

THE Caperone



Friars In San Francisco



From The Formators

“I admonish all my brothers when they go into the world to speak courteously to everyone, as is becoming,” St. Francis says in his Rule. For him courtesy and respect were foundational for all human relationships in the Lord. Hospitality is one of the essential manifestations of courtesy and respect. On our pilgrimage last month to the national shrine of St. Francis in San Francisco, the novices and team were able to experience gracious courtesy from so many different people: Bishop Richard García, Dr. Ruben Mendoza, the Carmelite nuns of Cristo Rey, the Camaldolese monks of Big Sur, and our own Capuchin brothers in the San Francisco Bay Area. The generosity of so many people was one of the great blessings of our journey.

However, the novices know that as friars we are not only to receive hospitality, but to extend it to others. This happens when we have guests, such as the friars and staff of the Provincial Council of St. Joseph Province, who recently held one of their meetings here at the novitiate. Not only are the novices involved in making beds and cleaning guest rooms, but also in making our guests feel welcome by simple gestures of respect and friendliness. St. Francis was aware of the power of small actions done with great love, and so helping the novices learn to be gracious hosts is also part of their training in Capuchin Franciscan life.

We are now in the second part of the novitiate year, and the discernment process for the novices in some ways kicks into “high gear.” So we ask your prayers for them and for the formators even more as we enter into Lent. What we seek is the will of God, and we know your prayers are a great help in that quest.

May the Lord bless and keep you always!

- *Br. Bobby Barbato, OFM Cap*

Calendar Of Events

February 1-3: *Presentation on Lent (Br. Bob Herrick)*

February 6: *History of the Australia Province (Br. Thomas McFadden)*

February 10: *Ash Wednesday: Day of Recollection*

February 15-17: *Presentation on PCO Documents (Br. Bill Hugo)*

February 22-24: *Presentation on St. Francis (Br. Paul Dressler)*

February 25-28: *Religious Education Congress*

February 29: *Presentation on St. Bonaventure (Br. Bobby Barbato)*

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Newsletter of the North American Pacific Capuchin Conference Novitiate

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Comments and Questions

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A soft drizzle of rain fell upon the grounds of San Lorenzo Seminary as all the novices and formators lugged their duffle bags out to the parking lot early Monday morning, piling into the cars and vans that would soon be on the highway for our long trip up to the city of St. Francis, San Francisco. Before even leaving the driveway, a malfunctioning GPS was the first mishap of the day. Some of the guys joked that it might be an omen of what was to come. There was a definite buzz of excitement among us as we all pulled out, looking forward to the journey ahead of us, imagining with wonder the many graces we were bound to experience along the way.

Each year the novice class takes a four day pilgrimage trip up to San Francisco, stopping at various missions and other religious sites along the way to experience first hand the depth of the Catholic faith and its fruits here in California. Our main destination each year is the National Shrine of St. Francis, which holds a nearly exact replica of the Portiuncula, the church in Assisi which was so dearly loved by St. Francis, and one of the three that he rebuilt after hearing the call from the San Damiano cross. However, as our novice directors explained to us, a pilgrimage is not all about the destination, but about the journey as well, and during these four days we learned how true that really is.

Day one of our journey was jam-packed with new sights, new sounds, and new silences. We began our drive up route 101 north, and unable to pass up the opportunity, our first stop was on the coast at the elephant seal viewing area near Hearst Castle, where dozens, sometimes hundreds, of elephant seals gather to relax under the warmth of the California sun. For those of us who had never seen them, the two to three thousand pound behemoths were an unbelievable sight to see, a sampling of yet another of God's mysterious creation, and well worth the stop.

The next leg of our journey brought us along the famous Route 1, with its winding, coastal vistas of the Pacific. A thick layer of fog permeated the whole area, and driving through it added an atmosphere of mystery to our ride along the coast, until we finally came out of the fog and saw the incredible view of the ocean before us. Our next stop, right on the coast and in the heart of the Big Sur area, was the Immaculate Heart Hermitage, a place of prayerful quiet for a group of Benedictine Camaldolese monks. The first feature which impressed us was its location atop a mountain, at the end of a steep, two mile driveway with a magnificent view of the Pacific. The second feature we noticed was the atmosphere of intense silence on the grounds of the monastery. Because the monks were on a day of recollection, there was an even greater silence than usual. We celebrated mass in their chapel, a simple stone building, but powerful in its simplicity. Hearing the resounding echoes of footsteps, followed by utter silence, was an incredibly moving experience, a brief entry into the life of monasticism. The monks' powerful example of prayer was an inspiration to us all.





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Following our visit to Camaldoli was a stop at the Carmel Mission Basilica, the burial place of the newly canonized saint Junípero Serra. We met with the bishop of the diocese, Richard Garcia, who gave us a tour of the mission and joined us for evening prayer in the church, in front of the tomb of St. Junípero. It is always a pleasure for us to visit another mission and be able to enter more deeply into the early history of the Church and the friars in California. We had a very blessed time there.

After seeing Mission Carmel, and following a short stop for dinner, we completed the first part of our journey, each vehicle going to one of the four Capuchin friaries in the San Francisco area. It was a slightly anticlimactic end to the day, arriving at the city at dark and being so tired from the driving that we all just wanted to get to our beds. That was the atmosphere at San Buenaventura Friary at least. However, the expectation of the second day ahead of us was definitely on our minds, looking forward to what awaited us.

Our first day in San Francisco began with none other than the National Shrine itself. We gathered at 9:30am for morning prayer in the main church. After morning prayer, we walked single-file down the narrow staircase leading to the Portiuncula. It was a step back in time to earliest days of the order. The replica of the small church (and it is very small), was built stone for stone and paint chip for paint chip, leaving no detail for granted. We packed into the church for the celebration of the Eucharist. The most striking feature of the Portiuncula is its simplicity. We always hear the stories of St. Francis' profound humility, simplicity, and poverty, but once one witnesses firsthand what it was like for Francis to live, pray, and gather for mass in this place, it gives a whole new understanding to the meaning of Francis' poverty and deep love for God. Being able to celebrate mass there was a great grace, a lesson in Franciscan history that books cannot teach us. Following mass we were given an hour of prayerful silence to wander the main church and the Portiuncula area for silent reflection, a space of time to pause and ponder the life of Francis and our vocational journey with the Capuchin Franciscans thus far. The church was so beautiful that for some of us an hour was simply not long enough, but when on pilgrimage, the journey must go on. We next went over to the section of San Francisco known as the Tenderloin District, the poorest area of the city, where we got to see the St. Anthony Foundation, a massive outreach ministry to the poor.





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The ten million dollar enterprise feeds over three thousand people a day, provides social services, professional healthcare and medicine, and housing for dozens of families. Being able to tour the foundation and see the incredible work that the OFM friars do there was absolutely awe-inspiring. One of the most touching moments of our visit there was going into St. Anthony Church, where the pastor has allowed the church to be a place of refuge for the homeless, opening up many of the pews as a place for homeless people to come and sleep, to have a safe haven amidst the chaos of the city. It was incredibly moving.

The following morning, on our third day of the trip, another wave of excitement and anticipation welled up in the community. This was our free day, and we had a half a dozen plans to explore the city. Before going off and scattering however, we gathered at San Buenaventura Friary to visit the nearby St. Ignatius Church, and then across the street for a face to face visit with the Carmelite sisters of Cristo Rey Monastery. Being able to meet them was a wonderful experience, and they told some incredible stories of their founding and their past sisters. Their example and model of religious life in living their charism is an inspiration.

By eleven we were all in our various cars off to explore the iconic city. Some groups went out to walk the Golden Gate Bridge, visit the famous Lombard Street, and find the location of the "Full House" house. Others went to Chinatown to enjoy an authentic food experience. Some went to UC Berkeley to meet with a group of Sisters of Life and Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. One group went to Muir Woods to explore the majestic redwood forest. When everyone returned back to San Buenaventura Friary at the end of the day, the response was unanimous: the day could not have been better. It was an extraordinarily refreshing day for all of us.

Thursday morning brought us to the final day of our trip. After morning prayer at our Burlingame friary, we hit the highway for the return journey. We stopped at Mission San Juan Bautista to visit an old friend of ours, Dr. Ruben Mendoza, who spoke at our Gala earlier in the year. He gave us a tour of the historic mission, along with a very inspiring personal testimony of his work there, and then joined us for mass in the Guadalupe chapel. It was a pleasure to see Dr. Mendoza again.

After a brief lunch we headed off once more and made one final stop at Mission San Miguel for the conclusion of our pilgrimage. We gathered in the front of the mission church for our final prayer and blessing, a chance to give thanks for the wonderful experiences and the countless blessings we had received in the past three and half days. With that, we were off home, back to San Lorenzo and the life of the novitiate. It was an incredible journey, and we give all the thanks to God for it.





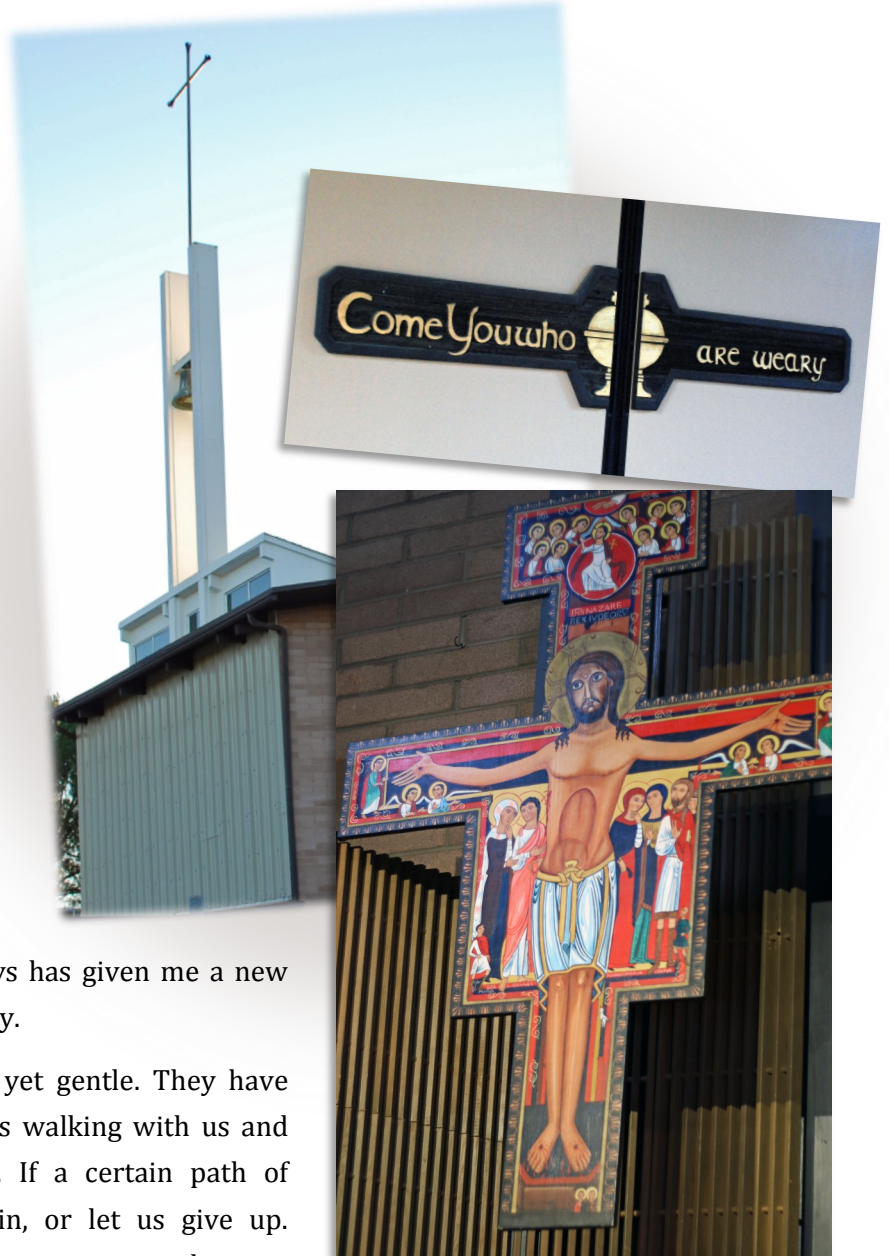
Discernment In Novitiate

I would have to say that my novitiate experience has been a really good one so far. That is not to say that it has all been easy though. It has been a time of learning to live with and trust my life to my brothers in ways that I have never trusted anyone before. It has been a time of learning my strengths and gifts as well as seeing the aspects of myself that need work and that need to change. Seeing these things in yourself can be difficult, but through working on them I feel that I have grown immensely. Due to having to truly see myself, I have come to be a much more balanced and joyful person and I have found real joy in the relationships that are developing between me and my brothers. Without this experience, or the Capuchins for that matter, I don't know if I would have ever been opened up to experiences like these. Growing in these ways has given me a new confidence and has enriched my life immensely.

I find the formators to be steadfast yet gentle. They have high expectations for us, but they are always walking with us and encouraging us to grow beyond ourselves. If a certain path of growth is difficult for us they don't give in, or let us give up. They stay firm and expect us to do the work necessary to become Capuchins and to grow spiritually, mentally, communally, and in various other ways. However, while remaining firm in their expectations, they are always available to help us process and to help us gently along. They treat us like brothers and don't lord their positions over us. I've grown to trust them deeply.

So in all, the experience of novitiate has been a really positive one for me.

- Br. Clint Evrard





Friars' FYI

Day Of Recollection

This month's day of recollection was led by our own Br. Jerry. He opened up for us the Gospel of John by centering his reflections on using the gospel to come to a better understanding of who God is, of his every present identity, and his overpowering, overflowing love for us. Jerry used the gospel as a sign of hope, of encouragement, and of reassurance during this crucial time in our discernment. By reflecting on Mary Magdalene, on Lazarus, and on the washing of the twelve apostles' feet, he gave us new insights into the way that God wishes to be in relationship to us, and how we too should be in relationship to one another. He also gave us a new lens with which to view the San Damiano Cross, an icon that, as Capuchin Franciscans, we are always trying to understand more and more. The day of recollection was a fruitful breath of fresh air, a chance to rest in the Lord and to reflect on his powerful love for us. We are very thankful to Br. Jerry for once again opening up the Scriptures for us and allowing the Word to permeate into our lives in ever deeper ways.

Capuchin Constitutions

This month we were blessed with the presence of one of our friars from St. Mary's Province, New York/New England. Fr. Jack Rathschmidt is one of the province's most prominent preachers, being on the mission band, and he is an impressive Franciscan scholar. Having done some significant work with the writing of our Capuchin Constitutions, he was the choice friar to give us a workshop on that highly important document. He spent two weeks with us, breaking open the Constitutions and giving us a lens with which to view it as a tool for encountering the Capuchin Charisms, especially our charisms of fraternity, minority, and contemplation, which he said were the foundational aspects upon which the rest of our life is built. Throughout the two weeks he was with us, he allowed each of the provinces represented this year to give presentations on a particular chapter of the Constitutions, exploring the ways each province expresses their Capuchin life. The novices really appreciated the time Jack spent with us. He gave us some challenging ideas to reflect upon as we continue our discernment of Capuchin religious life in the twenty-first century. It was a pleasure to have him.





Friars' FYI

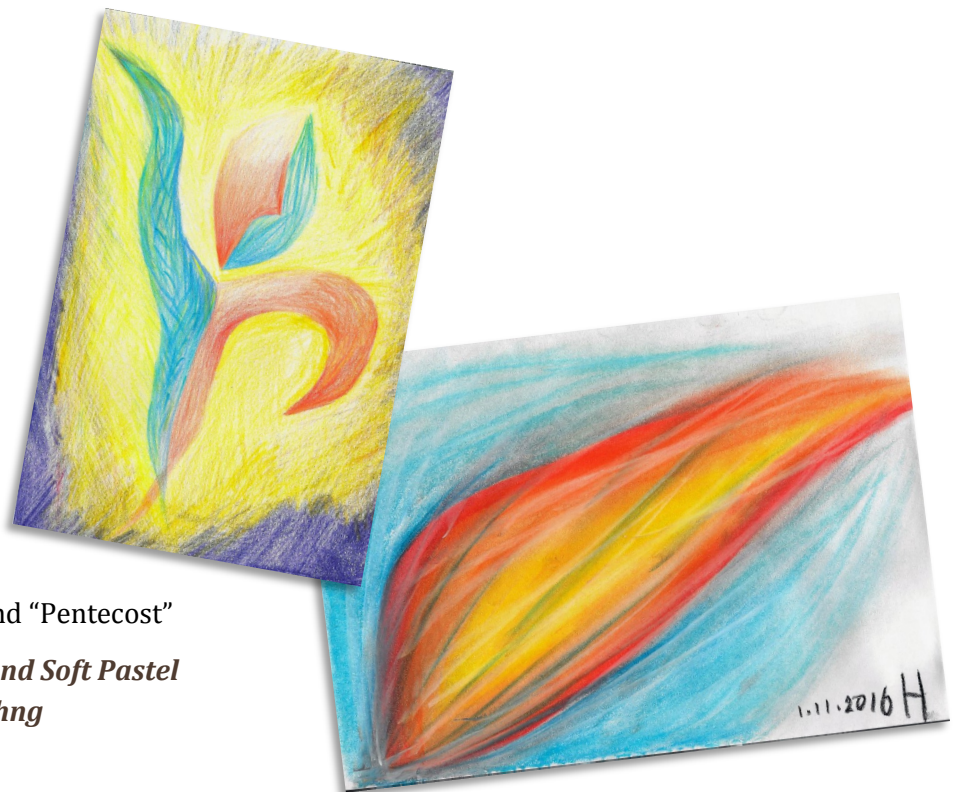
Life In Novitiate

This month's dominating feature was definitely the four day pilgrimage to San Francisco, but January was unique in another way as well: it was a month of birthdays. We celebrated the birthdays of novice brothers Vince, Steve, Christopher, and Rigo, and our beloved Br. Lance. We also celebrated the birthday of Fr. Alejandro. That was truly a special day. Alejandro has been a great example to us these past six months. His determination to get up each morning to concelebrate the mass every day without fail is an inspiring model of his Capuchin fortitude and an unceasing dedication to live out his priestly vocation on a daily basis. We have no excuse to grumble out of bed in the morning when Fr. Alejandro, with his physical difficulties, makes it every day for mass, eager to participate in yet another liturgy. At the end of our celebratory dinner for his birthday, some of the friars said a few words in his honor, and Br. Jack Rathschmidt from St. Mary's Province, who was a classmate of Alejandro's, sang to him a traditional birthday song which nearly brought him to tears. It was a powerful moment. Then Fr. Alejandro rose from his seat to speak, to express the gratefulness of his heart for the community of San Lorenzo and to give his unbounding love to us all. It won't be a day we will forget easily.

Around this time in the month we also had the St. Joseph Provincial Council with us for their monthly council meeting. It was great to have them with us, to meet new friars and make connections among the provinces. It was a pleasure to have them with us.



Creative Capuchins



"Happy Spirit" and "Pentecost"

*Colored Pencil and Soft Pastel
by Br. Hahm Gahng*