



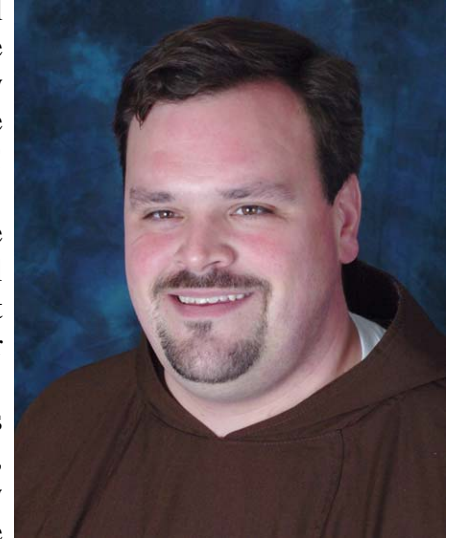
23 June 2009, #194

Is it Fr. Steve , Br. Steve, or both?

by Steve Kropp O.F.M. Capuchin

To the usual childhood protests of “are we there yet”, or “will summer ever come”, my parents always responded with the promise that, as I got older, time would seem to fly by. Another thing they always assured me of was that, someday, I would see that they were at least sometimes right. Well, they were right. Time has flown by!

As I write this I am aware of several “benchmarks” in my life and ministry. It has been one year since I assumed pastoral leadership of our parishes in Mount Calvary, Saint Cloud, and Saint Joseph, Wisconsin. Further, this summer marks the five year anniversary of my ordination to the Presbyterate (Priesthood). Likewise my formation “classmates”— Jerry Johnson and Carlos Hernandez (Saint Mary Province)— and I mark 13 years in the Order, 11 years since we professed First Vows, and 7 years as perpetually professed members of the Capuchin community. In that time I have completed two Masters degrees, served in two ministries, and reluctantly welcomed a few grey hairs. My, has time flown!



If you come to visit our parishes on a typical weekend, you will hear the parishioners greeting me: “Good morning Father... or, Brother... or, whatever”. Or you’ll hear the question, “how can you be a Brother and still have Mass?” Or, my personal favorite, “why didn’t you go ‘all the way’?” Good questions to be sure, since, for most of us, our Catholic understanding of the hierarchy of the church puts a clear division between “priest/Father” and “Brother”. Yet our Franciscan charism seemingly stands at odds with this sense of hierarchy, not with the intention to diminish the legitimate hierarchy of the church, but, rather, to point out our place within it: “Accepting the form of a servant, the Son of God did not come to be ministered to but minister and to give His life for the salvation of all.



Wishing to be conformed to His image, let us not presume to be greater, but let us expend ourselves as lesser ones in the service of all, especially of those who suffer want

and tribulation or even of those who persecute us” (*Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor*, 12). And so I am willingly know as Father... Brother... or whatever!

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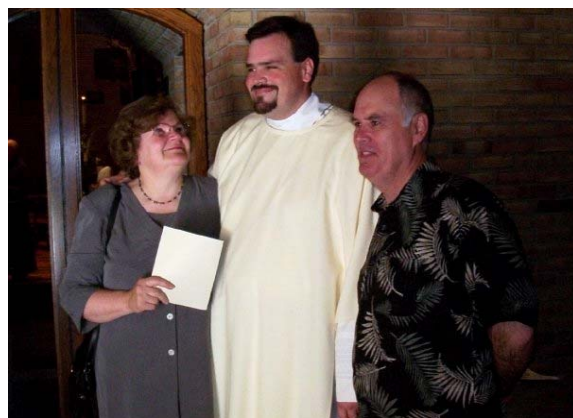
Vocation Update



This sense of minority, which has been continually debated and articulated since the time of Francis, has grown gradually in my own life. I began my vocational journey as a seminarian for the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin, having attended seminary in Winona, Minnesota. It was clear to me that my “calling” was to be a priest... Father... a noble calling of service, to be sure. During my junior year of college, my sense of calling began to change. I felt myself drawn to the communal aspects of our seminary life and had a strong desire to seek out religious life as a possible means of following my call to priestly ministry. But which Order to turn to...? The only one I knew of from my childhood– the Capuchins– the guys in brown robes who lived at the “monastery” in Marathon, Wisconsin! So I wrote a letter, met with the Vocation Director (David Schwab was my “first contact” with the Order), and the rest is history in the making.

Upon joining the Capuchin Order, my thought was focused– this is the way in which I will become a priest, and the community will be a nice bonus. Gradually, through formation and the life and example of the brothers, I began to have a new understanding of my vocation. I realized that my Capuchin vocation, in which I was continually formed and shaped by my brothers, was my first calling. Not that I abandoned ideas of being ordained (obviously), but I realized that my Capuchin life would profoundly shape my ministry as a priest in the Church. My identity as a Capuchin brother has influenced how I minister to others and how other see me. Our Franciscan Charism has molded the basis for the manner in which I understand and engage in ministry in the Church. Our Brotherhood, which continually forms who I am, encourages me to constantly rethink how I engage the world as an individual, a Capuchin, and a minister in the Church.

As I tell my parishioners (or anyone who asks) why I ask to be called “Brother”, instead of “Father”: “I was a ‘Brother’ for 8 years before I was ordained, nothing has changed that.” As time continues to fly by, I find myself always grateful for having answered this call, and even more grateful to my brothers who journey with me through this wonderful life. Ad multos annos!



Steve, along with his parents Carol and Ken

Candidate Rooftop Cookout!

Saturday, July 11,

4 P.M.

St. Clare Friary in Chicago

Contact Fr. John Holly 920-915-4400

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For more information about the process to become a Capuchin:

www.CapuchinFranciscans.org

