

the Capuchin Journey

ISSUE 1 · 2023



From Ashes to New Life

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

The role of provincial minister in the Capuchin Order is accurately described by the expression “big fish in a small pond.” I am given responsibility for the support of 133 friars and their ministries in our Province and in our missions. It keeps me busy, and sometimes I lament being “the guy in charge.”

Lately, however, my perspective has been broadened. In the last few weeks, I have spent a lot of time with our general minister, Br. Roberto Genuin, the major superior of all the Capuchins worldwide—over 10,000 of us. His job makes my job seem very small, indeed! Furthermore, by all accounts, he is indefatigable! By the way, in case you never noticed, Capuchins use the title “Brother” for all friars, whether ordained or not. (Brother Roberto is a priest.) It is a symbol of our Franciscan connection with one another and with all of creation, and Brother Roberto exemplifies this beautifully.

Throughout his six-year term in office, Brother Roberto has been making great efforts to visit friars around the world. In early February, he joined me in traveling to our Province's mission in Japan (see Page 5). Now, as of this writing in late February, he has come to the United States to tour our many parishes and friaries in New York and New England.

Brother Roberto's presence has been nothing less than inspiring to the brothers, especially our men in retirement. As a matter of fact, our men

at our infirmary, St. Lawrence Friary, Beacon, N.Y., were so excited that the general minister was visiting that they prepared a very special welcome. As we drove up, the chapel bell was ringing in the tower. As we walked into the front entrance of the friary, we saw all the friars gathered in their wheelchairs and on their walkers. They serenaded Brother Roberto with five verses of Saint Francis' “Canticle of the Creatures,” singing just as they used to do when they were young men in formation. It was beautiful! Brother Roberto was overjoyed. Later he told the friars that he is most impressed with the holiness of our older men around the world who can no longer work in active ministries but spend their days praying for the Order and the Church. I couldn't agree more.

This evening (Feb. 24), Brother Roberto will be attending an evening Mass at our parish in Brooklyn, St. Michael-St. Malachy, to bless their newest statue of Blessed Solanus Casey. Please pray for our general minister and all of the friars around the world. And please always be assured of the prayers of the friars of the Province of St. Mary for you!

Pax et Bonum,

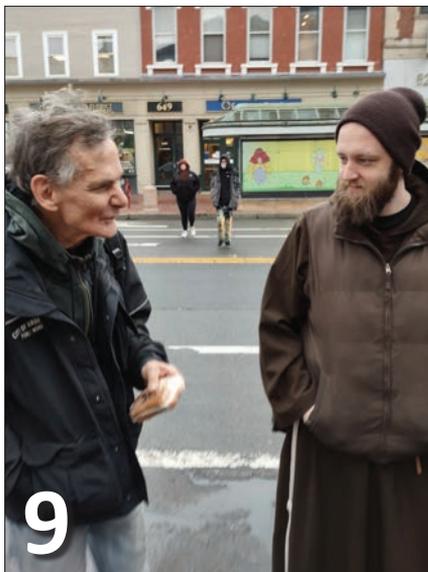
Fr. Michael J. Greco, OFM Cap.

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

the Capuchin Journey

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of the Capuchin Order



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

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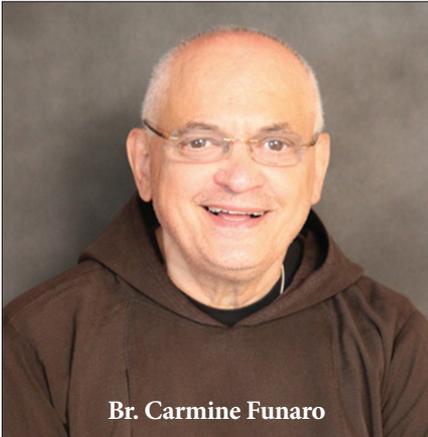
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Cover: Fr. Brendan Buckley, upper right, and the people of St. Michael-St. Malachy Parish, Brooklyn, on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22.

Opposite: Fr. Michael Greco, left, with Br. Roberto Genuin, general minister of the Capuchin Order (third from left), and the provincial council at Sacred Heart Friary, Yonkers, N.Y., Feb. 23.

Around the Province

Br. Carmine Funaro and Fr. John Baptist Riordan, RIP



Br. Carmine Funaro

They both came from New York City, and now they both have gone to heaven.

We bade farewell to two friars this winter: **Br. Carmine Funaro**, who died at 82 on Jan. 11, and **Fr. John Baptist Riordan**, who died at 77 on Jan. 28.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, James Funaro Jr. entered the Capuchin order on Oct. 3, 1965, completing his novitiate at St. Pius X Friary in Middletown, Conn. He took the religious name Carmine in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. He professed his perpetual vows on Dec. 12, 1971.

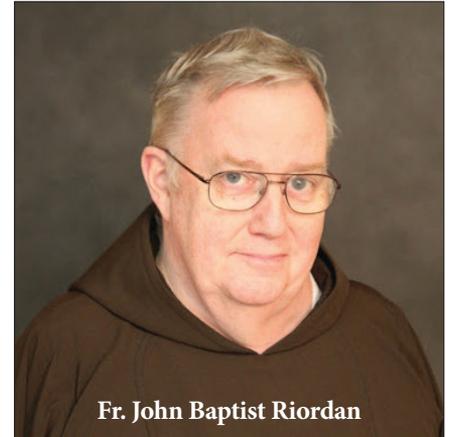
Having left school at age 16 to support his parents and five siblings, Brother Carmine was well-schooled in the virtues of hard work and personal sacrifice by the time he became a Capuchin. He practiced these virtues with excellence for over 50 years. He ministered to his fellow brothers as a cook and tailor, and he also served in the formation of younger brothers in assignments in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York.

Brother Carmine touched the lives of many people at the parishes where he was in residence, including Our Lady Queen of Angels in East

Harlem, New York City, and St. Joseph Parish in Portland, Me. While serving at St. Joseph he began a ministry called Families Together, gathering families weekly for games, spiritual reflection, and refreshments. He would bring many of those families upstate to St. Fidelis Friary, overlooking scenic Cayuga Lake in Interlaken, N.Y., for summer getaways.

In his retirement at St. Clare Friary in Yonkers, N.Y, Brother Carmine welcomed anyone who came knocking at the friary door, attending quietly to their needs like many a holy Capuchin porter before him. He developed his talent as an artist, creating portraits of saints, friends, and athletes. To his final days he cultivated a gentle, humble, and spiritual presence, grounded in Jesus and Francis, and devoted to Our Lady of Mount Carmel (and the New York Mets).

In his funeral homily on Jan. 14, **Fr. Arlen Harris** celebrated Brother Carmine as one of a “Murderers’ Row” of excellent friars he met from the Our Lady Queen of Angels fraternity whose good example inspired him to become a Capuchin friar. Paying tribute to his service as fraternity cook, Father Arlen revealed the “secret ingredients” that made Brother Carmine a good Capuchin friar: “The waters of baptism; a love of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary; prayer and service; the active living of our life in community and serving others in the many places he had been; a willingness to try new things, the humility of recognizing mistakes made and the courage to learn from them; and the art of learning to adapt and grow.”



Fr. John Baptist Riordan

Known as Sandy, J.B., or most affectionately as Bappy, Francis Xavier Riordan was born in Woodhaven, Queens. He entered the Capuchin novitiate on Aug. 11, 1963, and received the religious name John Baptist. He was ordained to the priesthood on Sept. 1, 1971.

For most of his Capuchin life, Father John Baptist lived in Manhattan and Yonkers, and he served as a parish priest and pastor, guardian of the local fraternity, spiritual assistant to Secular Franciscans, vocation director, guidance counselor, high school teacher, college professor, and campus minister.

Father John Baptist thrived in the hustle and bustle of midtown Manhattan, where he ministered at the Church of St. John the Baptist. He was a fixture on the streets of Midtown and threw himself into the cultural life of New York City, enjoying many a Broadway show. He moonlighted as chaplain to members of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, and he also worked as a balloon handler in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade!

The friars remembered him as being friendly to all comers,

someone who sought to minister well to the lonely, the lost, and the forgotten. He was one of several Capuchins who became a Missionary of Mercy during the Jubilee of Mercy in 2016. He kept the acquaintance of the many people he met and was renowned for sending a thousand Christmas cards every year.

Fr. Thomas Franks, guardian of the Holy Cross-St. John the Baptist fraternity, paid tribute in his Feb. 3 homily to a friar who was also a mentor, friend, and companion on the journey of life. He described how Father John Baptist performed magic shows for youths residing at Children's Village in New York State, not only to entertain them, but also to invite them into fellowship and guidance, and to inspire an encounter with a God who works wonders and who can wonderfully transform all people.

"We celebrate the life of a priest devoted to extending hospitality, kindness, and, most importantly, the love of God to everyone he met and saw, from the stranger to the most faithful friend he encountered at St. John," he said.

Visit to Okinawa

We give thanks to God for sustaining the Capuchin presence in Okinawa for 75 years. **Fr. Michael Greco**, provincial minister, visited the Custody of Japan for a week this winter, in tandem with Fr. Roberto Genuin, the general minister of the Capuchin Order, and the friars of Holy Trinity Province, Karnataka, India, who also support the custody. Arrival at Oroku, Okinawa on Saturday, Jan. 28, followed with a liturgy and celebration at St. Francis Parish on Sunday. After meetings on Monday, **Bishop Wayne Berndt** hosted dinner at his residence. **Fr. Maxim D'Souza**, the custodial minister, led a delegation to the mainland of Japan, with visits on Tuesday to Fukuoka and the parishes around that city. The delegation visited Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima on Wednesday. They moved on to Tokyo that Thursday, with visits to the parishes on that side of Japan. "Please continue to pray for our brothers in our custodies," said Father Michael.



Fr. Will Tarraza

Next Stop, California

Our initial formation of new friars is done collaboratively with the provinces of the North American and Pacific Capuchin Conference. The novitiate program in Santa Ynez, Calif., is led by a team of three friars from different provinces.

Fr. Will Tarraza, who is currently our Province's post-novitiate and presbyteral formation director, will be joining the novitiate team in California in June. The term of the assignment is three years.

With appreciation, the provincial ministers of the NAPCC thank Father Will and the Province for our commitment to the formation of all the brothers in the conference.

Spotlight on Sacred Heart School



It was Catholic Schools Week from Jan. 29 to Feb. 4. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, came to Yonkers to tour Sacred Heart School, celebrate Mass with Fr. Robert Abbatiello and Fr. John McHugh, and visit the students.



PARTNERS IN MISSION

LAY EMPLOYEES SUPPORT OUR WORK IN THE VINEYARD

Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” Matthew 9:35-38

Often, when we reflect on these words of Christ, we associate them with the need for more men and women to serve the Church as clergy and consecrated religious. Indeed, for many years, what was considered the work of the Church had been performed largely by priests and deacons and by nuns and brothers in various religious orders.

But in the latter part of the 20th century, a shift began to occur in the United States. A decrease in vocations to consecrated life and a deeper understanding of the universal call to holiness, in part ushered in by the Second Vatican Council, brought about a surge in the laity’s ministerial activity. It led also to their taking on careers in the Church. Many if not most of these lay employees worked in major Catholic institutions like schools or hospitals. A smaller group, often overlooked, worked for religious orders.

For decades now, the Province of St. Mary has employed lay people in a wide range of roles, including administration, development, health care, and maintenance. The provincial administrative office estimates that over the generations, between 200 and 300 persons have been employed by the Province.

“The friars consider ourselves thoroughly blessed by the wonderful people who work for the province and partner with us in our ministries,” said Fr. Michael Greco, provincial minister. “We are highly aware of what gifts and talents we possess as Capuchin friars and in what capacities we are lacking. Thank the Lord that we have many friends who can fill in those gaps for us and bring their own tremendous talents to bear for the good of the Church.”

There are 23 full-time employees working with us today. They are working at St. Clare Friary, Yonkers (9); the provincial offices in White Plains (8); the mission and development office in Yonkers (4); and Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries (2). These employees are an essential part of our Province, providing support and assistance to the friars, enabling them to carry out our shared mission. While the friars are the public face of the Province, it is the lay employees who often work behind the scenes to help ensure that everything runs smoothly in God’s vineyard.

‘I Get to See the Good’

Running any organization—smoothly or not—requires funding. Being a non-profit religious institution, the Province relies on donations from the Catholic community to raise the funds needed to carry out its mission. Responsibility for this fundraising falls squarely on the shoulders of the staff in the development office.

Alexander Muñoz has been a development associate for 14 years. His responsibilities have included management of fundraising mailings, database management, donor gift fulfillment, and donor relations. His work requires a great deal of skill and dedication, as well as an understanding and appreciation of the Province’s values and goals.

“One of the things I love about this job is that I get to see the good that the money I raise does in big and small ways,” he says. “Our fundraising can keep a building running, or build a wheelchair ramp, or support a ministry. I love it because the work has meaning.” Muñoz enjoys the challenges of the job. “When I started, we had a lot more people working here in development. Automation and updated processes allow us to work more efficiently. It also means I get to do and learn more things, like leadership skills. They trust me to do the work, and I trust them.”

The range of responsibilities and the autonomy that Muñoz describes is not unusual among employees of the Province. Lauren Vigna and Karen DiMaio, who have worked for a combined 25 years in the Province’s finance department, describe themselves as “Jacks of all trades and masters of ... all.”

“We all take on more responsibility than falls under our job description,” Vigna says. “We work in a less structured, more entrepreneurial environment.” To this DiMaio adds, “It’s so collaborative, and there is something new every day.”

They Make It Easy to Love Coming to Work’

These “utility infielders” would have it no other way. Curtis Warley has been with St. Clare Friary, the home for our senior friars, for 8 months as a full-time driver, aide, cafeteria helper, and all-around “go-to guy.” He enjoys the work and

Clockwise from top left: Heather Stanghellini, assistant to the provincial minister; Curtis Warley, staff, St. Clare Friary; Alexander Muñoz, development associate; Karen DiMaio, finance department; Lauren Vigna, finance department; Annie Wright, cook, St. Clare Friary.

its demands, and he has experienced a renewal of faith as he prepares to enter the Catholic Church. “I am currently going through RCIA, and it has been awesome working for the friars. They inspire me to get more involved. They make it easy to love coming to work.”

Tony Scott is director of housing at St. Clare. Over his 14 years with the Province, he has become known for handling multiple roles. He describes a typical week: “On Mondays I support some of the older friars with various tasks. Tuesdays I care for their rooms; Wednesdays I do their laundry; and on Thursday I am the night aide from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m.” In his off hours, Scott takes photos to document provincial celebrations and events, drives friars to appointments, and visits the friars who are staying at St. Cabrini Nursing Home in nearby Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. Once a month he gives all the friars a haircut!

“It wasn’t long after I came on board that I grew to really know and like these guys,” Scott says. “Fr. Andrew Drew was a dear friend—a tough bird, but once I got through his armor, we were very close. Fr. Knute Kenlon was another. I used to take him out for lunch or dinner and sometimes even to the beach. This was all on my time, but I loved those guys.”

The affection Scott has for the friars in his care certainly helps him in the performance of his duties. “My work with the friars requires that I get to know them. Each is unique, so I had to break each down individually to get to know him so I can do the work.”

Forming Bonds

Some of our staff, like Scott, created connections with the friars after they were hired. Others came into the job with a passing familiarity with the Capuchins: Muñoz grew up attending Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Manhattan. Still, there was a learning curve. “I didn’t really know the friars when I was younger until I started working here,” he says. “But over the years, I’ve gained friends and learned they are like everyone else. They’re human. Some even like sports!”

Tyrone Bannister, the chef at St. Clare, has taken the friars under his wing. He keeps an eye on the more vulnerable among them, making sure they are eating enough and observing any changes in their health status. “I’ve gotten to know these guys. They have been there for me in difficult times, so I try to be there for them,” he says. “They have even gotten to know my wife. They put their trust in me, so I put my trust in them.”

In a sense, Heather Stanghellini, assistant to the provincial minister, was working for the Province before she even knew it.

“Years before I started here, I worked at Downey Side with Fr. Paul Engel,” she said, referring to the adoption agency that Fr. Paul founded. “Then I went on to work at White Plains Hospital before adopting my first daughter. It was years later that I contacted Fr. Michael Greco after seeing the job posting in 2018. It was good to sort of come full circle.”

Stanghellini appreciates how working for a Catholic institution allows her the freedom to express her faith in the workplace. “It’s so nice on a holy day to be able to just go to the chapel with my colleagues!”

Steeped in the Faith

An appreciation for being steeped in the faith at work is a common theme among many who work for the Province. Mary Ellen Yannitelli feels strongly about how her faith and work are interwoven in the office. Since 2011, she has served as Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries’ programs coordinator and also as assistant for the vocations office. “I always have a full plate,” she says.

Yannitelli loves how her faith crosses over into every aspect of her life. “I feel very blessed to have a job working for this Order, which is on the ground bringing God to whomever they encounter.”

It seemed inevitable that Yannitelli would end up among the Capuchins. “I’ve known the Capuchins since I was a child. My parents lived in Okinawa for a time after World War II, and the only Catholic community there at the time was the Capuchin Order.” Shortly after her family returned to the U.S., she encountered one of the friars, Fr. Raymond Bartoldus, who was transferred to a nearby school and formation house in Cold Spring, N.Y. “Even as a child I was drawn to them—to Father Raymond’s serenity,” she said.

It was serendipity but hardly a surprise when Yannitelli found herself working with the friars years later. “I am blessed to be immersed in the life of the Church. My faith crosses over into every aspect of my life.”

Among her co-workers, Stanghellini feels an appreciation for her Catholic faith. “A few months after I started, I went on a mission trip to Kyrgyzstan, and when I returned, I felt free to share my experiences with my colleagues in the office.

“I don’t just enjoy being with the friars but with all the people I work with. There is a real family atmosphere here; we share common values.”

Common Values

The provincial employees who come from other faiths have also expressed an appreciation for the mission and values of the friars. Annie Wright, a part-time chef at St. Clare, says, “I grew up with a Quaker father and a Jewish mother, so I did not come in with a Catholic connection. But I love working for the friars,” she says. “They are so grateful for every little thing that it’s just impossible to say no to them!”

Wright spent 15 years cooking for youths attending CYFM retreats in Garrison, N.Y., before the Province closed the retreat center during the Covid-19 pandemic. “I was prepared to retire when my time with CYFM came to a close, but I jumped at the opportunity to come back when I got the call to work at St. Clare,” she said. “They are such kind, smart people. Their kindness makes me a better person.”

RETURN FROM THE DESERT

INTEGRATING OUR CHARISMS INTO THE COMMUNITY

by Br. Gabriel Conlon

“The first apostolate of a lesser brother is to live the gospel life in the world in truth, simplicity, and joy.” Capuchin Constitutions 147:2

The Province of St. Mary designates the first year of post-novitiate formation as a “year of integration,” in which the spiritual and practical insights of novitiate are deepened and strengthened before beginning studies or ministry training the following year. There is a special focus on maintaining the intensity of daily prayer developed in novitiate and integrating that “desert experience” of deeper contemplation into the everyday life of a friar in active ministry. Because friars now spend their first two years of formation away from the Province, the year of integration also serves to deepen the friar’s fraternal bonds with the province itself, with multiple trips to friaries in New York and New England and attendance of all major provincial events. Brother Gabriel reflects on this experience so far.

My time at San Lorenzo Friary during the year of integration has been a great introduction to the life of a friar outside the heavily structured experience of postulancy and novitiate.

Prayer remains the center of our lives. We gather in chapel three times a day for morning, evening and night prayer, and we spend an hour together in silent meditation. The high point of our day is Mass, which follows immediately after morning prayer and meditation. As part of my formation, I am encouraged to maintain the discipline of novitiate in creative ways, finding appropriate times to pray daytime prayer and the office of readings privately, and striving to make extra time for silent prayer, Scripture, devotions, and spiritual reading. This means looking at my daily schedule through the lens of my relationship with God, identifying moments for prayer I might have previously used for other things and discerning what ways I can improve my time management skills to make more time for God.

This effort flows directly into fraternity and ministry, because it is the time we spend with God that enables us to be more fully present to others. While there are no formal studies this year, I meet with my formator regularly to discuss assigned readings on topics relating to Christian life, the Franciscan tradition, and personal development. This year, I am also sacristan to the community, and I am responsible for cleaning the chapel as well as sharing in other house duties with my brothers, such as cleaning, cooking, and the like. Fraternal life in Christ is the wellspring of our charism, and we are encouraged to find



Br. Gabriel Conlon shows hospitality to the homeless with Capuchin Mobile Ministries outside the Boston Public Library on Feb. 21.



Brother Gabriel anoints an Anglican nun with ashes at Marian Manor on Feb. 23.

joy and surrender ourselves in all of these activities, no matter how simple.

On Mondays after Mass, I have time to work in the sacristy and to go to the friary library to read Scripture and my formation readings. It is a very peaceful time that I enjoy greatly. In the midafternoon I go to Dorchester, where the Missionaries of Charity run a short-term shelter for women and children, in which they also have their convent. After a Holy Hour with the sisters, beginning with the rosary and ending with the Divine Mercy Chaplet, I help one of the sisters and a lay volunteer in an afterschool program for neighborhood children, almost all of whom belong to Boston's wonderful Cape Verdean community and attend a nearby parish. After helping the children with their homework for an hour or so, we all go to the chapel, where the sisters lead the children in a short session of prayer and scriptural reflection.

Similarly, on Tuesdays I have the late morning and early afternoon to myself, which I use for house jobs, spiritual reading, and prayer. From 11 a.m. onward I work with Fr. Sam Fuller and Br. Anthony Zuba in prepping the van for Capuchin Mobile Ministries, which I have been blessed to be assigned to every Tuesday. At 2 p.m. we depart, usually

with one or two volunteers, lay people mostly but often other religious and diocesan priests as well. Over the next five hours we visit several locations throughout Boston and Cambridge, stopping to check in with our friends on the street. The van carries sandwiches, cereal bars, hot and cold beverages, and weather-relief supplies, in addition to spiritual items. But no one who has experienced our ministry would say that its central focus is giving things, although the quantity of food and supplies it gives out is great. Ours is a ministry of presence and prayer first and foremost, working to share and receive Christ's love on the margins. The ministry is deeply appreciated, and I have been stopped multiple times on the street by friends who know us through our outreach. It is always a deeply humbling experience. Elite Bostonians may often mistake us for medieval cosplayers from the Renaissance fair, but the homeless know who we are, and we are honored by their friendship.

On Wednesdays and Thursdays I am blessed to minister as a pastoral care assistant at two wonderful institutions: Marian Manor, a skilled nursing home run by the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm in South Boston, and Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, a public health hospital in our very own Jamaica Plain, a 15-minute walk from the friary, with medical, psychiatric, and correctional wards. In both ministries, I bring Communion to Catholic patients who wish to receive, and I speak and pray with a wide range of people, including other Christians, lapsed Catholics, and people who do not identify religiously. I also seek to facilitate access to the sacraments by arranging for visits from Fr. Will Tarraza, my formation director, and Fr. Claudino Teixeira Vieira, so that patients can go to confession or be anointed. At Marian Manor I also assist at their daily Mass and then take a Holy Hour in the community chapel before resuming my visits in the afternoon. At the Shattuck it is a truly wonderful moment of awareness when the Blessed Sacrament, confected on the altar in our friary chapel, is brought into the medical and psychiatric wards of the hospital. The heart of Jesus, connecting the heart of our community to the margins of our society. No place—physical or spiritual—is out of the reach of Christ's love.

The year of integration has been a truly grace-filled time to grow in the Capuchin Franciscan charism, deepen my prayer life and discernment, and experience the simple joy of fraternity. The apostolates I have been assigned to have helped me to learn the life of a lesser brother, by putting me out among the children of God and asking me to share our life, charism, and fraternity in the form of ministry. They humble me daily, remind me constantly of my need for prayer and dependency on God, and give me the privilege to meet and know so many people, and to seek Christ's face in them.

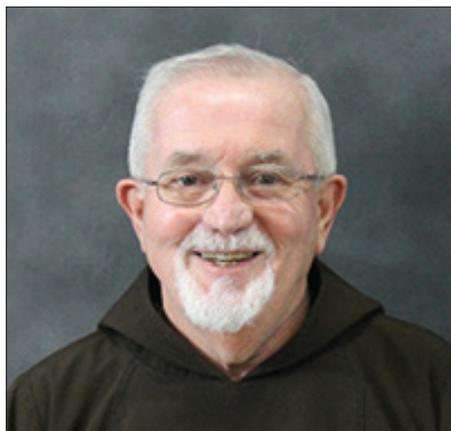
Living Lent, Living Lightly With Creation

by Fr. Jack Rathschmidt

Recently, while re-reading an article from *Commonweal* magazine, I found myself laughing out loud. An Irish nun asked her high school students what Vatican II was. After an embarrassing pause, one student suggested that perhaps it was the Pope's summer residence!

After enjoying a short laugh, I wondered what people might say if I asked them whether they had read or were familiar with *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical letter on care for creation? It is Francis' most famous letter and, arguably, his most important contribution to the social doctrine of the Catholic Church.

Although there has been an enormous amount of writing, inside and outside the Church, about climate change and our response to it, I don't imagine many people have read *Laudato Si'* since its publication in 2015. And even those who have read and studied it would be hard pressed to speak about it or suggest changes they have made to their lifestyles because of it.



A few questions might help us examine our consciences. Even though the price of gas has increased, are we driving less, carpooling, or asking ourselves whether a particular trip is necessary? Are we cleaning out our closets of coats, hats, and shoes that we haven't worn for years and giving them to community closets? Are we being more careful to prepare only enough food that we can eat at each

meal? And if we do have leftovers, are we eating them?

Perhaps Lent, with its traditional reminders to pray, fast and give alms, might be a good time to take up the challenges of remembering, as Pope Francis said in Ecuador in 2015, that "We received this world as an inheritance from past generations, but also as a loan from future generations, to whom we will have to return it!"

Pope Francis calls the Church to an ecological conversion in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Lent is a good time to make appropriate changes in our lifestyles, writes Fr. Jack Rathschmidt. How might we simplify our lives and de-clutter them?

In one passage of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis teaches us:

Ecological conversion... entails gratitude... a recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works.... It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings (LS 220).

Each time I think and pray about these matters, I am reminded of my own parents. Although they were poor and often short of money, they believed that their faith demanded they stretch their meager financial resources so that everyone, not just members of our family, could eat, go to school, have clean clothes, and find a way to help others who were worse off than they were.

Moreover, they gathered at church not only to worship, but also to socialize, organize, and work together for the good of all. Church was a community and a place that not only offered them vibrant worship with beautiful music, but also encouraged them in all their concerns. Hunger was simply unacceptable, and poverty was not a sin but a condition they worked to overcome.

My parents knew, as poor working people and as believers, that they could not afford too many luxuries. They needed to treasure and enjoy creation as a precious gift given to all by God for our sustenance and hope. Lent was a time to face their selfishness, self-absorption, and greed in order to renew their faith and dreams for their families. I have no doubt that the mantra “reduce, re-use, recycle,” affirmed in *Laudato Si'*, would have taken root quickly in



their hearts. The same can be true for us this Lent.

My parents, like most parents of their generation, were very committed to reducing our use of electricity and heat, making sure that we never wasted food, and handing down clothes from one child to the next. They spoke in simple and clear reminders. Shut off the lights when you leave your room. Shut the door when it is cold out. Eat leftovers for lunch. They may not have thought of these practices as a response to climate change. But it would not have been difficult for them to accept Pope Francis' insistence that “We must never forget that the natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone” (LS 95).

This Lent, *reduce* your food intake, not to lose weight, but to be in solidarity with hungry people

everywhere. Eat what you need to be healthy and enjoy your food, but don't eat half of what you put on your plate and throw out the rest. *Re-use* what you have. Look in your closet, and if you have clothes you haven't worn in a year, give them to a community closet or wear them again. *Recycle* what you no longer need. Give an old computer, television, or cell phone to a homeless shelter or to groups welcoming refugees.

Living Lent more intentionally—by reducing, reusing, and recycling as a way to follow Christ and to care for creation—might also help us to work together with our neighbors to help create a Church, country, and world in which everyone has access to adequate housing, clean water, food, health care, and transportation. Wouldn't that be a wonderful way to thank God this Easter for the earth and all creation!

'We received this world as an inheritance from past generations, but also as a loan from future generations, to whom we will have to return it!' Pope Francis said in Ecuador in 2015.

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The Capuchin Franciscan Friars of the Province of St. Mary devote their lives to serving the poor, the tired, the vulnerable—those most in need, following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

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

While gifts of all sizes are gratefully received and carefully expended, we at the Province of St. Mary extend a special thank-you to the members of the Capuchin Giving Societies listed below. God bless every one of you for your contributions to the tireless work of our Capuchin Franciscan Friars.



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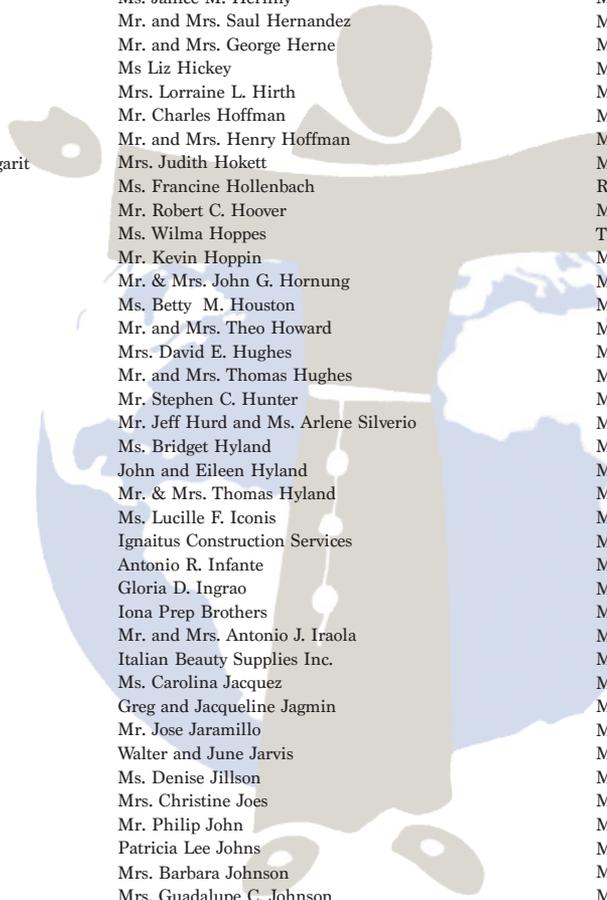
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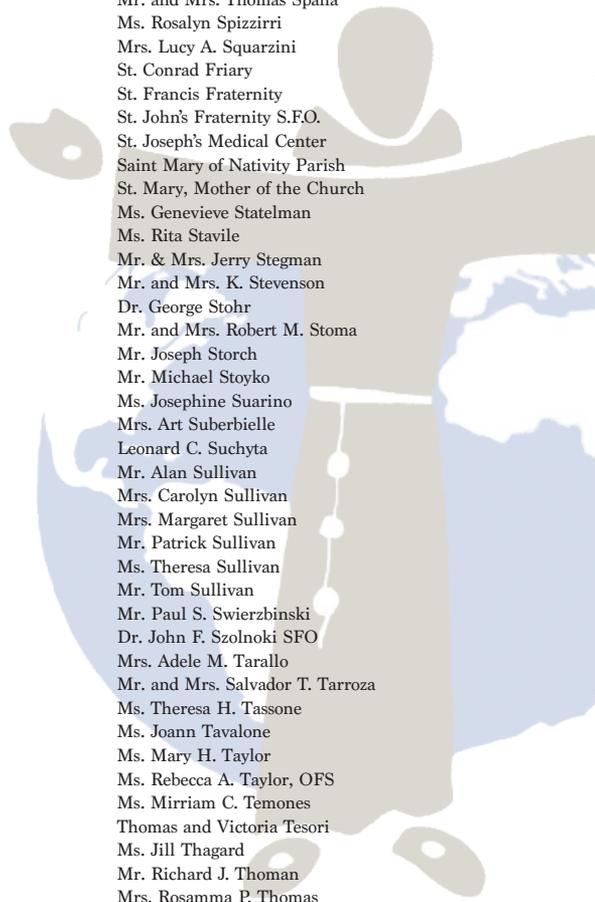
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The goal of the Capuchin Development Office is to fund the domestic and international mission of the Province of St. Mary. That mission ranges from supporting our own provincial members ministering here in the United States to providing assistance 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 gvoel@capuchin.org or visit our website at www.capuchin.org.