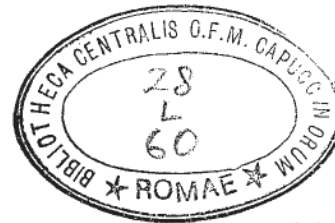


*The Capuchin Reform:  
Essays in  
Commemoration  
of its  
450th Anniversary  
1528 — 1978*



**ANALECTA ORDINIS FRATRUM  
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Mariano d'Alatri's article: *Reformationis Capuccinae Implantatio per Italiam Saeculo XVI*, is mainly a catalogue of the places and year of foundation of the various Italian friaries. It is omitted in this volume because it is of interest principally to Italian readers and would have little relevance in an English translation. Those who are interested can find the data in the original, *Analecta O.F.M. Cap.* Vol. 94, No. 5 (1978) *Numerus specialis*, pp. 325-335. Trans.

## Preface

"To return to our roots" was the admonition given all religious by Vatican Council II. This little collection of essays, appearing first in a special 1978 issue of *Analecta OFM Cap* to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the founding of the Capuchin Franciscan Order, affords us the opportunity to reread and perhaps relearn the central issues and values of the Capuchin Franciscan reform movement. The authors each use their expertise as historians and theologians to help us understand how and why this branch of the Franciscans, at one time nearly 35,000 strong, has been such a significant factor in Church history, the history of spirituality, missionary development, and religious reform. In offering this translation of these essays, the North American Capuchin Conference takes upon itself the challenge to make such writings available to the English-speaking world. For this first product, we need to thank the writers of the essays first of all. Then, our special thanks to Ignatius McCormick, Capuchin of the New York-New England province, for translating from the original Latin text; and to Edward Pikus, Reginald Russo and John Pavlik of the Pennsylvania province for their technical assistance in bringing the volume to its completion. We hope to follow this little book with a collection of the lives and activities of the men and women of the Capuchin tradition whom the Church recognizes as being among the saints and blessed. It is by our lives, after all, that we witness to the strength of our roots, as well as to their validity and worth.

Vincent Rohr, O.F.M. Cap.  
Pres. Director, N.A.C.C.

January 21, 1983

## *Introduction*

On the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the bull *Religionis Zelus*, by which Pope Clement VII canonically established the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin and received it into the bosom of the church, we felt it opportune to ask a number of friars who were well versed in history to write about some of the more important aspects of the young Capuchin reform. As we learned from the recent commemoration of the 750th anniversary of the holy death of our Seraphic Father, such occasions are the source of special graces for those who participate in them. Our religious vocation as friars and our spiritual identity are more clearly understood and take firmer root in our souls.

Accordingly, gladly accepting the invitation extended us by Pope Paul VI of happy memory during the extra-ordinary chapter of 1974, our scholars have endeavored to define more clearly that "special tradition of the Capuchins which distinguishes them from the rest of the Franciscan family", the "Franciscan charism and special marks of the Capuchin way of life."<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this special commemorative issue is not so much to further professional research as to serve as an inspiration for leading our life. The authors, to whom we here publicly express our thanks, while basing their studies on reliable sources have refrained from overburdening the pages with numerous references. Through their joint efforts the religious picture of that far off time comes to life again. It was an age in which "the fair and holy reform of the Friars Minor Capuchin" was born and had its early development. The reader will not fail to notice how well our authors have presented the mission and principal objectives of the order

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Analecta O.F.M. Cap.* 90 (1974) 279.

from the viewpoint of membership in the seraphic family, its dedication to poverty and the works of the apostolate. We are happy that these pages tell us not only about the Order's first flower of sanctity, St. Felix of Cantilice and that great pillar of strength, Bernardine of Asti but also that special treatment is accorded to its spiritual and apostolic influence over the course of the centuries.

Nevertheless we should be wary lest the recall of mighty deeds of the men who initiated the reform degenerate into a sterile salute to the past. Rather the remembrance of their great achievements must be related to present day needs.

Does not our principal calling as Franciscans consist in holding up to our contemporary world the image of St. Francis not so much "praying" as himself transformed into a living prayer, Francis, the archetypal poor man, passionately devoted to the authority of the church, and reaching out in love to all people, indeed to all God's creatures?

The venerable chroniclers of the reform succeeded remarkably well in achieving this goal. As Bernardine of Colpetrazzo wrote: "What else does reform mean except a return to that original image stamped on the holy order in the beginning? Well then, do you not see that nothing could be a greater guarantee of the authenticity of this reform than its total conformity to our holy father St. Francis and the first friars of the order?"<sup>2</sup>

God grant that the work of our learned confreres in this special issue will do much to promote a knowledge of the spiritual visage of our order among its members and inspire them to a closer imitation of St. Francis. Our Seraphic Father's great purpose for both himself and for his spiritual children was the imitation of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ with a sincere and generous heart. Whoever boldly embraces this charism, thereby becomes a living image of Christ.

We fervently hope that the wish of our beloved Pope John Paul II as recently expressed to the superior generals of religious orders may be realized: "Every religious community and each one of its members has a very special responsibility,

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<sup>2</sup>*Historia Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum (1525-1593)* I, Assisi, 1939, 228.

namely, to make Christ present to the world of today, Christ meek and humble of heart, Christ, crucified and risen, Christ present among his brethren."<sup>3</sup>

Wishing peace and every blessing to all our friars, we pray that you may enjoy the protection of all the saints and blessed of the order, and we gladly impart to you the blessing of the Most High God.

Written on the Feast of All The Saints of The Seraphic Order, 1978.

Paschal Rywalski, Min. Gen. O.F.M. Cap.

<sup>3</sup>*Allocutio*, Nov. 25, 1978, in *Osservatore Romano*, Nov. 25, 1978.