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Capuchin

# Vocation Update

Province of St. Joseph

## Life in Religious Community: Grapes or Marbles?

by Keith Clark, Capuchin

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Capuchins are brothers. Some of the brothers are priests, but all are brothers. Living in community as brothers can offer some challenges to individual brothers.

Almost all people come from a hometown or neighborhood where almost everyone else looks like them. Not only do people look alike, they share the same ideas lots of times. Almost always they are of the same ethnic or racial background. There's a certain comfort to be found in one's hometown or neighborhood.

When a man leaves the comfort of his hometown or neighborhood to enter into the Capuchin brotherhood, the move is accompanied by some discomfort. That discomfort is usually greatest at the beginning of the journey, but remnants of it can remain for years. So why bother?

Well, however cherished might be each person's formation of character and outlook in his neighborhood or hometown, sooner or later he learns that not everyone sees the world in the same way that his neighbors did. There are different ways of looking at life. There are different habits of speech and of acting. There are different preferences in everything from the way we pray to the meals we eat and how we eat them. Recognizing those differences and learning to cherish them makes one's experience of the world immensely more rich. It's worth it.

In the Capuchin brotherhood a man joins together with other men who come from other neighborhoods and other hometowns with other preferences. Because the way a man used to do things seemed good, he can begin to regard that way of doing things as a virtue which everyone ought to practice. That man may have a difficult time experiencing the benefit and joy of brotherhood.

Those who enter the brotherhood recognizing their own preferences for what they are – preferences – can be open to experience the benefit of other people's preferences. If everyone recognizes that his comfort comes from having his preferences met, and if everyone recognizes that everyone else in the brotherhood would like to have his preferences met, there can be a give-and-take which enlarges the world of each member of the brotherhood.

I have often thought, and almost as often said, that when people come together for any reason whatsoever, each member of the group has a choice to be a marble or a grape. Marbles and grapes can look a lot alike. But if you take a lot of grapes and put them in a jar, and if you press them down so as to get as many into the jar as possible, the grapes bend and bruise and even bleed a bit. But they touch each other pretty profoundly.

Marbles, on the other hand, when they are put into a jar hardly touch each other at all. They remain rigid, holding on to their own shape. They don't bend or bruise or bleed. But they remain pretty isolated, even when put into a jar with a lot of other marbles. A marble in a jar of grapes can be very irritating **BECAUSE IT ACCOMMODATES TO NO ONE AND EVERYONE IS EXPECTED TO ACCOMMODATE TO IT.**

# Vocation Update

Joining the Capuchin brotherhood is a bit like deciding to be a grape. It means I am willing to be affected by my brothers. It means that I recognize that I will have an impact on them as well. A closeness can develop in such a brotherhood, not because everyone comes from the same hometown or neighborhood, or because they all think the same thoughts, or have the same preferences, but because everyone knows the advantage of touching one another and of being touched by those who are my brothers.



*Keith Clark is currently the director at the Monte Alverno Retreat and Spirituality Center in Appleton, Wisconsin. He has served the province as Vicar Provincial (twice) and as Novitiate Director (three times). He has served for many years in formation, retreat work, and as a staff member at Saint Lawrence Seminary. He is the author of many books and has a special interest in the value of servant leadership.*

## **Detroit Ministry Weekend for Candidates and Inquirers Begins with supper on Friday Oct. 23 Ends after lunch on Sunday Oct. 25**

Visit the Solanus Casey Center and the many Capuchin ministries. Meet the friars and people who work with them. Spend time in prayer. *See the Vocation Update from Nov. 28, 2008 for last year's photos.*

**Reservations are required to attend the weekends.**

**New inquirers are welcome!**

Contact Fr. John Holly 920-915-4400

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or visit [www.CapuchinFranciscans.org](http://www.CapuchinFranciscans.org) and click on <How to Begin>

**Contact Fr. John or Br. Jerry as soon as possible if you would like to attend.**