also knit scarves, mittens, and hats that will often go to people in need through Amazing Grace Food Pantry or Capuchin Mobile Ministries.”



Parishioners tend a vegetable garden whose harvest goes to Amazing Grace Food Pantry in Middletown.

Capuchin Connection

Capuchin Mobile Ministries, which provides pastoral care to Boston's homeless community, is one of the provincial ministries that influences life at St. Pius X. Another is the annual Capuchin Appalachian Mission organized by Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries. Adults and teenagers of the parish have made the trip to Harlan, Ky., over 27 times, rebuilding homes for needy families. CYFM chaplains Fr. Erik Lenhart and Fr. Fred Nickle have visited the parish to lead days of recollection, like during Lent. Through CYFM programming, the adults have become stronger catechists, and the youths have grown in their faith.

The Capuchin connection at St. Pius X goes beyond these provincial ministries. "We also 'pirate' certain ideas from other areas of the Province that can work for us," Father Martin said. "Even if we can't bring friars to do it, we get some great ideas through other provincial parishes."

In the view of long-time parishioner Shirl Godbout, it is the friars who serve at St. Pius X themselves who are the most valuable influence the Capuchins bring to parish life and culture. "It's just perfect here," she said. "I know my guys. It's the guys—the guys make the people good, and the good people support the friars. It's a reciprocal relationship." Parishioner Flo Flechner agreed. "There is no friend like a friar; it's right from the heart. When you're in a jam, that's the guy you gotta go to."

It seems that once a friar comes to Middletown, he is adopted as family. "Don't forget where you really live," Godbout has been known to say when one of her "boys" is reassigned.

Often, they do come back. One such returnee is Br. Brian Champoux, who at the age of 18 started his six-month postulancy at St. Pius X Friary in February 1968. After several provincial assignments, Brother Brian was assigned to mission work in the Custody of Guam, where he remained for 40 years. "I never thought I'd be out there that long," he says with a smile. In Guam, he served as a formation director and as a teacher.

When it was time to return to the Province, Brother Brian chose to come back to his first home as a Capuchin. Now "retired" for three years, he continues to



Br. Brian Champoux tutors children at St. John Paul II Regional Catholic School from the convenience of his office at St. Pius X.



Fr. Ernie Bedard, the parochial vicar, prepares a lasagna dinner in early November for winners of the parish spring auction.

teach, being a volunteer tutor for students at Saint John Paul II School who need extra help or who have learning disabilities. He also serves as a catechist in the parish.

If you ask Father Ernie, he would gladly make St. Pius X his permanent assignment. “When I got assigned around Easter 2019, I had come on sabbatical and was helping fill in where I could. I never had the experience of welcome and being pulled into a family as I had here,” he said. “I was almost immediately pulled into doing RCIA. Fitting in and finding your niche has never been an issue here at St. Pius. I really feel that the people and the culture here really make it easy.”

Connecting During Covid

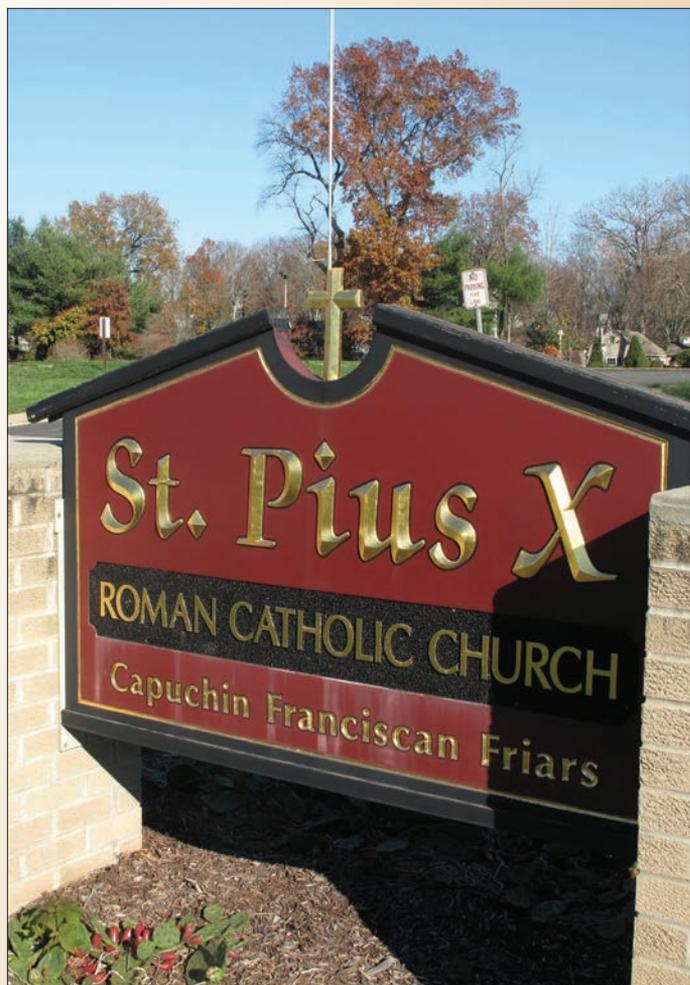
Like the rest of the world, St. Pius X was forced to contend with the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Among these was how to keep the students engaged in the faith formation ministry during the lockdowns of 2020. “When Covid sent everyone home, we met with other parishes in the area to discuss how we would

manage this,” Butler said. “Where most were solely concerned about what kind of work they would send home with the kids, we also went into ministry mode and started reaching out to the kids’ families to find out what their needs were. We also learned quickly how to keep them involved in ministry while maintaining safe social distance. For instance, we did outside drive-thru food drop-offs with a smaller crew of kids.”

In addition, the students donated colorful blankets to children receiving psychiatric care at the Albert J. Solnit Center. “A small group of our parish kids would prepare and send those blankets to the center to provide a bit of color and light to the stark rooms that clients would find upon arrival,” Butler said.

“Like many parishes, we continued virtual classes and Masses,” Father Martin said. But he took a page from his predecessor when he initiated a door-to-door Covid-19 outreach program during the height of the pandemic. “We put together small boxes containing a bulletin, a letter, some cookies, masks with the St. Pius logo, and hand sanitizer to deliver about 250 kits, door to door. We did it to keep people feeling connected. Why do we have to sit around and wait for people to show up?”

Father Walter would be proud.





Hospitality for Refugees in Brooklyn

It started with one family and a favor. Late in August, our parish of St. Michael-St. Malachy in Brooklyn was preparing a celebration. Br. Francisco Serrano had just moved to St. Michael Friary and was about to make his perpetual profession of vows. On the weekend of his profession, a family staying at a shelter on Dumont Avenue came to our parish looking for clothing. Fr. Ed Mason, the pastor of a Catholic parish near that shelter, sent the family across the neighborhood to us. Could we help them?

Fr. Brendan Buckley, the pastor at St. Michael, took note. The family was from Venezuela.

Very soon, more refugees came to our doorstep. The New York City government found itself overwhelmed

as buses of refugees, mainly from Venezuela and Nicaragua, kept arriving from other states whose governors sent them. Most of the refugees were single adult males. The city decided to house them in another Brooklyn shelter on Williams Avenue, mere blocks away from St. Michael. As word of mouth spread that there was a Catholic church in the area, the stream of arrivals at our parish became a river.

Father Brendan and Brother Francisco assessed the situation. It was immediately clear that all these men needed warm clothing. All they had were the clothes on their back, namely, sweatpants and color-coded T-shirts issued to them while they were in custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Their only

St. Michael-St. Malachy Parish in Brooklyn served a hot lunch for 150 migrants on Oct. 29 in collaboration with chaplains of the New York Police Department. Fr. Brendan Buckley and Br. Francisco Serrano are leading the parish's refugee relief efforts.

footwear was flip flops. None of them were prepared for winter in New York City.

Our brothers sprang into action. They began to procure clothing, seeking small- and medium-sized items for the men, sneakers, and waterproof winter boots.

They also began to serve hot lunches in the basement of the parish offices. At the outset, the parish was serving meals daily, feeding as many as 83 people on one day, but this proved to be exhausting. Now the parish offers meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with Brother Francisco cooking culturally appropriate meals that give refugees a taste of home. Our guests enjoy the delicious heaping plates of rice and beans and almost always ask for seconds.

“They’re very grateful,” said Brother Francisco, who noted that many of the individuals they feed want to give back in some way by helping out at the parish.

By Father Brendan’s account, at least 500 refugees have come to the parish seeking assistance. The volume of refugee arrivals has lessened since the peak in September, but the needs remain great. The friars are continuing to seek information about where people are being sheltered. It is hard to anticipate how the migrant situation will evolve. “It’s different every day; we don’t know what will happen next week,” said Father Brendan. “We do what we have to do.”

For Father Brendan, that includes contacting people every day with requests for financial assistance. For Brother Francisco, that involves cooking the meals, interacting with the refugees, and questing for clothing.

They have been aided by volunteers from neighboring parishes who help with the hot meals. And the lay staff of St. Michael-St. Malachy have been working heroically every day to address the immediate needs of refugees who come to the door while still managing the day-to-day operations of the parish.

Going forward, the parish will serve the refugees in its old grammar school building. With funds from the Province, Father Brendan purchased a previously used oven and refrigerator for the preparation of the meals.

While meeting the refugees’ immediate needs for clothing and food, the friars are seeking a long-range plan for care for their human needs. Father Brendan has met with leaders from East Brooklyn Congregations, a faith-based community organization that seeks to coordinate a humanitarian response with New York City’s government. The faith leaders are seeking to understand the refugees’ legal situation and advise them of their rights with respect to work and social benefits. They are also trying to synchronize their offering of social services (meals, clothing, ESL classes) with the schedule of the shelters where the refugees are staying.

Around the Province, a few of our Capuchin parishes have stepped up to send warm winter clothing to Brooklyn. Brother Francisco drove to Mary, Mother of Mercy Parish in Interlaken, N.Y., in October to collect the clothing they donated. Similar clothing drives took place this fall at Sacred Heart Parish in Yonkers, N.Y., St. Joseph Parish in New Paltz, N.Y., and St. Pius X Parish in Middletown, Conn.

Despite the challenges of meeting the daily unexpected needs of the refugees arriving at their door, “It’s really a wonderful grace-filled opportunity for us,” said Father Brendan. “We don’t know how long this is going to last,” added Brother Francisco. “We just go day by day and try to give them as much as we can with dignity and love.”

You can also make a difference! Your donations to the Province can help us sustain St. Michael’s efforts to feed and clothe the refugees. You can make a check payable to Province of St. Mary of the Capuchin Order (memo line: Provincial Refugee Ministry) and mail it to the Capuchin Mission and Development Office, 110 Shonnard Place, Yonkers, NY 10703-2226.

May God bless you and our newest neighbors in Brooklyn.



With financial assistance from the Province, St. Michael purchased a previously used oven and refrigerator for use in preparation of its hot meals for refugees. The parish has set up an improved dining area in the old grammar school building.

A SEARCH FULFILLED

DISCOVERING BEAUTY, PEACE, AND TRUTH AS A CAPUCHIN

by Fr. John Tokaz

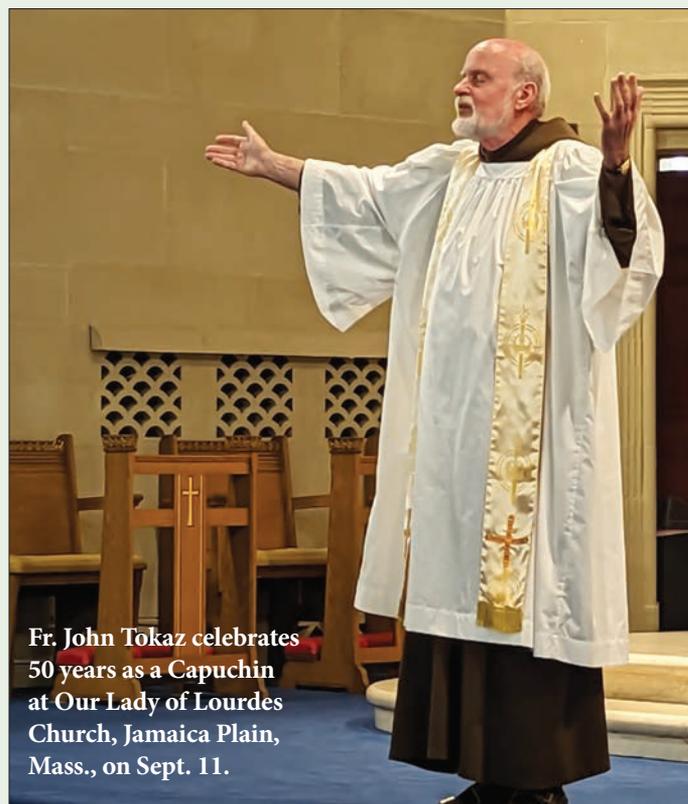
It was 1972, and I was 22 years old. I was earnestly, tirelessly looking and searching for peace, community, and a sense of joy. Having spent my teenage and my young adult years in the milieu of the Vietnam War, the “hippie culture,” and the exaltation of drugs and rock-and-roll, I was desperate for true beauty, true peace, and genuine truth. I was desperate for God and for a spiritual relationship with God, who could answer my questions and satisfy my longings.

My family was Roman Catholic, and I was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. But Catholicism had seemed to change since the Second Vatican Council. The comforting religious expressions and the feelings I had experienced in church as a child were difficult for me to recover in my teenage years. The Mass was very different; devotions were few; and even the appearance of the interior of church buildings had become unrecognizable. Once-familiar rituals had become new and even strange. Consequently, my search for God involved a search for the comfort and dependability that my Roman Catholic faith had given me as a young child. I wanted to feel my faith again.

I never did lose confidence that even in this “new” Church, God could relieve the restlessness of spirit I felt. Even though it all seemed very different, I believed that my longing for beauty, community, peace, and truth would somehow still be fulfilled in Catholicism.

When a young man about my age joined a group of Franciscan friars called the Capuchins, I was intrigued. I knew him: he was bright and intelligent, very social, and quite aware of all those present-day influences on American society circa 1972. I paid him a visit and immediately saw that he was content, yet challenged; fulfilled, yet still growing personally; in other words, he was happy. Perhaps this group of brown-robed, joyful, committed friars called Capuchins could do the same for me in my quest for the comfort of God. On Aug. 31, 1972, I was given the habit, and the discoveries began; the learning began; the satisfaction began.

Having never gone to Catholic school as a child or teenager, I had a limited catechesis in the faith. In our novitiate, which was then in Milton, Mass., professed friars led classes on the history of the Capuchin Order, canon law for religious, theology, and spirituality. These classes were all very helpful, interesting, and engaging. However, my real education in Christian life—in Gospel life, in fraternal life, and in spiritual life—began outside



Fr. John Tokaz celebrates 50 years as a Capuchin at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Jamaica Plain, Mass., on Sept. 11.

the classroom and without any books. My genuine education—and my discoveries about God, peace, truth, and beauty—occurred (and continues to occur) while living with the Capuchin friars themselves. The lived Capuchin experience was, and still is, my classroom and my school.

The friary became a school of patience. Here I encountered men of all ages (from 19 to 80 years old), from very different places of origin (from urban New York City to tropical Guam), of very different educational backgrounds (from high school graduates to Ph.D. candidates) and from all social classes (from economically challenged to upper middle class). They all lived together. Through the continual exercise of understanding, these men were able to be tolerant and even accepting of one another. These men demonstrated patience. Of course, they did not do this perfectly; rather, it was through constant effort that they practiced patience with one another. I learned from them how to put my personal preferences aside for the common good. I learned not only how to be patient but also how to build the spiritual foundations for the vow of obedience, wherein I was challenged to step out of myself and step into the reality of God.

The friary became a school of spiritual consolation and comfort. I saw (and continue to see) friars who were comfortable simply being with God. Through dedication to prayer together and through true devotion to contemplation, the Capuchins taught me how to sit quietly with God, experience the presence of God, and to express a personal relationship with God, in common prayer and liturgical prayer. I realized that I could be comfortable with God if I took the time to practice being comfortable with God. Enjoying God's presence was and is a goal.

Patience and comfort with our most high and glorious God in prayer contributed to my progressive learning of the supreme virtue of charity. In our Capuchin friaries, I have lived with friars who are absolute heroes of charity. Capuchin charity is distinctive, for it takes place first and foremost among the brothers in fraternity. I have seen and continue to see friars be charitable to one another and take time for one another, showing compassion, kindness, patience, and understanding. With the Capuchins I experienced a type of charity that is abundant and gracious; a charity that is simple and genuine; a charity that is the by-product of our

Capuchin poverty. It is a charity that creates and sustains joy.

In 50 years of Capuchin life, I have been privileged to witness and be the recipient of the "Capuchin spirit." I have seen how our life together in fraternity spills over and out of the friary and into our world through our various works. Whatever the kind of ministry they perform, Capuchins seem to be able to bring to their work patience, the comfort of God, and an unassuming charity, which is focused not on success but on peace.

I am privileged to have been part of the Capuchin spirit, our Capuchin ministry, and the Capuchin experience of God for 50 years. I am grateful for what I have learned and been given by God through my fellow brothers. I hope to be able to continue to contribute, with the help of my brothers, to the coming of the Kingdom of God in our world. May it be so by the love of God.

Fr. John Tokaz commemorated 50 years of religious life as a Capuchin Franciscan friar with a celebration in Jamaica Plain, Mass. on Sept. 11.



Father John says he has received the gifts of patience, the comfort of God, and charity in his 50 years as a Capuchin.

A Thank-You From Capuchin Mobile Ministries

Through the generations, our holiest Capuchin friars distinguished themselves as friends of the poor. They were renowned as questors, begging alms not only for their own Capuchin brothers but also for the needs of the poor in their towns and cities.

In earlier ages, questing was as simple as knocking on door after door of homes and bakeries. Today, questing has become a sophisticated operation. Friars operate social services. Friars manage solidarity funds. And to obtain the resources necessary to serve the poor, friars do fundraising.

But when it comes down to it, it all goes back to basics: the friars go from person to person, asking for help to meet the human needs of others.

This is where we are at with Capuchin Mobile Ministries, our outreach ministry of pastoral care to people experiencing homelessness in Greater Boston. We friars are getting used to personally asking for help from everyone to meet the material and spiritual needs of people living on the streets.

Over the last two and half years, we have asked for help from parishes in the Archdiocese of Boston. We have asked for help from our Capuchin parishes around the Province. We have asked for help from fellow women and men in religious communities. We have asked for help from students of all ages. We have asked for help from people of all faiths or who do not hold to any particular faith. God's abundance has astounded us again and again through the generosity of others.

In 2022, we put together a team of advisors to help us raise the visibility of our ministry in Boston and to build our capacity to raise money for the ministry. Working with our development office and provincial leadership, this committee organized a benefit that we held on Oct. 5 near the Seaport District in Boston. An audience of 80 benefactors and volunteers gathered with the friars to celebrate the beginnings of our ministry and its growth since 2020.

Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, the archbishop of Boston and our Capuchin brother, was our special guest. He gave a few remarks that put our ministry in the context of the phenomenon of homelessness in Massachusetts and the local Church's mission to the poor.

We thank everyone who attended in person for their generosity of time, talent, and treasure. We thank all of you who made financial contributions from afar. And we thank God whose providence has been the foundation and mainstay of this ministry from the beginning.

Please keep the mission of Capuchin Mobile Ministries in your prayers, and please consider making

a generous gift for its sustenance, at whatever level you can afford. Visit capuchin.org/mobile to learn about your giving options. May God watch over the poor we meet in our travels throughout Greater Boston, and may God bless you, our supporters, in all things.



Friars celebrated the mission of Capuchin Mobile Ministries with benefactors, volunteers, and Cardinal Seán O'Malley at a benefit on Oct. 5.

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Good Shepherd Friary & Parish
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Holy Cross Residence & Parish
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Phone: 212-246-4732

St. John the Baptist Residence
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New York, NY 10001
Phone: 212-564-9070

Our Lady of Sorrows Friary & Parish
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Infant Jesus Residence
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St. Peter Friary



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Capuchin Mission & Development Office

The goal of the Capuchin Development Office is to fund 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 generating support for the works of justice and mercy undertaken by Capuchin friars across the globe.

If you are interested in supporting our mission, please contact George Vogel at (212) 564-0759 ext. 284 or gvogel@capuchin.org or visit our website at www.capuchin.org.

