



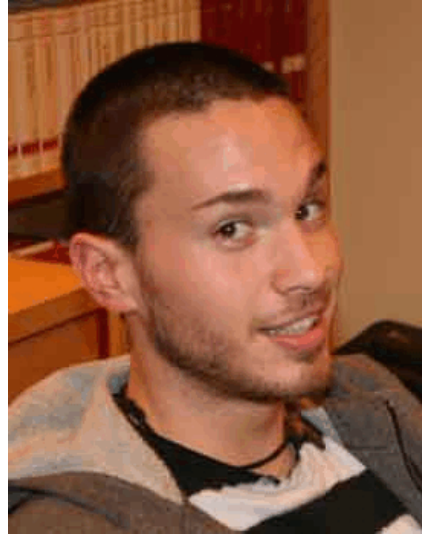
11 March 2008, #155

Capuchin Vocation Update Province of St. Joseph

A community of two tables by Rich Reinhardt, Capuchin Candidate

(This is the second in a series in which new Capuchins and applicants to the order write about their aspirations for Capuchin life and ministry. It is part of our preparation for the upcoming chapter of Midwest Capuchins which will discuss our fraternal life. Rich Reinhardt is an applicant for the 2008 Midwest Capuchin Postulancy. He currently lives in the Catholic Worker Community of Boston.)

I'm someone who has tried to let my passion for social justice and my spiritual practice of private and communal prayer -- especially daily Eucharist -- work as guiding factors in my life. I have also found living in community to provide a welcome challenge to finding some sense of regularity in a chaotic ministry. Striving to engage in authentic relationships with (mostly homeless) guests, and to maintain the space needed for relationships to develop between everyone in the soup kitchen requires a large and often shifting time investment. I must balance cooking, meeting with guests and volunteers -- oftentimes individually -- and being available for conflict resolution in the soup kitchen. Finding regular time to pray can be difficult; living in an inter-faith community presents unique challenges to practice regular communal prayer that feeds all of us without leaving anyone out.



Rich Reinhardt

It is a challenge and a privilege, life-giving and chaotic to find regularity in ministry and in prayer (especially the celebration of Eucharist). However, in many ways, I don't feel called to work with this tension for the rest of my life. I feel a strong need for regular in-house Eucharist as a creative way to nourish my need for space to give thanks and to be sent forth. In short, I don't want to have to leave the house to go to mass everyday. I have often heard Capuchins use the imagery of two tables to describe the connection between the Eucharistic table and the table we gather around for meals and fraternity. It seems to me that this imagery can likewise be applied to the dynamic of ministry and the Eucharistic celebration.

Having regular time around the table in sacred space for everyone in community to give thanks and to be reconciled enlivens all of us, both as individuals and as community. Our sharing in the Eucharistic meal also transforms us from a group of individuals into a community -- as the grains of wheat or grapes come together to make bread or wine. At the Eucharistic table Capuchin communities can be held and hold each other in giving thanks and being sent forth.

As a newly reconciled community, we advance to the second table of ministry as an exercise that's relevant and life-giving. This is the sacred space of the world -- the sacred space figures like Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day knew well -- the vague and gritty space where we wash each other's feet and allow our feet to be washed by others. In soup kitchens and shelters, prisons and picket lines we find Christ.

I need time at both tables, and this is what I'm seeking in applying to Capuchin community. I need a space where all can be quietly and genuinely held together and healed together -- and a space where everything is in movement: challenging, chaotic, and vibrant. For me, in this wave-like back and forth motion of being nourished and being hospitable, of listening and allowing our voices to be heard, and of receiving and giving, we are transformed and merged into the Body of Christ.

To attend the annual **Triduum Retreat** in Burlington, Wisconsin
20-22 March,
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