

the Capuchin Journey

Magazine of the Province of St. Mary of the Capuchin Order



'The Heart'
Inspires Faith

From the Provincial Minister

Dear brothers and sisters in Saint Francis, peace and all good things to you! As we enter into the wonderful season of Advent, preparing to celebrate our Lord's birth and awaiting his return in glory, I bring you the greetings and prayerful best wishes of all the friars in the Province of St. Mary.

Our minds naturally turn to gift giving at this time of year, as we celebrate God's greatest gift to us: His Son, Jesus, through whom we have salvation and eternal life. Of course, there are many other gifts for which we friars are grateful—including our Capuchin fraternity, our families, and you, our friends and benefactors who support us and our ministries with your friendship, prayers, and sacrificial gifts.

This year the friars give special thanks to God as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of Sacred Heart High School in Yonkers, N.Y. A ministry of the Capuchin friars, Sacred Heart High School has been educating young men and women and providing for their spiritual, moral, and social development. As a college preparatory high school, Sacred Heart has assisted our graduates as they embark on successful college and life careers. All of our students are encouraged to use their gifts and talents for the good of others, with service as an important and required component of our curriculum. Other Capuchin charisms evident in the high school include prayer, fraternity (friendship), and care for creation.

We thank God for the vision and hard work of our Capuchin friars, assisted by the Sisters of St. Agnes, the De La Salle Brothers of the Christian Schools, and lay men and women who have provided thousands of students with an excellent high school education and a strong foundation for



their future. Sacred Heart High School has a 100 percent graduation rate and a 100 percent college acceptance rate! As a graduate of the school (Class of 1978), I am blessed to be serving as its president. My vocation to the Capuchin Order and to the priesthood was encouraged, nurtured, and supported by the many friars who served as administrators, teachers, and staff members while I was a student there. How wonderful it is for me to be back "home at the Heart!" You can learn more about Sacred Heart High School on the pages that follow.

We look forward to the next century of educating young men and women here at Sacred Heart, and we thank all those who support the mission of Catholic education!

Fr. Robert J. Abbatiello, OFM Cap.

Fr. Robert Abbatiello, OFM Cap., Provincial Minister

Capuchin Charisms

FRATERNITY calls the friars to promote genuine relationships among all people and nations so that the world may live as a single family under the gaze of its Creator.

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

CONTEMPLATION requires they give priority to a life of prayer, especially contemplative prayer, to listen to God's guidance in their mission.

MINISTRY promotes the apostolic dimension of Capuchin life in proclaiming the Gospel and assuaging 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.

Province Mission

The needs of the poor and the demands of justice shape our every ministerial endeavor. We attempt to promote equality for 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 allow 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 FRANCISCANS
PROVINCE OF ST. MARY

the Capuchin Journey

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Cover: Students gather after attending the centennial Mass for Sacred Heart High School, Yonkers, on Sept. 17.

Opposite: Fr. Robert Abbatiello and Sacred Heart High School students celebrate at the school's centennial gala held in New Rochelle, N.Y., on Nov. 2.

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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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Around the Province



Fr. Francis Gasparik, Two-Time Provincial Minister, Dies



Fr. Francis Gasparik pastored
in Manhattan for many years.

He was a son of New York City and a son of St. Francis of Assisi. Now he joins all of God's children in heaven.

Fr. Francis Gasparik, through and through a Capuchin and a New Yorker, died on Nov. 12 at the age of 65. A fixture of midtown Manhattan, Father Francis was well known both among high society and the salt of the earth. Fittingly, his funeral was celebrated at the Church of St. John the Baptist, where he had been pastor for so many years.

Anyone who met Father Francis never could forget his outgoing personality, his booming voice, or his blunt manner of speaking. "He didn't do dainty and demure," said Fr. Michael Marigliano in his funeral homily. "But that was simply his manner ... it was not his core. At his core, Francis was and is a disciple of Jesus." Like those first disciples, each of them bold characters in their own right, Father Francis devoted his energy to spreading the kingdom of God. "And Francis was dedicated to that, with all the bombast and all the laughter," said Father Michael.

He served the Province for 21 years on the provincial council, including his two terms as provincial minister from 2011 to 2017. In the 2000s he was the mission secretary and director of development. He had a hand in the administration of provincial properties, finances, investments, vehicles, health care, and policy. He also served the global Capuchin Order in fundraising for its Office of Economic Solidarity, which supports the growth of the Order in mission fields.

Within the Archdiocese of New York, Father Francis served on the presbyteral council under Cardinals John O'Connor and Edward Egan in the areas of priests' compensation and retirement as well as outreach to the poor.

Born on July 7, 1958, Father Francis was the adopted son of Francis J. and Joan E. Gasparik. The Capuchins were to become his adoptive spiritual family. He entered the novitiate on Aug. 31, 1979, professed his solemn vows on Aug. 24, 1985, and was ordained to the priesthood on May 31, 1986.

"I wasn't sure the priesthood was for me," Father Francis told the *New York Post* in 2003. "I just wanted to give it a try and get it out of my system. I figured I'd be out of there in a year."

In 1991, Father Francis began his first tenure as pastor of St. John the Baptist. He was faced with a church whose ceiling was collapsing and attendance was declining. He opened a parish thrift store and wrote to foundations, and with the funds he obtained from them, he repaired the church. To renew attendance, he promoted the Padre Pio Shrine, the Secular Franciscans, the Solanus Casey Guild, a charismatic prayer group, 12-step recovery groups, and an all-night vigil on the first Fridays of the month. He boosted the St. John Bread of Life Food Pantry, which came to feed hundreds of families weekly.

In 2013, while Father Francis was provincial minister, the Church of St. John the Baptist was merged with Holy Cross Church on West 42nd Street to become one parish. He took up residence at Holy Cross and later became the pastor of Holy Cross-St. John in 2017, a position he held until ill health required his resignation in March.

Father Francis was also director of St. Francis Food Pantries and Shelters, a network of food and service programs for the poor. He became special adviser of the chairman and CEO of the Saint Pio Foundation in 2022.

Fidelity to the Call

Every Capuchin has heard The Call. Our friars continue to answer The Call in the many big and little calls they hear, day after day and year after year. Like Jesus Christ and St. Francis of Assisi, they offer the fruits of the Holy Spirit to the Church, the world, and all people—willingly and joyfully.

It is that fidelity to their calling, and it is that generosity of spirit, in love of neighbor, that the friars celebrate every year on Fraternity Day. More than 40 friars assembled at Sacred Heart Church in Yonkers on Oct. 9 for Mass and to confer a blessing on the jubilarian friars.

Fr. Maurice Moreau, 25 years a priest, is one of 17 friars observing an anniversary of religious life or priesthood this year. In his homily at the Fraternity Day Mass, he exhorted all the brothers to take heart from the call of Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-10), St. Paul's counsel on the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22a-26), and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). He urged them to fulfill their Franciscan call to live among their religious fraternities and all peoples as brothers.

Celebrating 25 years of priesthood were **Fr. Edward Conway**, **Fr. Norbert D'Souza**, **Fr. Robert Lasrado**, **Fr. Royson Menolickal**, **Fr. Edwin Monis**, **Fr. Maurice Moreau**, and **Fr. Henry Vas**. **Fr. Thomas Franks** celebrated 25 years of religious life. **Br. Robert Gerdin** and **Br. Yasunori Francis**

Hashiya marked 50 years of religious life. **Br. Antonine Lizama** and **Fr. Patrick Sullivan** celebrated 60 years of religious life. We honored **Fr. Joseph Flynn**, and **Fr. Robert Phelps** for 65 years of religious life, and we gave thanks for **Fr. Dominic Silvestro** and **Fr. Eugene O'Hara**, who have attained 70 years of religious life. *Deo gratias ... ad multos annos.*



Fr. Benedict Ayodi and Fr. Thomas McNamara.



Fr. Jack Rathschmidt.



Fr. Thomas Franks, Fr. Patrick Sullivan, and Fr. Joseph Flynn (seated).



Fr. Frederick Nickle and Fr. Arlen Harris.

Visitation of Guam



Friars from our Province first set foot in Guam nearly 85 years ago. They oversaw the postwar expansion of the Church throughout the Mariana Islands. A custody, Star of the Sea, was formed from Guam and Hawaii in 1982.

Now, our mission among the Chamorro people is at a turning point.

Fr. José Ángel Torres Rivera, vicar general minister of the Capuchin Order, came to Guam Oct. 22-28 to conduct a

visitation of the custody. During that week he met with each friar individually. He addressed the group about the transition of Star of the Sea from a provincial custody to a provincial delegation. He explained the nature of a delegation and what the transition to that juridical status involves. With the decrease in friars, governance of Guam will revert to the Province and a delegate of the provincial minister. Friars were given the opportunity to ask questions. Father José also toured the island, particularly to see the four parishes where our brothers minister.

The Capuchin Order has had a ministerial presence in Guam since the dawn of the 20th century. Friars from our Province took over from their Spanish missionary brothers beginning in 1939. After World War II, the friars constructed many churches and schools, organized the laity, and promoted vocations to priesthood and religious life among the Chamorro people.

The friars who live and minister in Guam today include **Fr. Patrick Castro**, the custodial minister, **Br. Jason Chargualaf**, **Fr. Andre Eduvala**, **Fr. Joseph English**, **Fr. Eric Forbes**, and **Fr. Felixberto Leon-Guerrero**. They also include our guest friars **Fr. Anil Silvano Fernandes** and **Fr. Stephen Claud Mascarenhas** from Holy Trinity Province, Karnataka, India. **Fr. Michel Dalton** and **Fr. Paulo Kosaka** minister in Hawaii. **Fr. Marvin Bearis** is pastor of St. Pius X Parish in Middletown, Conn. **Fr. Michael Tenorio** works overseas as a chaplain for the U.S. Air Force. **Br. Austin Usar** is in studies in the Philippines.

Pilgrimage of Adoration

As part of the National Eucharistic Revival promoted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the bishops of New York State held a statewide Eucharistic Congress at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Martyrs in Auriesville, N.Y., Oct. 20-22. An estimated 8,500 people registered for the congress, and many more than that showed up. In addition to keynote addresses, prayer, praise, and worship, there was adoration of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the 40 hours of conference, as well as confessions around the clock.

Br. Richard Therrien, one of the attendees on Oct. 21, said there were at least 20 bishops from across New York State and hundreds of priests and religious. He said Mass was a highlight of the day. There was also a Eucharistic procession that afternoon. Brother Richard was given a ride to the shrine by Charles Aviles, who was once a student in one of his adult faith formation classes. He borrowed a wheelchair from St. Lawrence Friary in Beacon, N.Y., where he resides, so he could ambulate around the coliseum of the shrine.

Fr. Erik Lenhart and **Br. Francisco Serrano** also attended the congress. Father Erik boarded a bus of pilgrims at New Paltz, N.Y. Brother Francisco came from St. Michael-St. Malachy Parish in Brooklyn.



Friar Pulls Publishing Hat Trick!

Let's hear it for Fr. David Couturier, professor of Franciscan studies and theology at St. Bonaventure University, who published three titles this year through Franciscan Institute Publications.

Most recently, he co-edited *The Earlier Rule of 1221: History, Theology, and Vision, on the Earlier Rule of St. Francis of Assisi*, which he says expresses the original passion and spirituality of the founder of the Franciscan movement.

The book is the product of a conference held at St. Bonaventure in July 2022. It brought together friars from



Fr. David Couturier

the Capuchin, Conventual, and Franciscan provinces of Australia, Canada, Italy, and the United States. Ten Franciscan scholars weighed in on the significance of this foundational document, not only for the life and spirit of the early friars around St. Francis but also for friars serving in more than 100 countries today.

"[The] Rule of 1221 draws us into the drama of the earliest Franciscan friars with all their primitive

aspirations, lofty ideals, agonizing challenges, petty (and sometimes quite volatile) squabbles, and torturous questions," Father David writes in the opening chapter.

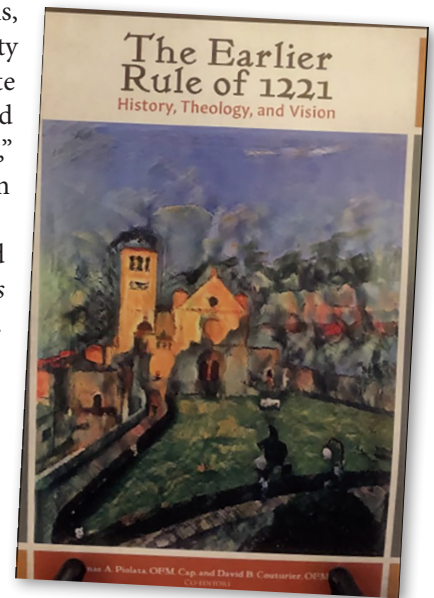
He also co-edited *Lesser Ethics: Morality as Goodness-in-Relationship*.

This book addresses how we can make the Franciscan intellectual and spiritual tradition of a relational moral goodness relevant and fruitful for present-day ethical practice. Finally,

he published *Integrating Missions: Organizational Identities and Founding Stories in Health Care Systems Today*. A product of his engagement with hospital systems across the U.S., Father David presents ways that mission officers can integrate insights from Franciscan, Catholic, and secular traditions of corporate purpose and mission.

"No doubt, it's work. However, the Franciscan tradition is so meaningful and relevant for today's corporate and organizational challenges that it is also exciting and inspiring," Father David said.

You can purchase these and other books edited or written by Father David at www.franciscanpublications.com.



Praying for Vocations, Welcoming Candidates

We have been asking the master to send out laborers for the harvest!

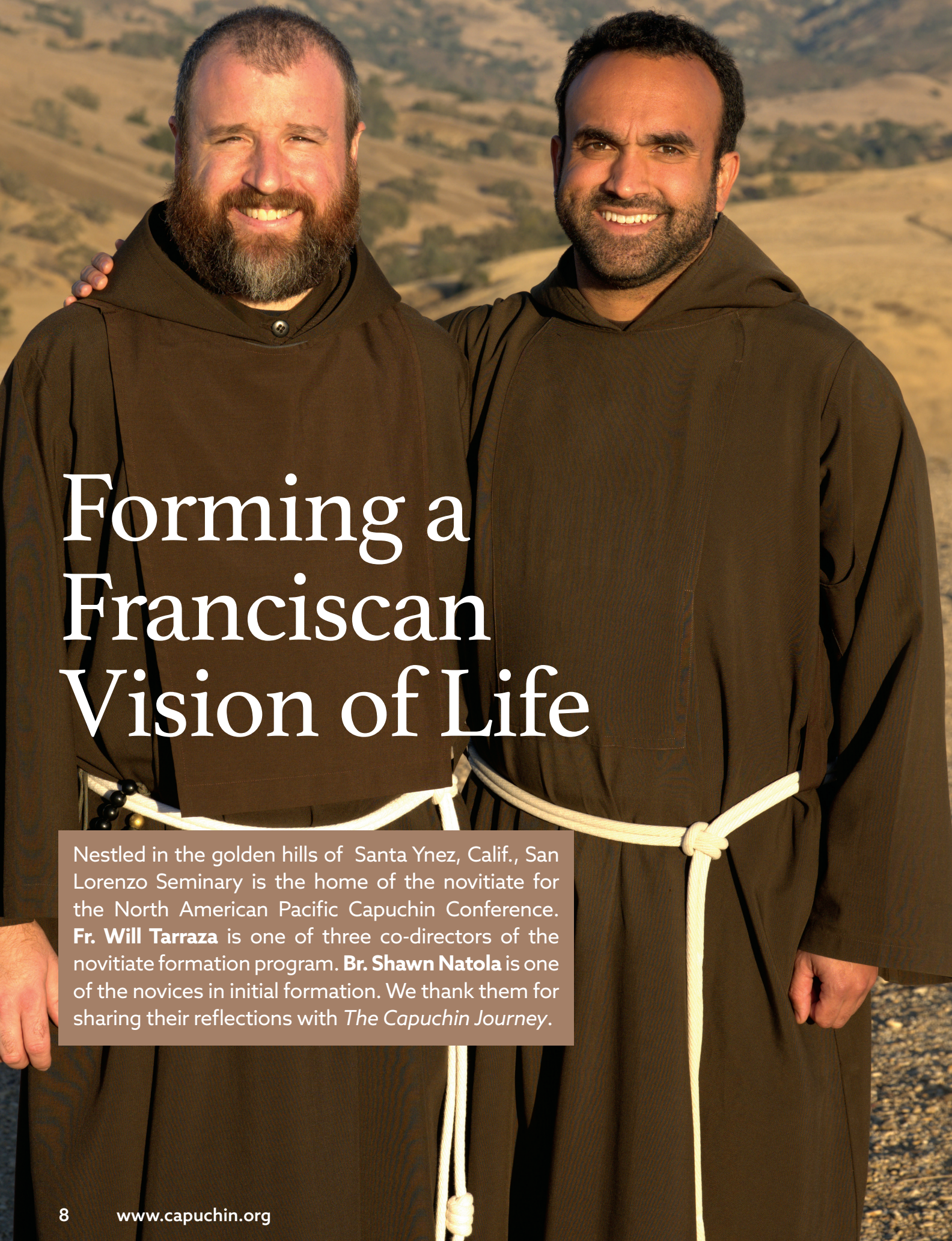
Fr. Erik Lenhart, director of the vocation ministry, has traveled over 3,000 miles around the Province in his first two months on the job. He has had conversations with over two dozen men, out of which six of them attended a vocation discernment retreat on Nov. 17-19 hosted by the Capuchin friars in Jamaica Plain, Mass.

"We had a blast, a great experience, prayerful experience, deep experience," said Father Erik. "Tons of friars helped out, from meals to liturgies to presentations, and also just talking one-on-one with candidates. So thanks, brothers, for being so generous at San Lorenzo Friary."

In the months to come, we intend to intensify our prayers for vocations, establishing vocation prayer societies in our parishes. We will enhance our use of social media, especially our website, in order to promote our charisms. We will increase our engagement of young adults and college students as we aim

to better understand the background, personality, attitudes, and behaviors of discerners. Please continue to pray for us, as Blessed Solanus Casey and St. Padre Pio surely do, that God will send us new brothers so that we may more effectively—and joyfully!—share the good news of salvation.



A photograph of two men in brown Franciscan robes standing in a golden-hilled landscape. The man on the left has a full beard and is smiling. The man on the right has a shorter beard and is also smiling. They are both wearing white ropes around their waists. The background shows rolling hills under a warm, golden light.

Forming a Franciscan Vision of Life

Nestled in the golden hills of Santa Ynez, Calif., San Lorenzo Seminary is the home of the novitiate for the North American Pacific Capuchin Conference. **Fr. Will Tarraza** is one of three co-directors of the novitiate formation program. **Br. Shawn Natola** is one of the novices in initial formation. We thank them for sharing their reflections with *The Capuchin Journey*.

A Look at the Capuchin Novitiate

by Fr. Will Tarraza

The gift of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the work of all the baptized. Some Christians recognize God's invitation to devote his/her life to this proclamation by a more intentional and radical witness of Gospel values, often living in communal settings. With numerous possibilities to express one's call, the Church recognizes different institutions and societies of consecrated life to cultivate unique charisms.



Consecrated individuals (sometimes identified as religious) vow to God in their respective community to live in obedience, chastity, and poverty. As with the vows of matrimony, the Church seeks to seriously prepare individuals to take these vows of consecrated life freely and willingly. For this reason, men and women who feel called to the consecrated life must begin their journey with at least a year of probation. This year is called the novitiate.

Novitiate is a rite of passage for all religious. Each institution or society is responsible for determining what constitutes the nature and process of its own novitiate, according to the order's values and charisms. The Province of St. Mary assigns our men to partake in a collaborative novitiate program at San Lorenzo Seminary, settled in the majestic Santa Ynez Valley in California. This picturesque location provides a serene and prayerful environment in which the novices can discern God's call for them. This year of seclusion from the noise and busyness of the world is our investment in the formation of solid men who are committed to living the Gospel, according to God's will. Whether or not these men go on to profess vows with us as a member of the Capuchin Order, we trust they will make a good discernment. Thus we expect our men to take novitiate seriously, despite the challenges it presents.

Our novitiate is a highly structured program that seeks to reframe a person's vision of life according to the Franciscan charisms and values. Following postulancy, a novice begins the year by receiving the "clothes of probation," which is a traditional Capuchin habit with a secondary brown cloth, or caperone, that distinguishes him from those friars who have made vows (the professed brothers). This exciting moment marks the canonical recognition of a man as a member of the Capuchin Order. Here begins a year that holds relatively strict expectations of the novices to maintain the integrity of the "removed" nature of a novitiate. For an entire year, the novices

do not leave the confines of the program unless a significant life event occurs, like the death of a relative or the wedding of an immediate family member. The novices are permitted one extended weekend visit from family during the year. They are expected to limit the use of personal time on the Internet to 90 minutes a week, and they are not permitted to have their own personal computers or cell phones. These restrictions may seem authoritarian; but, ideally, they are meant to set novices free from potential distractions that may hinder the work of reframing their vision of life. We want them to see themselves and the world through a new lens of faith.

It is the responsibility of the novices to make the choice to adhere to these restrictions under their own freedom. It is my experience that those who take the novitiate seriously (regardless of liking/disliking) are less likely to leave the Order in the future, as these individuals develop skills and tools to succeed in fraternal and ecclesial life as friars.

Every day of the novitiate program is centered in communal times of prayer. We gather four times a day in the chapel to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, meditate together in silence, and celebrate the Mass. The Eucharist, the source and summit of the life of the Church, similarly guides our life as friars. The novice who forms a solid foundation in a life of prayer will direct his future according to the Highest Good, which is God.

The typical week of a novice is as follows. Three days a week, in the morning, there is class instruction on topics related to the Catholic faith, Franciscan spirituality, Capuchin history, and interpersonal growth. Saint Francis of Assisi praised manual labor; therefore, each novice is responsible for house chores that contribute to the upkeep of the friary. In addition, we set aside two periods a week for work projects on the grounds of San Lorenzo Seminary, including tending the vegetable garden, landscaping, house painting, etc. These work projects not only contribute to the good of the friary but also help to build fraternal bonds among the novices as they work together. We also ask they spend one day in external ministry in service to the poor, vulnerable, intellectually disabled, or sick. The novices are given one day a week to spend away from the friary. We conclude each day in fraternal time of recreation.

There are many other components to the novitiate that provide some variety and deviation from the routine. Hopefully, this brief description of our program captures the intensity of what the Church and the Order asks of these men. They embrace the rigorous nature of the novitiate, trusting in the wisdom and providence of God who has called them to offer their lives as a living sacrifice. The novices and those entrusted with their care rely on your generous prayers and support. Without you, we could not provide this gift to our brothers: to be formed and prepared to vow their lives willingly to God, proclaiming the Gospel as Capuchin Franciscans.

Taking a Road Less Traveled

by Br. Shawn Natola

I doubt that there was a time when most of the Catholic world had entered a life of “religion.” But much of the Catholic world today has been deeply impacted in its charisms and traditions by that Italian knight of Jesus Christ, St. Francis of Assisi. His passionate belief that the Gospel way of life was not merely an ideal but a true treasure for which anyone of faith could sell all to acquire. Our Lord Himself said, “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). As Capuchin brothers and sons of our father Francis, we understand these words literally and nobly strive to attain to what they promise.



The novitiate experience is a deep “turning,” is it were, toward that road less traveled. This is not to say that those on the road more often traveled are in any way less noble, holy, fulfilled, or called by God. I only mean to say that, today, few indeed are choosing to take this road. The goal of this journey is to turn back to the Lord; laboring with the Lord in the vineyard of one’s own heart, soul, and mind. So what does it mean to be a Capuchin Franciscan? Why choose this path?

I came to the novitiate with ideas of what life would be like here, what I needed to work on, in what ways I would be challenged, etc. Can you hear God laughing from where you’re reading this? Pope Francis says that God is a God of surprises. My vocation story could be a divine “comedy” of sorts, and my expectations for novitiate were the setup for the latest skit. He is patient with me, and I eventually come around to laughing at myself in the end. How good God is! Again, why choose this path, then? Surely this is more serious than a Three Stooges short!

The blessings of novitiate boil down to a couple of key themes for me. I’ve had to learn to allow my heart to fall in

love with God again. While in the world, there are so many distractions and accretions that cover over or crowd out the space that God once occupied in my heart. I’m continually learning how to let others love me as well and see God’s hand in it, especially when doing so requires humility. Out of these themes I am discovering the deeper identity of a Capuchin Franciscan, continual conversion in trust and not fear.

“Behold how good and pleasant, where brethren dwell as one!” (Psalm 133) I’ve considered all that goes into this life, and I recognize that I can have all this elsewhere. And yet there is still something attractive about this life. Allow me to explain. While in the world I had fraternity, ministries, the sacraments, liturgical prayer, and private devotions, I still lacked something, because I held on to my own will, my own possessions, and my selfishness and ego.

What unites this fraternity in its various ministries, the sacraments, the liturgical prayer are the vows that the friars take. To the world, these vows appear restrictive and possibly harmful. What I have discovered in these last 18 months of formation, and especially in the first five months of novitiate, is that these vows can be vehicles that can take us where we never thought we could go, in joy and without fear. What we don’t know can cause fear, which is why I believe so many hesitate or refuse to join religious life today. But perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4:18).

Capuchin Franciscan life is a life of abandonment to divine providence with a family of brothers, who by their joy demonstrate that they indeed have found a pearl of great price. They are like men who have journeyed home from adventures abroad in a land hitherto only spoken of in legends. I love to hear those stories, because I begin to see myself in them, and I dream of what the Lord has in store for my future. I can only do this because I am learning to slowly let go. I am letting go of what I thought I wanted, or what I think this life should be. I am letting go of my pride and letting others love me, especially the beautiful lay people who support our way of life. I am learning to be humble, to be grateful to God that I don’t have to travel this road alone ... for then the Lord gave me brothers!



“ Capuchin Franciscan life is a life of abandonment to divine providence with a family of brothers, who by their joy demonstrate that they indeed have found a pearl of great price. ”

Br. Shawn Natola



A Century of Catholic Education

Sacred Heart High School Continues to Inspire Faith



For generations of faithful in the United States, their identity as Catholics was deeply entwined with the parish they belonged to and the parochial schools they attended.

This holds true for so many of the faithful who grew up in Yonkers. The heart of their Catholic identity comes from Sacred Heart Parish and in a special way from Sacred Heart High School. For 100 years, the high school has formed the faithful and evangelized them through education.

“There was an incredible spirit in the school because it was so neighborhood-oriented,” said Fr. Senan Taylor, who graduated from the high school in 1962 and went on to teach religion there from 1971 to 1978. “The school spirit was not just rah-rah-rah. People would ask you what school you went to, and you told them The Heart, and they knew what you were talking about.”



An American Story

The history of the high school tracks the history of American Catholicism in the 20th and 21st centuries. (See Timeline, Page 16, for more details.) The school was born at the close of an era of massive immigration from Europe. It first served the children of Irish-American families—the school once boasted a bagpipe band—and then many other ethnicities. It grew dramatically during the postwar boom. Its enrollment crested at 1,200 in the late 1960s, with faculty from three religious orders.

John McCormick, 56, grew up in Yonkers, and like his parents before him, he attended the high school. While he was a student there, so did nine of his relatives! “One really fond memory I have of Sacred Heart High School is seeing my cousins in the hallway every day,” he said.

McCormick graduated in 1985. Today, he lives in Pelham, N.Y., and has a career in asset management. He credits the high school with propelling generations of graduates like him upward into society. “It plays a really vital role in Yonkers,” he said. “It’s the only Catholic high school in Yonkers. In addition to developing moral and spiritual character, it is a gateway to the middle class and beyond for a lot of students who for one reason or another might not thrive in the public school system. It is an agent of positive change in students’ lives.

“I think in a post-industrial city like Yonkers, it would be hard to overstate the importance of the opportunities that Sacred Heart opens for students. I feel passionate about creating pathways for deserving students. It’s really important.”

For Judith Juback Griffin, 83, the school was a place of safety and stability during a turbulent childhood. “I love Sacred Heart High School. It was a safe haven for me as a child growing up in somewhat of an unhappy household. The greatest thing was the camaraderie with my friends and students I met there. The teachers gave me an opportunity to think. And without even knowing it, I was growing spiritually.”

After her graduation in 1958, Juback Griffin would endure several trials in life: a divorce, unemployment and near bankruptcy, and her brother’s death. But her Catholic faith, instilled by the friars at Sacred Heart, came back to her to sustain her. “The reality is that my Catholic faith has actually provided a lifestyle for me and carried me through the challenges of everyday living. My Catholic faith is the foundation of my life today. By believing in God, it has enabled me to deal with every trial and tribulation that has happened in life.”

“Now and then, troubled students would come and talk to me,” Father Senan recalled. “There are people I had in high school who still call me. I am not surprised, because we really bonded, and that continues. So I feel like an uncle or a godparent.

They are not calling me because I am a priest. They are calling because of the kinds of relationships you could develop at Sacred Heart.”

Challenges

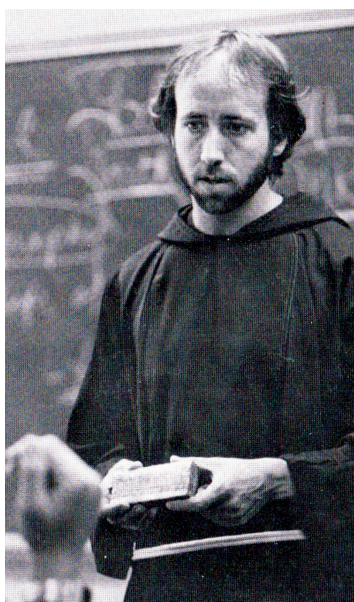
The seismic waves of the Second Vatican Council and the social and cultural revolutions of the era shook the Church and its institutions. Sacred Heart High School felt these reverberations, too.

“It was a very exciting time. It was right after Vatican II. It was around the time of Woodstock,” said Father Senan, who took a humanities-based approach to religion, applying what was happening in the world at the time of Jesus to the present day. He rented a movie theater so his students could see *Godspell* and organized a class trip to Broadway for a performance of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. “The cultural atmosphere was alive with religion. The way I taught religion, I tried to make it as interesting and palpable as possible.”

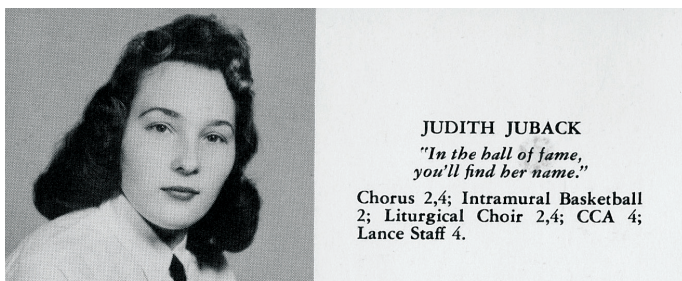
As time went by, priests and religious on faculty diminished in number, as did enrollment because of smaller families

“When I went to Sacred Heart, that is when I learned theology. When I went to Sacred Heart to teach, that is when I learned to preach.”

Fr. Senan Taylor



Fr. Senan Taylor in the religion classroom and with alumna Deanne May.



schools. Within my five-year period, the high school had three principals, and teachers left for higher salaries at public schools. I met weekly with school administrators to keep informed about the direction they were leading the school and the difficulties they were experiencing. Mine was a supportive and helping role.

"The ministries of teacher and pastor provided me the opportunity to encounter children, youth, and adults, and to love them by being the servant to them as best I could in striving to imitate Jesus. Despite the hardships of a teacher and pastor, those ministries are a joy that stays with me."

Sisters and Brothers

For most of its history, the high school was staffed largely by the Sisters of St. Agnes. This congregation would have a long and fruitful collaboration with the Capuchins, dating back to 1870 in Fond du Lac, Wis., when Fr. Francis Haas, co-founder of our Province, became spiritual director to the sisters. The Agnesians began teaching at the Capuchins' Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish in East Harlem, Manhattan, in 1886. They readily accepted the call to Yonkers several years later, when the parish grade school opened in 1893, and they would remain a vital presence in the education of Sacred Heart's youth for a century.

For a generation, the De La Salle Christian Brothers also served the school, beginning in the 1960s as enrollment soared and, for a time, the young men and women were being taught in separate departments.

Many a Capuchin friar taught religion in the halls of the high school (see Honor Roll). It was a rite of passage for young friars. Father Senan recalls: "If you were newly ordained,

and rising tuition. But God always provides. Increasingly, laypeople became the teachers and administrators and carried on the legacy of the priests, brothers, and nuns who went before them. And new families arrived who wanted their children to have a quality Catholic education.

Fr. Bernard Maloney, who taught religion at the high school from 1970 to 1972, was pastor of Sacred Heart from 1993 to 1998. He recalls those latter days: "The enrollment was about 400 students. The school was struggling financially but making it. In the Archdiocese of New York, it was one of two parish high

Sacred Heart High School Honor Roll

The following is a partial list of friars who have served on faculty and in administration since the establishment of the Province of St. Mary in 1952.

Fr. Robert Abbatiello
 Alumnus, Class of 1978
 Pastor of Sacred Heart,
 2019-present
 President of High School,
 2019-present

Fr. Colman Boylan
 Religion Teacher, 1956-59

Fr. Berthold Buckley
 Religion Teacher,
 1955-56

Fr. Claude Burns
 Religion Teacher,
 1966-71

Fr. Dean Corcoran
 Religion Teacher,
 1966-67

Fr. Theodosius Corley
 Religion Teacher,
 1978-83
 Moderator, Lance Yearbook
 1979-80

Fr. Joachim Crumlish
 Religion Teacher,
 1955-56

Br. Roland Daigle
 Religion Teacher,
 1980-82

Fr. Armand Dasseville
 Religion Teacher,
 1951-55
 Pastor of Sacred Heart,
 1955-61

Fr. Richard Donaldson
 Religion Teacher,
 1970-71
 Pastor of Sacred Heart,
 1970-81

Fr. Philip Fabiano
 Pastor of Sacred Heart,
 1987-93

Fr. Declan Finn
 Religion Teacher,
 1961-1963, 1964-1970

Fr. Joseph Flynn
 Religion Teacher,
 1968-70
 Intramural Football,
 1968-69

Fr. Ramon Frias
 Religion Teacher,
 1981-82

Fr. John Gallagher
 Pastor of Sacred Heart,
 2006-08

Fr. Donatus Goetz
 Religion Teacher,
 1955-58
 Prefect of Discipline,
 1957-58

you were assigned to teach at the school. It was part of the experience. It took a few years for me to get into it.”

It was a transforming experience for friars as well as for the students. “When I went to Sacred Heart, that is when I learned theology. When I went to Sacred Heart to teach, that is when I learned to preach,” said Father Senan. Handing on the Catholic faith was not about showing what he knew; rather, he said, “you are trying to get people to get the meaning of Gospel.”

Juback Griffin praised her Capuchin teachers as very knowledgeable and very soft spoken. “In hindsight, we were lucky to have their knowledge and information,” she said, while adding that she and her peers wondered why they had to learn Latin! She also recalled her class attending Mass at Sacred Heart Church during Advent and Lent. For women, the school’s dress code at Mass was white berets, blue skirts, white blouses, white saddle shoes, and white socks. Men wore suits and ties.

What did students learn about God and Catholicism? “I think it was really about lived faith,” said McCormick. “There was certainly an intellectual component, but in my mind the emphasis was on living your faith and how you respect yourself and treat other people. That was not only taught in class, but it was the ethos of the school. Our religion is not something that we do on Sunday, but it affects how we treat people in every interaction.”

Evolution

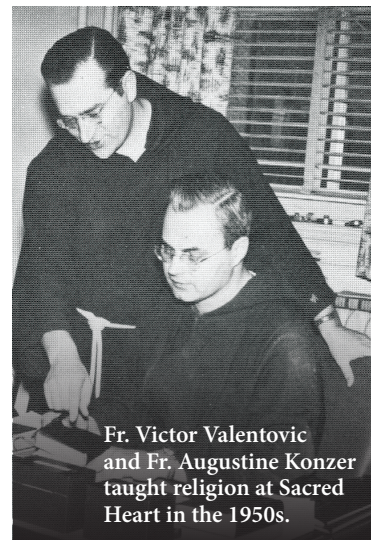
The high school made its first home in the basement of the church, then moved into the former minor seminary building on Convent Avenue (see Timeline). During the pastorate of Fr. Finian Sullivan (1949-55, 1961-70), the modern facilities,

first its wings and then the circular main building and administrative building, were erected.

The school is about to undertake a campaign to upgrade the facilities, particularly its science lab rooms. Other major improvements have already been made. The school replaced a boiler recently. The ceiling fans were replaced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The entire building has also been rewired for wireless internet, making it possible for the school to use a donation for the purchase of Chromebooks.

When Juback Griffin was a student, tuition was \$15 a month, and with after-school and summer jobs she could pay for her studies all by herself. “The student body came up from the streets back in the day,” she said. “We didn’t have an exam to enter the school system. Father Finian said to the freshmen, ‘You got in here because we needed bodies to fill the new wings of the school!’ ”

In contrast, tuition for the 2023-24 academic year is \$9,850, not including other fees. It is an increasing challenge to keep the school affordable to the working class of Westchester. Accordingly, the school has a board of advisors drawn from alumni and academic, business, and community leaders to do



Fr. Victor Valentovic and Fr. Augustine Konzer taught religion at Sacred Heart in the 1950s.

Fr. Barnabas Keck
Religion Teacher,
1953-55, 1962-70
Rector, 1955
Prefect of Discipline,
1961-64

Fr. Knute Kenlon
Religion Teacher, 1958-60

Fr. Neal Kerrigan
Religion Teacher, 1953-55

Fr. Augustine Konzer
Religion Teacher, 1955-57

Fr. Godfrey Luechinger
Religion Teacher, 1973-75

Fr. Bernard Maloney
Religion Teacher, 1970-72
Pastor of Sacred Heart, 1993-98

Fr. Peter McCall
Religion Teacher, 1974-81

Fr. Ignatius McCormick
Rector and Religion Teacher,
1956-61

Fr. John Mellitt
Religion Teacher, 1974-77

Fr. Maurice Moreau
Pastor of Sacred Heart, 2008-17
Head of School, 2008-17

Fr. Aidan Neenan
Religion Teacher, 1958-64
Prefect of Discipline, 1958-61
Rector and Guidance
Counselor, 1961-65

Fr. Eugene O’Hara
Religion Teacher, 1963-64
Administrator, 1977-81

Fr. Terence O’Toole
Religion Teacher, 1970-72
Administrator, 1970-73

Fr. Damien Pickel
Religion Teacher, 1984-85
Campus Minister, 1985-87

Fr. Gregory Reisert
Religion Teacher, 1965-67

Fr. John Baptist Riordan
Religion Teacher, 1972-73
Pastor of Sacred Heart, 1998-2006

Fr. Nelson Ruppert
Administrator, 1981-83

Fr. Bernard Smith
Religion Teacher, 1971-73
Administrator, 1973-77
Pastor of Sacred Heart, 1981-87

Fr. Finian Sullivan
Pastor of Sacred Heart,
1949-55, 1961-70
Spiritual Director and Religion
Teacher, 1962-70

Fr. Senan Taylor
Alumnus, Class of 1962
Religion Teacher, 1971-78

Fr. Joseph Testagrossa
Religion Teacher, 1960-61

Br. Richard Therrien
Religion Teacher,
1986-92, 1997-98

Fr. Victor Valentovic
Religion Teacher, 1952-56



strategic planning, fundraising, and fiscal oversight. This includes guiding the mission and vision of the school, finding new revenue sources, containing costs, and improving communications with alumni, students, families, and the parish.

“We are very proud of our momentum,” said McCormick, who chairs the board of advisors. “We are really focused on giving our students the very best opportunities coming out of high school.” For instance, the Class of 2023, a class of 63 students, had a 100 percent graduation rate, a 100 percent college acceptance rate, and was offered over \$11 million in scholarships. The school has also kicked off a centennial campaign, establishing the Green & Gold Fund to support

students by providing funds for curriculum enrichment, special projects, new programs, educational equipment, organizational development, and other needs.

Father Senan and other alums praised the spirit of Sacred Heart High School for binding together the Yonkers community, a spirit forged in its blue-collar neighborhoods, reinforced by the Capuchin friars and Agnesian sisters, and guided by the Holy Spirit. We leave the last word to current senior Adriana Williams, who spoke at the school’s centennial gala on Nov. 2. “Being a part of this school was the best part of my life,” she said. “I truly hope that everyone who comes to the school will feel the same way I do and never leave.”

1905-06 A preparatory seminary is established at Sacred Heart Parish, Yonkers, with a 2-year course for boys studying for the priesthood.

1915-16 Ground is broken on Convent Avenue for a seminary building in August; the school is dedicated in July 1916.

1921-24 The Province purchases the Glenclyffe property in Garrison, N.Y., and moves the seminary there. The parish purchases the building on Convent Avenue for \$50,000. It is converted into a high school.

1923 Sacred Heart High School opens. Instruction is in two rooms in the church basement with 14 students and one teacher from the Sisters of St. Agnes. The school offers a 2-year curriculum of business courses.

1924 The school moves into the Convent Avenue building. It is the first co-educational Catholic high school in Westchester County.

1925-26 The high school applies for accreditation from the New York State Board of Regents. Curriculum converts to a 4-year academic program. Four rooms are added to the school building.

1930 The Board of Regents grants full accreditation.

1950-51 The facilities are upgraded with additional classrooms and administrative offices. Enrollment is at 420 students with capacity for 500.

1954-55 Fr. Finian Sullivan begins renovation and expansion, adding two wings with 16 classrooms, a cafeteria, and a library. Enrollment capacity increases to 800 students.

1961 The De La Salle Christian Brothers join the faculty. The school becomes a co-institutional operation, with the Capuchins and Christian Brothers teaching the boys and the Sisters of St. Agnes teaching the girls. Ground is broken on a new, main building for administration and instruction, including cafeteria, chapel, gym, laboratories, and library.

1965-67 Expansion is completed under Fr. Finian Sullivan’s leadership. Christian Brothers take residence in main building. Enrollment exceeds 1,200 students, with a capacity for 1,600.

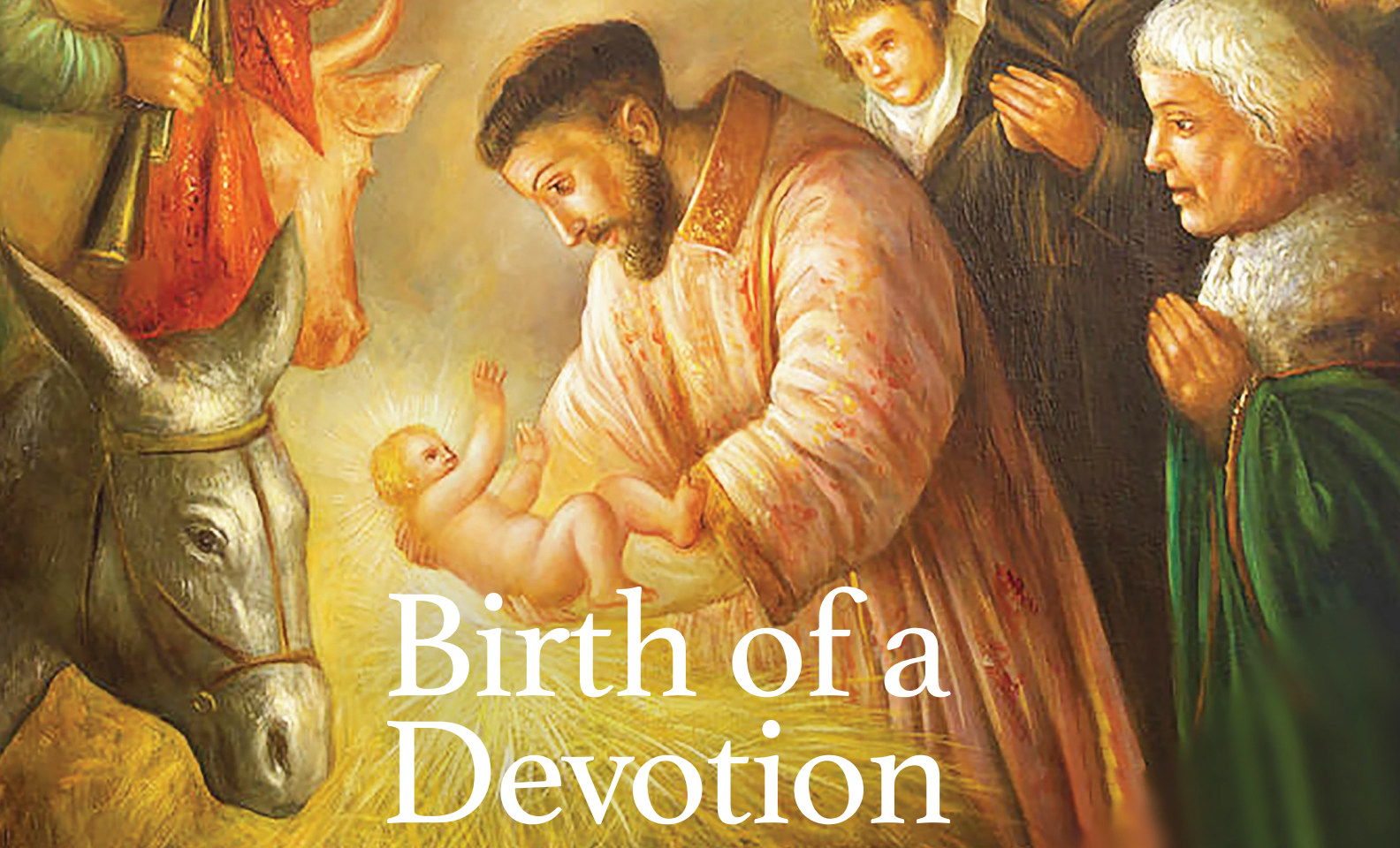
1969 The school returns to a co-educational model. Enrollment reaches 1,260 with 64 faculty members.

1979 The high school revises its academic program.

1990 The Christian Brothers depart. Faculty members are mainly lay persons and sisters. Senior friars take residence in main building to form St. Clare Friary.

2018 300 students enrolled with 98 percent graduating and going on to college.

2023 Sacred Heart High School begins its second century of providing a quality Catholic education to the young women and men of Westchester and the Bronx.



Birth of a Devotion

St. Francis, the Nativity, and the Presence of Christ



by Fr. Charles Sammons

One of St. Francis of Assisi's early biographers, Brother Thomas of Celano, relates how Francis, three years before his passing from this life, planned and celebrated Christmas in the little hill town of Greccio, located about halfway between Rome and Assisi.

Three years before his death would make that the Christmas of 1223, of which we mark and celebrate the eighth centenary this year.

Francis enlisted the help of local friend, a certain nobleman named John, to help gather everything that was necessary for his idea of putting together a living nativity scene. According to Thomas of Celano, Francis exclaimed,

"I wish to enact the memory of the babe who was born in Bethlehem: to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he rested on hay."

This desire, to know and to feel the love and suffering of Jesus, to follow in his footprint, was Francis' particular devotion to Christ and his vocation in him. This desire was

most perfectly realized in Francis' experience of the stigmata, which, as the great Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure writes, transformed the lover, Francis, into the image of the Beloved, Christ.

When that Christmas Eve arrived, everything was prepared according to Francis' expressed wish. The ox and the ass were led to the spot, the local faithful approached with lamps and torches for light, and the holy Mass of the vigil of Christmas was celebrated over a manger filled with hay. Francis himself sang the Gospel of that holy night, and he preached with remarkable devotion and sweetness on the King born poor, the "babe of Bethlehem" whom Francis loved and desired with all his heart. It is said that contact with the hay from the manger subsequently restored many animals to good health, and even some people as well.

A curious and yet beautiful vision came to pass during the celebration. One of those present and at prayer, perhaps John of Greccio himself, the friend who had helped Francis prepare for that night, saw a baby, apparently lifeless in the manger. Francis approached the vision, touched the baby, and awakened him from a deep sleep. Bonaventure writes that Francis even picked up the baby to embrace him.

The early Franciscan writers note that this vision of Francis awakening the child suited the Christmas moment

because of Francis' mission to awaken the presence of Christ in the hearts of many, to stir up in their souls the love of God and devotion to the newborn Christ of Bethlehem. This invitation remains for us today—an invitation, as we approach Christmas ourselves and the eighth centenary of the celebration at Greccio—to allow the example and devotion of Francis of Assisi to stir up to new life the presence of Christ in our hearts.

As we set up our own nativity scenes in our homes, or as we pray before them in our churches, let us ask the Holy Spirit for some small share of St. Francis' own desire to see with his own bodily eyes the hiddenness and poverty of the Lord born in Bethlehem, and even the "discomfort of his infant needs," born away from home and in a place where there was no room for him or his parents at the inn. And may we also find the answer to this prayer in a renewed vision of the suffering Christ in the poor of our neighborhoods and our country as well as in the fear and terror of those in places, much in our thoughts these days, that are suffering the horror of war.

We need not fear our hearts breaking as we contemplate these sufferings of Christ in the peoples of this world, for if we allow our hearts to break open, we also have hope, and indeed a saving hope. For open hearts are ready to receive the Holy Spirit. And just as at Christmas the Holy Spirit conceives the Word of God as the human life of Jesus of Nazareth, anointing him as Lord and Savior of the world, so the same Spirit, in the

same way, can conceive the presence of God in us, making of us Christians, anointed members of Christ after Christ's own Heart, awakening in us the presence of Jesus.

Opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit in this way as we approach another Christmas, we can let the Spirit make of our own hearts a living nativity scene, a little "Greccio." And if we fear that our hearts might not be fit for God because they can sometimes harbor darkness or even be a little cold at times, let us rejoice, for the good news of Bethlehem is that it is precisely in such places that God wills—indeed desires—to be born among us. In this awareness of the littleness and the poverty of our inner self, where Christ wishes to be born and abide—in order to make us a dwelling place for God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22)—we can marvel with St. Francis at the humility and poverty of the God who empties himself into the poverty of our little hearts, so that by his poverty, you might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9) in blessing and grace.

Then, having celebrated Christmas within, having prepared a little "Greccio" in our hearts where God hides and makes himself little in order to glorify our littleness and poverty from the inside, let us let that love of God out, into the outside, where the "infant needs" of Christ are heard in the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. In this way, the Love of God, made incarnate for us at Christmas, may continue to take flesh in the gentleness and charity we reflect out toward a suffering world.



Pope Francis visited the Italian town of Greccio on Dec. 1, 2019, to pray at the site where St. Francis of Assisi created the first nativity scene.

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Phone: 914-423-2392

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134 Convent Avenue
Rutland, VT 05701
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Wisconsin

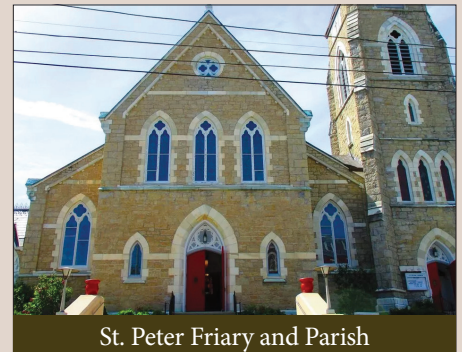
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The Capuchin Development Office funds the domestic and international mission of the Province of St. Mary. That mission ranges from supporting our own provincial members ministering here in the United States to providing assistance to Capuchins serving worldwide. The Province of St. Mary is a leader in supporting the works of justice and mercy undertaken by Capuchin friars across the globe.

**If you are interested in supporting our mission, please contact
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or visit our website at www.capuchin.org.**