



# Franciscan Vocations

## Saint John the Baptist Province

January 2008

### Busy New Year for Franciscan Postulants

Our five Postulants returned from a nine day Christmas break to face a heavy schedule. Each of the Postulants spent enjoyable time with their families and were eager to return to Saint Anthony Friary to continue their year of formation.

First on their agenda was Mid-term Evaluations. On the evening of January 3 each met individually with the Professed Friars of the house to hear their input on how the Postulant is developing and where he might still need to grow. This input was followed up by a personal evaluation with the two Postulant Directors, Frs. Carl Langenderfer, O.F.M. and Frank Geers, O.F.M., in which the Postulant also had a chance to evaluate his own progress. The result of this process was summed up by Fr. Carl at Mass on January 6 when he announced to the congregation that the five passed "with flying colors."



On Monday, January 7, the two directors and five Postulants headed to Gethsemane Abbey near Bardstown, KY for a five day retreat. Gethsemane is a Trappist monastery where the monks observe silence and live a highly cloistered life. Our guys entered into the spirit of the place and came home enthused about their experience, but convinced that they are called by God to be Franciscan Friars and not Trappist Monks.

While the Franciscans are not monastic, Saint Francis did write a Rule for Hermitages providing for the possibility of Friars spending some time in a quiet, prayerful space. Also, contemplation is a part of Franciscan life at all times. So this retreat introduced the Postulants more deeply to an essential aspect of Franciscan life.

(Dan Helfrich brought back some pictures. There are a couple on "Fr. Don's Blog," and a few more below.)



The Monastery Chapel



A Prayer Hut



The Statue of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Having barely returned from retreat, the Postulants helped host a *Come and See* weekend. Two men participated in the program: Andrew Wood from Columbus, OH and Nathan Ribar from Monroeville, PA.



Andrew Wood



Nathan Ribar

Andrew is 26 and is a librarian and student. Nathan is 30 and has served in the Army.

*cont. on back*

**Two *Come and See* weekends:  
yet this spring**  
March 7-9, 2008  
May 2-4, 2008  
Call the Vocation Office if you would like to participate

5000 Colerain Ave • Cincinnati OH 45223-1213 • 1-800-827-1082 • 513-542-1082

[www.franciscan.org](http://www.franciscan.org) • [sjbvocations@franciscan.org](mailto:sjbvocations@franciscan.org)

## Postulants cont.

The “fun” continued on January 15 when Fr. Don Miller, O.F.M. Vocation Director, joined Fr. Carl and the five Postulants on a trip to Chicago, IL for a four day workshop on *Male Spirituality and Sexuality*. Fr. Don offered the workshop to the postulants of three other Franciscan Provinces as well as one Capuchin Province and one Conventual Province. Sixteen postulants and four Postulant Directors participated.



Fr. Don at the podium with Fr. Perry McDonald, O.F.M. Cap wearing the habit in the front row with Bro. Joseph Wood, O.F.M. Conv. in the white hooded sweat shirt.

The occasion is a good opportunity for the postulants from various communities to get together and learn about the various Franciscan Orders. It is also a chance for the men from our province and those from Assumption and Sacred Heart to get to know each other a bit better since they will be novices together next year in Cedar Lake, IN.

Fr. Don has offered the workshop the past four years. He started in Joliet, IL at St. John the Baptist Friary of Sacred Heart Franciscan Province. The program moved to Sacred Heart Friary, the headquarters of St. Bonaventure Conventual Province, last year because more room was needed to house the participants.



David Hirt, a Capuchin Postulant, (on far left and moving clockwise); Fr. Dennis Schaffer, O.F.M., Postulant Director of Sacred Heart Franciscan Province; Galen Osby, Franciscan Postulant for Assumption Province; Peter Lee, Franciscan Postulant for Immaculate Conception Province; Clifford Hennings, Postulant for our province; Stephan Steiner, Postulant for Immaculate Conception; and Roger Lopez and Tim Tran of our province play a serious game of UNO.

## Note by Fr. Don, O.F.M. on *Male Spirituality and Sexuality Workshop*

As is clear from this newsletter, our Postulants of Saint John the Baptist Province are off to a busy start of 2008. Their entire year has been busy, but these past few weeks seem especially active due to travel and some major events. Mid-term evaluations and a week-long retreat are significant pieces of the Postulancy Program as the men begin the second half of their formative year. They have had a chance to return to their families during Christmas break and to take stock of their decision to join the Franciscan Order. And they have come back enthusiastic about being together and continuing their formation.

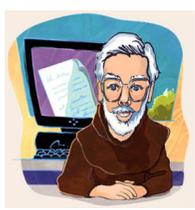
The *Male Spirituality and Sexuality* workshop is another significant event at the beginning of the second half of Postulancy and one that I have the privilege of being a part of since I offer the workshop. This year's group of postulants ranged from nineteen to 57 years of age. Two are doing formation for St. Joseph Province of the Capuchin Franciscans, three for St. Bonaventure Province of the Conventual Franciscans, and eleven for four provinces of the Observant Franciscans—usually referred to as simply “Franciscans.” Of the sixteen, I had previously gotten to know and work with nine and had met all but two. So I felt right at home sharing some thoughts and feelings about the topic of male spirituality and sexuality with them and their directors who are fellow Franciscans even though we represent different Orders and Provinces within Franciscanism.

What does it mean to be a celibate male within the Franciscan movement in today's global society and Church? What does being an American male add to the mix? What does the Franciscan tradition add? How is all of this situated within the Catholic Church? And, most especially, how do all of these factors impact one's relationship with Jesus, his Father, and his Holy Spirit?

Those are some of the background questions and concerns I had floating around in my head as I drove to Chicago Tuesday a week ago. As I looked over the gathering sitting in front of me on the first night I was impressed with the rich variety of personalities and talents in the group. And deeply impressed with the fact that these young men are willing to give their lives to the Lord in the context of Franciscanism, a movement that has inspired and fed me spiritually for over 40 years.

I love having the opportunity to teach since teaching is in my blood having been in the classroom for many years. And the areas of sexuality and spirituality are such rich topics to share. So, needless to say, the workshop proved to be a highlight of the beginning of 2008 for me—and hopefully for those to participated in the workshop as well.

I, of course, have no idea where the Lord will eventually lead the young men with whom I had the pleasure of working. But the joy of teaching them is the knowledge that, at least in some small way, I have helped them in their understanding of being male in today's world and Church and shared with them a little of the beauty of Franciscan spirituality. That makes the time, effort, and travel more than worthwhile.



More up-to-date accounts of happenings in and around the province can be found on Fr. Don's Blog at:  
[www.vocationvibes.franciscan.org](http://www.vocationvibes.franciscan.org)

Also, monthly updated information about who we are and what we do as Franciscan Friars can be found at:  
[www.franciscan.org](http://www.franciscan.org)