



Insight & Wisdom

Franciscan Vocation Ministry

“O Most High, Glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me a right faith, a certain hope and a perfect love, insight and wisdom, O Lord, that I may carry out your holy and true command.” St. Francis of Assisi, Prayer before the Cross

Deeping Their Relationship With God

On June 17th at Saint Bonaventure University, four men who spent last year as postulants were received into the Novitiate of the Holy Name Province by Fr. Dominic Monti, OFM, Vicar Provincial. At the Reception Ceremony three novices from the Province of Christ the King in western Canada also joined the four novices from Holy Name Province and will be completing their novitiate together in the Holy Name Province's Novitiate program.

As novices, each of the men will be seeking to deepen his relationship with God. The novices will be introduced more intensely to the Rule of Life of the Friars Minor and to the history and traditions of the Franciscan order. At the conclusion of this novitiate year, the candidates will profess their first vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a Franciscan friar.



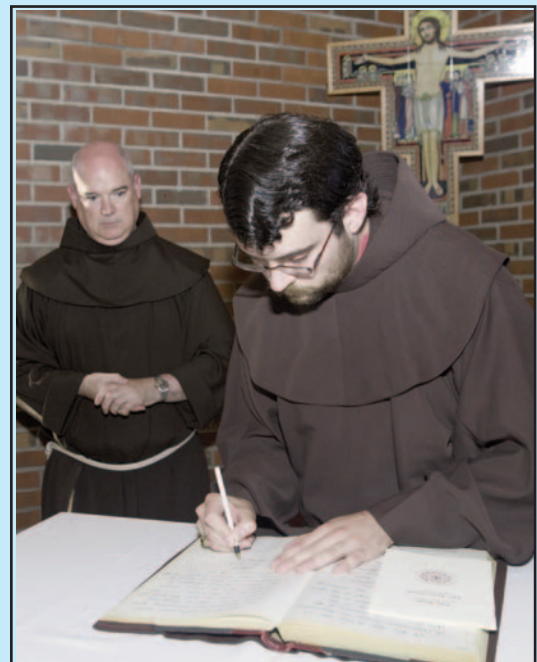
The new novices receive a fraternal embrace of welcome from the solemnly professed friars.



During this past year living with the friar community at Holy Cross Friary in the Bronx, NY, Stephen DeWitt, Mario Gomez, Daniel Horan, Hugo Medrano, and James Nagle engaged in various aspects of the Franciscan communal life and work. During this time, they were presented with resources such as workshops and personal advisors to

help each man develop the psychological and emotional qualities necessary for religious life and ministry. It was a time to further discern their call to the Franciscan way of life.

The experience of the postulancy was positive according to the newly received novices.



Br. Stephen DeWitt, OFM, signs his name in the “Book of Life” that records his reception into the novitiate as Fr. Thomas Gallagher, OFM, Novice Director, looks on.



Br. Hugo Medrano, OFM, prepares to wear the Franciscan habit for the first time.

"I can honestly say that this has been one of the best years of my life," says Steve. "I have enjoyed the experience of living and working with my brother friars and coming to know the people at my ministry site, St. Stephen of Hungary Church. I have also learned a great deal about myself through the various seminars and discussions I have participated in as part of the formation program."

For Dan, the year was "filled with more blessings than I could have ever imagined. Everyday comes with exciting challenges and graces that continue to inspire and motivate me along my journey to follow Francis' way of following Christ."

Not only was it a positive experience, but for some it was challenging also. As Hugo explains, "In general it was a very intense year, with a lot of different activities. I was challenged in different ways. You meet a lot of people and places in this year and you have a lot of information from everybody. My goal was approached because I could know more about my vocation in this year; I can say it was challenged in many ways. You got to know and to live the three elements of the Franciscan life: prayer, life in community, and ministry."

For Jimmy, the postulant year was "certainly something other than the norm. It was stretching and affirming in more ways than one. It has certainly prepared me for the next step in my vocational discernment." Jimmy completed his year of postulancy in the Bronx but has subsequently withdrawn from the Holy Name Province's formation program and entered the Franciscan novitiate of the St. Barbara Province in California. Jimmy's family and social ties are on the West Coast, which led him to transfer there.

For each man, different aspects of the postulant year offered something important. For Dan the frequent experiences of fraternity moved him. "From our daily gatherings of prayer and meals, to the larger celebrations of ordinations and professions, to the celebrating and remembering of the lives of those of our communities that have met Sister Bodily Death; the support of community and joyful spirit that surrounds fraternity is a very powerful element of this life and this year."

The ministry done by a postulant was important for Jimmy. At his ministry site at CREATE Young Adult Center in Harlem, NY, Jimmy says he "felt most myself and most helpless, at times. It brought me to prayer and prayer brought me back to my ministry site."

Steve believes one of the notable things he will always remember about this year was "the experience of coming to know my classmates and bonding with them over the course of the year."

"This is a place where I belong and am called to be."

- Br. Steve DeWitt, OFM

Hugo found that one of the most valuable aspects of year was the opportunity to get to know himself better. "This has been so important for me in order to approach community life, prayer, ministry, and in general to be a better person for myself and especially for others."

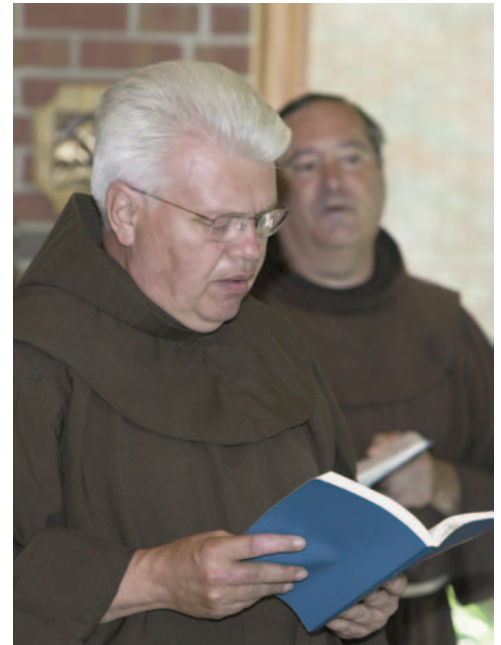
Steve echoes that response. "I think I have become more comfortable with myself and who I am," says Steve. "This is partly a result of coming to know



Fr. Dominic Monti, OFM, Vicar Provincial, gives Br. Mario Gómez, OFM, the Rule of the Order of Friars Minor and the Testament of Saint Francis of Assisi.



Fr. Dominic prepares to bless the habits of the new novices.



Br. David Haack, OFM, and Fr. Greg Brennan, OFM, join in singing during the reception celebration.

myself better through the experiences of this year and partly the result of living with a very supportive group of people who have challenged me and pushed in good ways."

"I feel I have grown in many ways especially in the face of many of the challenges that come up as a natural part of the discernment process," explains Dan. "Real-life issues that arise in community, prayer, and ministry have pushed and pulled me in ways that have made me a better person and a better brother."

According to Steve, "Over the course of the year my fellow classmates and I have been able to see what Franciscan life and ministry are about in a very real way, both when things are easy and when they are more challenging. The fact that I still feel called to this life after this

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- Br. Dan Horan, OFM

experience is, for me, a good sign that this is a place where I belong and am called to be."

Dan adds that "as uncertain as anyone is of God's will at any point in their life, I must say that I feel more certain of what God's call to religious life is about and what it means for me. God's continued grace in each friar's life and the lives of all friar candidates' lives is what makes the life of a young man from Assisi still relevant nearly 800 years later. It is this grace that I attribute to the strengthening of my vocation."

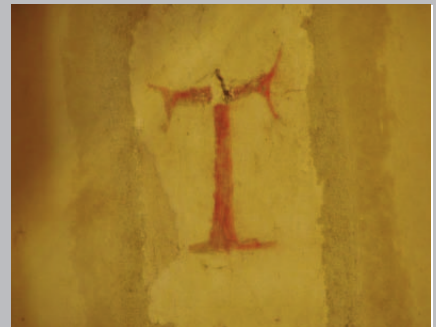
The year ahead for these men as novices will offer continued opportunities to deepen their Franciscan vocation.

Hugo says that during his novitiate he would like "to continue growing in the Franciscan spirit; trying to adapt the new experiences of this life into my life." Dan's hope for his novitiate experience "is to take full advantage of a year that is there for deep, spiritual development and growth while learning more about what it really means to be a Franciscan." While Steve hopes "to be able to continue to come to know my classmates better. I also hope to be able to enter more deeply into the spirituality and history of the Order and work to integrate that spirituality more explicitly and consciously into my own prayer life and spirituality."

For those who are discerning whether they have a vocation to the Franciscans and whether or not it is worth pursuing, the novices offer the following advice.

"If you are being nagged by a sinking suspicion

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that you are being called to religious life, - I know I felt that way, it would not leave me alone - enter the postulant year," says Jimmy. He adds, "You will not regret it. You will know. You won't know if it is forever, but you will know one year or one day at a time. The postulant year is a chance to discern this "crazy" and powerful counter-cultural way of life in a group of men who are discerning the same thing."

Dan's advice to those considering applying to the Franciscans is that "there is no other way to know for certain if this life is what you are called to until you try it for real. You cannot know what it is like to swim without first jumping in the water and you cannot know what the Franciscan life is like until you take that first step.

Whether in the end you feel that this may in fact be what God is calling you to or not, it is a year that will help you to grow in so many ways and make you a better person of prayer and of relationship in the end."

Steve suggests that by entering the postulancy one has "time to explore deeply and with others where and what God is calling you to in an environment where you will be supported and guided in this process. Even if you determine that God is calling you someplace else, you will learn much about who you are. I don't think that anyone who enters fully into this process of this year will ever consider it a waste, no matter what happens."





The novices (from the left to right): Br. Steve DeWitt, OFM; Br. Dwayne Fernandes, OFM; Br. Dan Horan, OFM; Br. William Isenor, OFM; Br. Mario Gómez, OFM; Br. Jean-Pierre Ducharme, OFM; and Br. Hugo Medrano, OFM.

Come and See ...

If you are interested in finding out more about the Franciscan way of life, then consider coming to one of our Hospitality Weekends or Discernment Weekend Retreats. They offer the opportunity for you to join one of our Franciscan communities for a weekend of hospitality, prayer, discernment, and fraternity. You will get a chance to see how we live, where we minister, and to pray with us. During the weekend there will be time for you to meet personally with the Vocation Director and with other friars about our Franciscan life.

If you believe God might be calling you to be a Franciscan and you are interested in attending one of these Vocation Weekends, check out the Franciscan Vocation Ministry on the web at www.vocation.org or call us at 1-800-677-7788.

2006-2007 Vocation Weekends

September 22, 23, 24, 2006

Hospitality Weekend
St. Francis Friary
Beach Haven, NJ

October 20, 21, 22, 2006

Discernment Retreat (Contemplative Experience)
Holy Peace Friary & Mt. Irenaeus
West Clarksville, NY

December 8, 9, 10, 2006

Hospitality Weekend
St. Anthony's Shrine
Boston, MA

February 9, 10, 11, 2007

Hospitality Weekend
Holy Name College
Silver Spring, MD

March 2, 3, 4, 2007

Discernment Retreat (Service Experience)
San Damiano Spiritual Center & St. Francis Inn
Philadelphia, PA

Pax et
Bonum



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