

what is a capuchin friar?

what do they do? who are they?

an introduction to the
Capuchin Friars



Exactly 257 years ago before anyone knew about capuchin monkeys (so named in 1758), there were Capuchin friars. It was more than 400 years after Capuchin friars came into existence in 1528 that anyone tasted a cup of cappuccino (first served in 1948). As for friar's, no, they aren't fryers, but some of them do prefer theirs fried, rather than baked or grilled. The 'hood'? It's all in the name. The brotherhood is found in all kinds of neighbourhoods, hoods and all.

Even if you have known Capuchin friars for a long time, it wouldn't be surprising if you found them somewhat mysterious. The Catholic Church has many religious Orders and communities of men. So what makes Capuchins different? Aren't they Franciscans? And how are they different from Diocesan priests? It can all be confusing even for those well versed in Catholic life.



Maybe you can recognize a Capuchin because of the curious, medieval clothing he wears, but you might wonder what makes him tick on the inside. Come to think about it, why do they wear that robe? And you might ask why anyone would want to be a Capuchin friar in this day and age? Is there a point to a bunch of men living together? Why don't they get married like other people? And then there's the money thing? Like everyone else they need it, but they take a vow of poverty. How does that work?

If you aren't familiar with the Catholic Church you might wonder who these guys follow. Anyways, what's so great about that man named St. Francis of Assisi? And what does he have to do with Jesus Christ? You might suspect that an organization founded in the middle ages should be dying out because it couldn't possibly have any meaning for people today. *Guess again!*



If you've wondered or were curious or didn't want to offend by asking, this may be just the place for you to begin to look around and see just what a Capuchin is.

are they priests or brothers?
are Capuchins monks?

The Rule and Life of the friars minor is to observe



**St. Francis
of Assisi**

the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

More than 800 years after he was born, St. Francis remains one of the most popular personalities in history. Well known for his care for animals, an advocate for peace and his simple lifestyle, St. Francis, above all gave himself completely to God because he realized God's total love for him. His dream to achieve fame and glory in battle was transformed into a desire to radically follow his Saviour our Lord Jesus Christ. He stood naked before the bishop, kissed the leper, opened the book of the Gospels,

rebuilt the ruins of San Damiano, contemplated the

crucified Christ, gazed upon the crèche at Greccio, sang in the streets of Assisi, met with the Muslim sultan, pledged obedience to the Pope, gathered the brothers in the Portiuncula, received the sacred stigmata, prayed at all times, immersed himself among the poor ... because he declared with all of his soul, strength, heart and mind, "*Deus meus et omnia!*"



"My God and my all!"

repair my church!

He was walking on day near the little church of San Damiano; it was crumbling and no one seemed to have a care for it. Francis went to the altar. Suddenly he hear a voice speaking from the crucifix, "Francis, go and repair my church, which you can see is in ruin." In astonishment he replied, "Gladly, Lord, I will repair it." Then he felt a marvelous love for the crucified Christ take possession of Him. Such a love he had never felt before.



Cuthbert's *Life of St. Francis*, p.32



The Pope had a dream that the church of St. John Lateran, the mother church of Christianity, was about to fall, and a religious man, small in stature and of lowly appearance was holding it up. It seemed to the Pope that Francis was the man of his dream. He approved the Rule which Francis presented to him.

Cuthbert's *Life of St. Francis*, p.100

The book of the Gospels was near the altar that all might read who cared. Francis knelt before the altar and prayed to God to show His Will in the opening of the book. He came upon St. Matthew's Gospel at these words; If any man will come after me; let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Francis exclaimed, "This is our life and our rule!"



from *First Celano*, IX, 22

lesser brothers

Friars minor

Francis asked God to give him brothers who would be content to possess God alone as their only treasure. Francis said, "The Lord has willed that the brothers be called lesser because they are the people of whom God spoke in the Gospel: there is no need to be afraid little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the Kingdom, and again, whenever you did it for one the least (minor) of these brothers of mine, you did it for me. Thus did blessed Francis call his followers Friar's Minor.



from the *Legend of Perugia*, #67

For among all the unhappy spectacles of the world, Francis naturally abhorred lepers; but one day he met a leper while riding near Assisi. Though the leper caused him great disgust and horror, nevertheless, he got off the horse and prepared to



Kiss the leper



When the leper put out his hand a thought to receive something, he received money along with a kiss. Filled with wonder and joy, Francis, after a few days, took care to do the same thing again with other lepers, and after he had given each leper some money he kissed his hand and his face. Thus did he exchange the bitter for the sweet.

from *Celano's Second Life of Francis*, V

Catholic
Penance
Austerity
Solidarity
Prayer
Brothers

Order Friars Minor – Capuchin

Capuchin – Franciscan Friars

Three centuries after St. Francis, a number of Franciscan Friars wanted to live as the founder envisioned; they wanted to observe his original Rule and ideals. Devoting themselves to prayer, penance and preaching, the friars also heroically served the poor, sick and dying. In 1528 Pope Clement VII gave them permission to form a new community of Franciscan friars. They soon became known as the “Capuchins” because many Italian children called them *cappuccini* for the large hoods on their habits. Overcoming stiff opposition from some of their former superiors and enduring great trials, the Capuchins soon won the hearts of the people. “They were alive with a spiritual life which was in touch with the fundamental needs of the human spirit of their time.”



The same historian observes that the Capuchins began as a “revolt against secularism and conventionalism” which permeated both society and the Church. The Capuchins recaptured

the fervor and original vision of *The Poverello*, the Poor Little Man, St. Francis of Assisi, even to wearing the same, simple habit he wore. These friars and those who followed had a reputation for austerity, holiness and solidarity with the poor and common people, and soon demand for their presence beyond Italy could not be ignored. With missionary zeal the Order grew into an international community. Today there are more than 11,000 friars world-wide with rapid growth in Africa, Asia, South America and lately a resurgence of growth in North America

Prayer of the heart leads us to an intimate experience of

God, and our hearts cannot but break into adoration, thanksgiving, admiration and praise ... We should have the greatest respect for the mystery of the Eucharist and the Divine Office which St. Francis wished to shape the entire life of the brotherhood ... Let us preserve and promote that contemplative spirit that shines in the life of Francis ... interior prayer was a charism of our Capuchin fraternity and is the seed of genuine renewal.

from the Capuchin Constitutions, Chapter 3

the 3 vows

Christ proposes the evangelical counsels to every disciple. The perfection of charity, to which we are all called, entails for those who freely follow the call to religious life, the obligation of practicing *chastity* in the sake of the Kingdom, *poverty* and *obedience*. This is one way of experiencing a more intimate consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God ... to follow Christ more nearly ... to give themselves to God who is love.

Evangelical Counsels

from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #915, #916

BROTHERHOOD

Inspired by God, St. Francis initiated a gospel form of life that he called a brotherhood according to the example of life of Christ and his disciples. We who profess this form of life truly constitute and Order of brothers. United by faith with God our Father and nourished at the table of the divine word and Eucharist, we owe one another that the world may know we are disciples of Jesus Christ. ... Wherever we may be gathered in the name Jesus, let us be of one heart and one mind, always striving to advance to greater perfection.

CommonLife

from the Capuchin Constitutions, Chapter 6

Ministry

The principal apostolate of a lesser brother is to live a gospel life in truth, simplicity and joy. We should willingly assume any apostolic activity as long as it is in harmony with our form of life and responds to the needs of the Church. Aware of our minority, let us generously undertake those ministries that are regarded as especially difficult. Let the brothers show special care to those deprived of ordinary pastoral care because of the conditions of their life: the young, emigrants, laborers, those burdened by financial pressures, or those harassed by hostility or racial prejudice.

The Apostolic Life

from the Capuchin Constitutions, Chapter 9

FAQ: Frequently asked questions

What's the difference between a friar and a monk?

A monk is called to the contemplative life within a monastery or abbey. Normally a monk lives his entire religious life on the grounds of the monastery and does not undertake ministries outside of the monastery. A friar lives with other friars but is usually involved in ministry among people outside the friary. Friars are called to be both contemplative and active in the world.

Is a friar “Brother” or “Father”?

The Capuchin Order is a community of lay and ordained members; all are friars professing the same vows as Capuchins. They are brothers to each other and try to be brotherly to all people. Friars who are also priests may be called “Father”, however the General Minister of the Capuchins has asked the friars to prefer the title of “Brother” to “Father” even if they are ordained priests.

Do friars pray together?

Yes. They pray the Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office, especially Morning and Evening Prayer. They also participate in daily Mass and are obliged to meditate each day. Of course, their studies of Scripture and other spiritual writing guide their prayer. Friars may also pray the same devotions that Catholics frequently use, e.g.: Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic adoration, the Rosary, etc. Friars must also pray privately if they are to persevere in their vocation.

How are friars assigned to a friary and ministry?

Taking into consideration the friar's needs, abilities and desires, as well as the needs of the Church and Order, the Provincial Minister in dialogue with the individual friar assigns him to a friary and a ministry. The friar's vow of obedience obliges him to go where he is asked.

Can friars be missionaries?

Of course! Friars are encouraged to become missionaries in foreign countries. From the earliest days of our Order, Capuchins have always had a great tradition of sending missionaries and supporting missionaries with prayer and material resources. The friars' missionary labours throughout the centuries and in many lands have resulted in the blessings of many brothers all around the world.

What is the difference between a Capuchin friar and a diocesan priest?

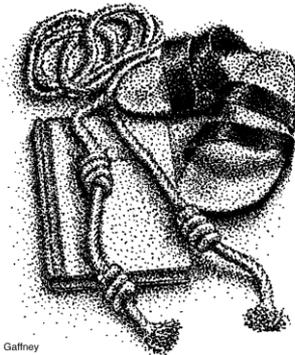
A diocesan priest is ordained for the service of his diocese and is obedient to his bishop. Many friars are not ordained, but a friar who is also a priest is ordained for priestly ministry. He lives in a community of friars made up of both lay and ordained friars, to live the Capuchin life. A friar is not bound to a specific diocese. The superiors of friars are other friars and the Holy Father. Of course friars are obedient to the bishop of the diocese in which they live and work.

What do friars do about money?

Most friars receive a minimum salary for their ministries. All salaries are turned over to the Guardian to pay the bills for the friary and to send what remains to the Provincial to support the retired friars, help pay for the training of new members and help with the other obligations of the Province. Friars may request money from the Guardian for personal needs. Because the salaries of friars are not adequate for ordinary expenditures of the community, they are grateful for the generosity of benefactors and pray for them everyday. There is a Capuchin Development office to assist benefactors in supporting the friars and their ministries.

What do friars personally own?

Friars may not personally own land or buildings or other assets. Most have cars, but they are owned by the Order. Friars use computers and cell phones; they may acquire such items with permission and are ultimately the common property of the community.



Gaffney

Capuchin Glossary

Capuchin (kap-u-shin): from the Italian for *cowl*, hood; *capuche*; a friar of the Capuchin Order.

Friar (fri'-ær): from the romance languages for *brother*; professed member of several specific Orders of religious men.

Friary (fri'-æ-re): an officially established house in which friars live.

Guardian: a friar appointed to serve as leader of a friary; he is assisted by a designated *vicar*.

Province: the geographical territory designated by the Order in which friars live, minister, receive candidates for the Order, provide formation and is presided over by a Provincial Minister. A religious province in Canada may consist of several secular provinces ie: Ontario

Provincial: pertaining to a religious province; or *the Provincial*, referring to the Provincial Minister, who is elected by the friars in a provincial chapter to lead that province for a three year term (triennium). The Provincial is assisted by definitors or councilors who are also elected.

Order: more precisely, *the Order*; the world-wide fraternity of Capuchin friars under the leadership of the General Minister in Rome, sometimes simply referred to as the *General*.

Chapter: a formal meeting of friars to determine how various aspects of Capuchin life are lived; A local chapter is convened for a local friary; a provincial chapter for the province; a general chapter for the entire Order.

Formation: the entire, multi-level period of training in which men are prepared to ultimately profess perpetual or solemn vows as Capuchin friars.

Postulant (päs-tyoo-lant): a man who is in Postulancy, the first phase of training to become a friar.

Novice (nä-vis): a *new* friar, invested in the habit and in intensive training lasting one year, at the end of which he makes temporary profession to live three years as a Capuchin.

Novitiate (no-vis-e-at): the friary in which novices are trained.

Habit: cross-shaped, brown robe worn by Capuchin friars, including a white cord with three knots symbolizing the vows worn at the waist, and sandals.

Profession: the act of making public vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as a friar. Temporary profession is usually made for a period of 3 years. Perpetual profession is making vows for life, also known as solemn vows.

Living the GOSPEL life

In truth, simplicity and joy

From the call of his first disciples, God continues to invite us to follow His son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Every friar knows that he has been called and that his entire life is a response to God's invitation. The friar knows that he follows our Saviour on the way of the cross, of being the least rather than the greatest, the last rather than the first, to serve rather than be served, to give rather than receive. Imitating Christ and St. Francis, the friar trusts in God's promise that His love will never fail.

Come, **follow ME**
Luke 5:28

Our hearts are filled with wonder and awe for all the goodness God has shown to us! Not only has he given us earthly life, he has promised us eternal life. We give thanks for God's sacrifice of love in becoming Jesus Christ, dying to give us new life. Our hearts are full of gratitude for the gift of the Church, of which we are sons, and the Eucharist which sustains us, and the Word that guides us. For the gift of faith, our vocation to the Capuchin way of life and the wonder of all creation, we are friars, not because we have decided to do great things, but because God's love overwhelms us.

GOD

So loved the world

John 3:16

By dying on the cross for us, our Lord showed us how to love one another. It isn't always easy, but it's always the right thing to do. Friars come from different countries and backgrounds, each having his own opinions, seeing things from different perspectives and having his good and bad days, but the command that Jesus gives remains. A friar's fraternal life can lead him to pray in joy and thanksgiving or to beg for God's forgiveness and strength. A friar is called to love the brothers; he is also called to show that same Christ-like love to everyone, not that he might be loved in return, but that all might come to know the tremendous love that God has for them and that His love overcomes all that afflicts and divides us.

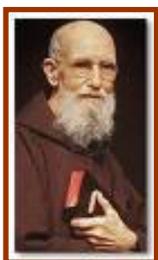
Love one another as I have loved you
John 13:34

Go make disciples of all nations

Matthew 28:19

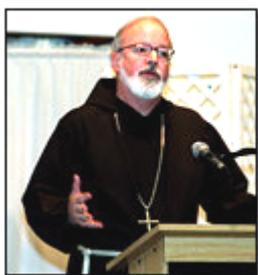
The newly risen Lord gave his disciples the mission to go beyond the limits of comfort and familiarity, to announce the Good News and bring God's salvation to all people. Whether in nearby towns and people or distant villages and cultures, the mission of a Capuchin friar is to be the very presence of Jesus to all he meets. In communion with the Catholic Church, friars are present in parishes, soup kitchens, classrooms and hospitals. They are seen in city neighbourhoods, suburbs and rural towns. Capuchins serve among the poor, wealthy, and in-between, with those who are searching and those who want to help others find the Way, the Truth and the Life. In his ministry as a teacher, pastor, confessor, porter, preacher, tailor, chaplain or cook, the friar is on a Mission.

Noteworthy Contemporary Capuchin Friars



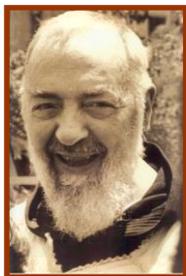
Blessed Solanus Casey His was not a life of obvious achievements, just prayerful service to others. Br. Solanus although a priest, was not inclined toward intellectual pursuits, but he was holy and compassionate with anyone who came to the friary for help any time of the day or night. This humble friar from Wisconsin is on his way to being named a saint.

www.solanuscenter.org



Cardinal Sean O'Malley (of the Capuchin Province of St. Augustine) was appointed as Bishop of Boston by Pope John Paul II in 2004. Less than two years passed when Pope Benedict XVI appointed him to the College of Cardinals. A devoted shepherd, he is known from his earliest days in the Order as a tireless servant to the poor. As a Bishop he has tirelessly reached out to those who have been alienated from the Church.

www.cardinalseansblog.org



St. Pio was declared a saint by Pope John Paul II on 16 June 2002 with the largest crowd ever in St. Peter's Square to witness a canonization. At his baptism in 1887 he was named Francesco; he was given the name Pio when he became a friar in 1902. Shortly after his ordination he received the sacred stigmata. Padre Pio, well known for his ability to heal, also founded a hospital. As a confessor, people waited in long lines to bare their souls and receive God's forgiveness from this Capuchin friar.

www.padrepio.it



Br. Raniero Cantalamessa is the preacher to the Pope! For 28 years this Papal Preacher has stood before the Holy Father, cardinals and bishops to preach the Word of God. Br. Raniero travels extensively to preach and has authored many books. He is the most recent Capuchin friar in a long line of Capuchins to be the Pope's preacher.

www.cantalamessa.org

Capuchin Province of Mary, Mother of the Good Shepherd

The year was 1927 when the first two Capuchins arrived in Blenheim, Ontario from Belgium. By 1933 a fraternity was established in Notre Dame de Toutes-Aides in Manitoba. Belgian and Dutch roots took to the soil and formed the Capuchin Custody of Central Canada in 1938. The following year a Minor Seminary was constructed in Blenheim.

The spread of roots continued! This time it was West again with a novitiate being established at St. Boniface, Manitoba in 1951. From there it was to Downsview, Ontario where St. Philip Neri Parish was entrusted to the Capuchins. Five years later and a little to the northwest, Holy Cross Parish in Georgetown, Ontario was to be administered by the friars. In 1961 the Minor Seminary was moved from Blenheim to Orangeville, Ontario to be known as Mount Alverno. By 1970 the Custody became the Vice-Province of Central Canada. The following year, in 1971 the first Vice-Provincial chapter was held to elect a Council and the first Formation Policy was created.

From fertile to rocky soil, Capuchin roots expanded their system a little way across the cold north-Atlantic to Newfoundland in 1969. Ministries were extended to include youth ministry, chaplaincy to schools and later to Janeway Child Heath Center. It was in 1974 when Mary, Queen of the World Parish in Mount Pearl was entrusted to the Capuchins. The 1970s was truly and exciting time... in 1972 the Minor Seminary in Orangeville became a Retreat Centre for youth. Over 25,000 students and teachers were part of the legacy that included religious and outdoor education programs in community building, week long experiences. Again, heading west, St. Conrad Friary was established in Winnipeg, Manitoba and shortly afterwards St. Felix Friary was established in Weston, Ontario to house the Vice Provincialate.

In 1980 our brother, Br. John Corriveau, OFM., Cap. was first elected to the General Definitory in Rome and in 1983 Br. Ignatius Feaver, OFM., Cap. was elected Provincial Minister, the first lay friar to hold the position of Major Superior in over 400 years!

The firmness of the Capuchin roots in English speaking Canada were realized in 1986 when the Vice-Province of Central Canada became a new Capuchin Province to be known as Mary, Mother of the Good Shepherd.

In this new millennium we Capuchins are proud of our roots. Ministries are as varied as the friars themselves: from parish to hospitals, youth to seniors and from institutions to the city streets. The Capuchins of Central Canada, Mary Mother of the Good Shepherd province continue to keep alive the spirit of our founder and brother St. Francis of Assisi. Courage, commitment and challenge are the hallmarks of continued growth. This year (2007) we celebrate our 80th anniversary of our presence in Canada serving the people of God and the Canadian Church.

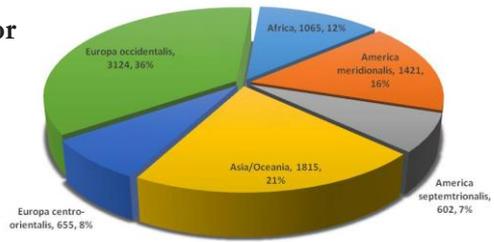


The Order in Figures 2015 /16

ROME: A meeting of

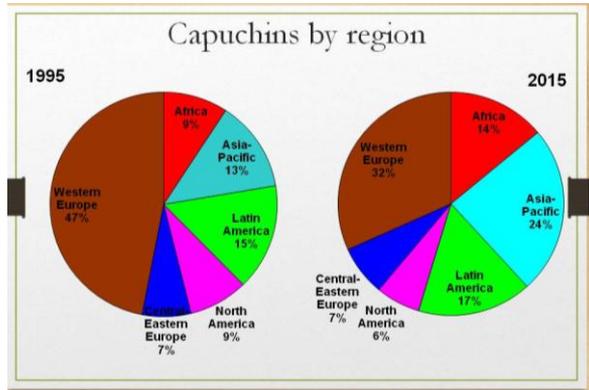
our General Definitory saw the publication of the latest statistics for 2016. Numbers don't tell the whole story, but they can be a chance to pause and look at where we are, where we are going and where we wish to go in response to the Spirit.

Professi Perpetui_2015



On December 31, 2016, there were 10,180 Capuchins in the world: 630 postulants; 363 Novices; 1530 temporarily professed; 8650 perpetually professed (priests: 6848; permanent deacons: 14; transitional deacons: 168; lay brothers: 3060. Among these we have 1 brother who is a Cardinal, and Archbishops/Bishops.

Capuchins are present in 110 countries: Africa 1065; Latin America: 1421; North America: 602; Asia- Oceania: 1815; Europe 3779. Our world-wide brotherhood is made up of:
79 Provinces,
12 General Vice-provinces,
31 Custodies,
15 Delegations,
17 houses of presence,
and 13 Conferences of Major Superiors.



Capuchins of Central Canada

2100 Jane Street

Toronto, ON M3M 1A1

416-241-3101 x248 Vocations

416-244-9796 Fax

www.capuchins.ca

Vocations: friarlouiscap@yahoo.ca