

Province of the Stigmata; New Jersey, USA

Candidacy Program

*As applied to St Francis of Assisi Friary
1901 Prior Rd. Wilmington, Delaware*

I. *Nature and Purpose*

The candidacy program is designed for individuals who feel the need for further discernment and guidance regarding their vocation in life. This dynamic is placed in a communal setting within the general framework of Capuchin religious life.

Such candidates are invited to live in an atmosphere and setting that supports the individual's need for further maturation, education, faith development, and knowledge of religious life as gained through personal experience. These areas are to be nurtured in a gentle, welcoming manner.

The predominant theme that is constantly playing in the background is one of *invitation*; an invitation to a deeper personal relationship with the Lord, leading to clearer direction and purpose of life.

The Candidacy Program maintains its identity as *different* from that of the Postulancy in several ways. First, to a large extent the candidates retain their personal freedom. Secondly, there are no formal classes given to the candidates that would normally be found in the common syllabus of the Postulancy. Thirdly, the candidates participate on a somewhat limited basis within the inner life of the local friary. The challenge is to strike a balance between the candidate's autonomy and his personal involvement with the religious community.

The actual length or duration of an individual participating in this program may vary according to personal circumstances, and the recommendations put forward by the local friars in conjunction with the candidacy team and the formation council.

The candidacy program falls under the Vocation Office of the Province. The Vocation Director will maintain regular communication with the candidates.

Offering young men the real possibility of sharing in our life in some way is among the practical means that have been found to be particularly useful, especially in community activities such as prayer, celebration of the Eucharist, meals and work. All these could perhaps be done in houses specially geared to the purpose, with the chance for individuals to be given assistance in personal reflection. (PCO IV No: 60)

II. *Inherent Structures of the Program*

It should be noted that the following components are designed to initiate and nurture basic values that are common or fundamental to our Capuchin way of life.

Beneath each of the main headings is a brief explanation followed by various activities or strategies that may further clarify and facilitate the desired goal.

2.1 *Living Quarters*

Candidates would occupy the bedrooms located on the second or third floor of the ‘mansion’ side of the friary. At present, there are eight rooms.

- House rules will be composed by the local fraternity
- It is the responsibility of the candidates to keep their living quarters clean
- The candidates themselves shall provide computers, phones and other communication media, if so desired
- Internet accessibility will be made possible by the local fraternity
- Ministerial protocol shall be defined and upheld in accord with provincial guidelines and the local diocese
- A disclaimer document (work, injury, etc) shall be drawn up and signed

2.2 *Meals*

All meals are held in the common refectory. All cooking is done in the main kitchen. Breakfast normally follows the morning Mass. Lunch or the noonday meal is a ‘pick-up’ based on schedules and other responsibilities. Meals partaken separate from the local community are financed by the candidates.

2.3 *Transport*

If a candidate so chooses he may bring his own vehicle upon entry into the program. Fuel, insurance, road license and maintenance for a personal vehicle are the responsibility of the candidate. A candidate in need of a vehicle for purposes directly related to the program shall make the necessary arrangements with the local guardian.

2.4 *Finance*

A certain sense of independence is at the heart of this program. As far as possible, this also includes financial independence of the candidates. A realistic and comprehensive annual budget for the running expenses of this program must be submitted and approved by the relevant Provincial offices. Members of the Candidacy program shall agree to commit themselves to the guidelines and restraints of such a budget.

The items listed below fall under the financial responsibility of the candidate:

- Medical concerns
- Postage, stationery
- Cell phone and computer related charges
- Entertainment
- Special dietary requirements or extraordinary requests
- Clothes, shoes, books, toiletries, personal items
- Monthly contribution to the friary for upkeep shall be determined

2.5 Recreation

Once again, striking a balance between too close and too far is the challenge. Creative recreations and spending time with one another is a source of both renewal and inspiration. The candidates should feel welcome to join the local community during its periods of recreation.

At other times and for different reasons, the candidates may freely choose to participate in recreation among themselves.

2.6 Work

It must be kept in mind that the candidates are *inquiring* about our way of life and have now begun their first steps in a long process of learning. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to place upon them duties or obligations not in accord with their state in life. At the same time, work has its own inherent value and worth—especially when viewed within the context of our Franciscan tradition. A few suggestions of where suitable work or duties can be exercised would be in the areas of:

- Domestic chores
- Meal preparation
- Sacristy
- Friary grounds
- Outside Employment

2.7 Apostolate

Giving of oneself in charitable ways and means provides rich material for both human and faith development. All such ministries must be approved, supervised and evaluated by the friar(s) in charge. Possible areas of involvement are:

- Hospitals, health facilities, nursing homes
- Social services
- Ministry of Caring
- Local Parishes

2.8 *Prayer Life of the Candidates*

Some avenues that help foster spiritual growth are:

- Common, vocal prayer
- Private prayer
- Gospel sharing once per week
- Theological Reflection once a month
- Monthly day of recollection
- Spiritual Direction
- Spiritual Reading

2.9 *Scholastics*

While discussion and open dialogue with the Vocation Director and other persons in charge is in progress, the final selection or direction of formal study is left to the discretion and initiative of the candidate. It is the responsibility of the candidate to meet the financial requirements necessary for their own formal education. Different fields of study may be pursued while residing at the friary through:

- Courses in surrounding schools or institutions
- Workshops and seminars that are offered locally
- Correspondence courses, personal study

2.10 *Participation in the Prayer Life of the local Friary*

The candidates should experience a joyful and enthusiastic welcome to share in the prayer life of the friars.

- Liturgy of the Hours
- Eucharistic Liturgies
- Lectors, Acolytes

2.11 *Participation in the life of the Province as a whole*

Provincial gatherings for celebrations and prayer services are prime occasions for the candidates to meet other friars of the Province. This cultivates a positive sense of what it means to belong to a religious community. A few suggested events are the:

- Provincial Days of Recollection
- Professions, ordinations, anniversaries
- Parish feast days
- Visitation of friaries and churches throughout the province

Postulancy Program

Nature and Purpose

“ The postulancy is the first period of initiation when one makes the choice to adopt our life.

During this period, the postulant comes to know our life and makes a further and more careful discernment of his vocation. The fraternity, on its part, comes to know the postulant better and ascertains the growth of his human maturity, especially affective maturity, and his ability to discern his life and the signs of the times according to the Gospel.

The postulant, therefore, must be helped in particular to deepen his faith life. To this end, the formation of the postulants is chiefly aimed at completing their catechesis in the faith, introducing them to the liturgical life, to the methods and experience of prayer, the study of Franciscanism, to fraternal life and to an initial experience of apostolic work” (Const. 30, 1-3).

“ Postulancy, as the first period of initiation, is a time of discernment and choice of the Franciscan life. During this period, the candidate is in close contact with the fraternity and comes to know our way of life, while the fraternity on its part comes to know the candidate better, so that it can discern his request and give a responsible reply. Postulancy is the time for the candidate to discover the deepest reason for his own vocation, to know and experience our Capuchin Franciscan life, complete the break with his environment and gain a first experience of brotherhood.

For postulants, formative activity above all revolves around completing their catechesis of faith; methods of prayer, especially with an introduction to the liturgy; Franciscan instruction; an initial introduction to apostolic work. It also seeks to examine and promote human maturity, especially their emotional maturity.

What is done in formation must be centered on the person of the candidate so as to meet his needs on the intellectual, affective and spiritual plane. It is important that those not suited to our way of life be guided along other ways.” (PCO IV, 62)

The Postulancy is a time of prayerful discernment with regard to a possible calling to live the Capuchin Franciscan way of life. It is a special time of prayer, study, spiritual direction, apostolic ministry, and fraternal living patterned on Gospel brotherhood.

The friars in the community have the responsibility to provide an authentic expression of our fraternal life. They also support and encourage the postulants in their daily interactions; thus they are able to assess the postulant’s ability to live our life, participate in fraternity, and to form healthy relationships both within and outside the local community. Postulancy may be prolonged for a set period of time or even extended for a second year in individual cases.

Seven Cornerstones of the Postulancy

1. Ongoing Conversion

The postulant learns to reflect critically on his life, gradually disconnects himself from the dominant influences found in our modern-day culture that are at odds with religious life, and begins to reorganize his set of values and priorities. His Gospel conversion now set in motion will hopefully lead to the assimilation of Capuchin values.

Means:

1. The physical move to a new community and a distancing from family and friends
2. Limitations on the use of mass media and secular recreation
3. An environment created for recollection, silence, study and prayer
4. Work and ministry with people in minority situations, i.e. the sick and poor
5. The challenge to leave his comfort zone and question his outlook on life, his attitudes, beliefs and behavior patterns
6. Group reflection and dialogue
7. Selected readings and study, especially of the saints and other heroic lives
8. Regular meetings with the program director and a spiritual director
9. The use of autobiography or life story

2. Fraternal Living

The postulant begins socialization in the Capuchin community, participates in fraternal life and service, continues vocational discernment, and grows in his identity with the Province and Order.

Means:

1. Truly participating in the daily life of the brotherhood
2. Rendering service and showing responsibility for “home”
3. Fraternal sharing and interaction during times of recreation
4. Visits to other friaries and participation in provincial activities
5. Guidance and formal input on the dynamics of community life, communication skills, fraternal correction and reconciliation
6. Regular house chapters
7. Communal penance service
8. Evaluation sessions and feedback
9. Collaborative experiences with other provinces or entities

3. Catechesis

The postulant deepens his knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith, learns to think with the Church, and acquires basic skills for faith development, spiritual growth, and liturgical prayer.

The emphasis in the program of study is to cover the basics or fundamentals in order to provide a foundation for future study in the Novitiate and Post-Novitiate.

Means:

1. Study, formal input, classes and workshops
2. Reflection papers on assigned topics or issues
3. Group discussion
4. Daily community liturgy, common prayer,
5. Participation in faith sharing
6. Interaction with various groups, movements and activities in the church
7. Acquire a working knowledge of other religious traditions and spiritualities
8. Learn the dynamics of evangelization

4. Franciscan Traditions

The postulant is introduced to St. Francis and begins to familiarize himself with the Franciscan family, ideals and traditions.

The goal is to assist in personal spiritual growth and the understanding of Capuchin Spirituality.

Means:

1. Study, formal input, classes and workshops
2. Spectrum of study should include the Poor Clare Sisters and the Secular Franciscans
3. The cross of San Damiano and other pieces of artwork, literature, and sacred places associated with the Franciscan heritage
4. Reflection papers
5. Group discussion

5. Personal Maturity

The postulant grows in personal psychological maturity, takes initiative and responsibility for his formation, and practices the fraternal skills of correction, reconciliation and conflict resolution.

Means:

1. Is given specific areas of responsibility and is held accountable
2. Workshops on community life, fraternal correction, reconciliation, and conflict resolution
3. Interaction with people who are seen as “different”— socially, politically and religiously
4. House chapters and other meetings where divergence of opinions is likely to occur
5. Exploration of issues raised in psychological evaluation
6. Discussion of unresolved issues in spiritual direction and psychological counseling
7. Is challenged to grow in faith and trust when uncertainties seem to abound
8. Open and honest dialogue with the director and formation personnel

6. Prayer Life

The postulant learns the Christian and Franciscan traditions of the spiritual life and gradually develops an interior life of prayer.

Means:

1. Daily celebration of the Eucharistic
2. Communal celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours
3. Fervent sacramental life
4. Morning offering, the daily examination of conscience, and personal devotions
5. Study of scripture and its use in prayer, especially the Psalms and Wisdom literature
6. Classes dedicated to Catholic / Franciscan spirituality and prayer
7. Greater emphasis on periods of silence during the day
8. Longer periods of contemplation prayer, a hermitage experience
9. Recollection days, retreats and renewal experiences
10. Private meditation on a daily basis
11. Regular spiritual direction
12. Written reflection concerning prayer experiences (such as a prayer journal)
13. Opportunities to verbally share ones spiritual journey
14. Participate in faith sharing sessions based on scriptural passages

7. Apostolic Ministry

The goal is to foster an attitude of loving serving based on Gospel values. The postulant begins to recognize and understand that the service dimension of his evangelical vocation is expressed by living and working in greater solidarity with the poor and marginalized of our society.

It will also be a learning experience, as new skills will be acquired in the areas of: compassion, sensitivity, respect, courtesy, and inclusiveness. At the same time it allows the friars to observe how well a postulant interacts in ministry, and how this experience is incorporated into his spiritual life.

Means:

1. Reflections on the Biblical and Franciscan approach to poverty
2. Discussions and input on Franciscan minority, poverty, simplicity, and austerity
3. Discussions and input on the use of money and the exercise of power
4. Classes depicting Capuchin biographies and real-life examples of altruistic service
5. Volunteering his time and talent to the fraternity, community, and church
6. Ministry with the poor and sick during the week
7. Outreach programs focused on people whose culture and language are different from that of the postulant's
8. Longer experiences with those who are actually financially poor
9. Personal life-style consistent with the values of austerity and poverty
10. Ecological awareness and practice
11. Shared review and reflection of the ministry with the director and formation personnel

General Directives

1. Ongoing Conversion

- A strong sacramental life coupled with a prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture is indispensable for ongoing conversion. Biblical passages that depict vocational stories are excellent for personal reflection.
- Spiritual Direction plays an essential part in the postulant's effort to embark upon a fruitful discernment process. Such direction provides the much-needed accompaniment on the spiritual journey for the one desiring an intimate relationship with the Lord.
- A list of spiritual directors will be made available to the postulants.

2. Fraternal Living

- The postulants participate in all aspects of the life of the local fraternity. The director may consider some points of the friary schedule to be optional for the postulants. Holiday and vacation times are allotted to the postulants according to the director's stipulation.
- Postulants are encouraged to attend all spiritual and social events of the province. They are excluded from business gatherings of professed friars. Familiarization with the life and activity of the province is promoted by a schedule of visits to various friaries throughout the year.
- The Postulants will be encouraged to treat the friary as their home. They will participate with the friars in the cleaning of the house and other domestic chores. The goal is to develop initiative, motivation, and a responsible approach to work as an integral part of our life as Capuchins.

3. Catechesis

- The Postulant program will have a schedule of classes in areas relevant and necessary for a person embracing the religious life. The course of study will be part of their daily schedule.
- The program will utilize the Catechism of the Catholic Church as well as other resources for understanding church teachings and basic doctrine.
- Such topics as: Scripture, Christian Ethics, Sacraments, the history and structure of religious life, Capuchin biographies, spirituality and prayer, are among the primary classes that are to be given.

4. Franciscan Traditions

- The postulants will be introduced to the life, times and places of St. Francis by using biographies and other sources of material.
- The experiential model of teaching is suggested whereby particular happenings in the life of St. Francis can be linked or identified with similar events or issues experienced in the life of the postulants. By this method a more personalized image of St. Francis is formed.

5. Personal Maturity

- The value of personal accompaniment cannot be overemphasized. It is the primary responsibility of the director and those assigned to assist him, to provide such accompaniment to the postulants throughout the entire program.
- Education and input shall be given in the areas of: responsible use of modern day social media, communication and listening skills, conflict resolution, time management, and human sexuality within the context of religious life.
- Postulants must learn to practice accountability and transparency in all aspects of their life and ministry.

6. Prayer Life

- The postulants are encouraged to contribute to the Liturgical life of the friary. This will include participation in the Liturgy of the Hours and communal meditation, daily participation in the Eucharist, the Rosary, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This active involvement in the common prayer of the community assists the postulants to develop their own personal life of prayer.
- Times for personal prayer are allotted in the weekly schedule. Such times foster the gradual introduction to interior prayer.
- Days of recollection are held on a regular basis, i.e. monthly. Retreats, workshops, guest speakers, and extraordinary confessors serve to enrich the postulancy experience.

7. Apostolic Ministry

- Prior to any involvement in public ministry, the postulants must complete all training sessions and fully comply with Diocesan requirements and protocol regarding minors and vulnerable adults.
- The Postulants will take part in a supervised ministry each week. This will include, but is not limited to, working in an outreach program to the poor and visiting the sick. Such experiences will help the postulants develop a sincere love for the poor, and to recognize this service as an essential aspect of our life as Capuchins.
- Periods devoted to review and reflection will be made available in the schedule so that the postulants may interiorize the pastoral experience more fully.

8. Evaluation

- The friars in the local community will contribute to the evaluation of the postulants. The director prudently shares the results of such evaluations with the postulant in order for him to develop greater self-awareness. The first evaluation will be done in December before the Christmas break; the second will be done in early April, well in advance of the departure for the common novitiate.
- The first evaluation will focus on the progress of each postulant and to formulate recommendations in areas that are in need of further growth. The second evaluation will focus on his suitability for the novitiate. This evaluation will be shared with the Provincial and Council.
- Those approved will have their evaluations forwarded to the Novice Master

Tools for the Director and formation personnel

1. Ongoing Conversion

Questions to gain a broader perspective:

1. How does the postulant evaluate his personal values and life style?
2. How does he handle the separation from family and friends?
3. What choices does he make relative to mass media and recreation?
4. How does he handle silence, solitude, and times of not being “productive”?
5. Can he honestly face and talk about his compulsions and struggles with emptiness and loneliness, discouragement and disappointment?
6. What are examples of his choosing a simpler life-style and recreation?
7. How does he demonstrate flexibility, with a capacity for change?
8. How does he communicate compassion for the poor?
9. How does he speak about the past, deal with the present, and envision his continued conversion and growth?
10. What is the quality of his self-disclosure?
11. Does he freely choose quiet and prayer?

Key areas of identifiable growth:

- Observation and feedback from the fraternity and ministry
- Self-evaluation and reflection papers
- Evaluation by director, staff and peers
- Group and faith sharing

2. Fraternal Living

Questions to gain a broader perspective:

1. Does he demonstrate positive motives for joining religious life?
2. Does the postulant participate fully and positively in fraternal activities?
3. Does he show and express sensitivity to friary and community needs?
4. How would you describe his level of generosity?
5. How does the postulant deal with issues of assertiveness?
6. Does he consistently display passive aggressive or aggressive behaviors?
7. Do you notice signs of him being either overly compliant or rebellious in relation to authority?
8. In relating to other members of the community does he tend to be overly dominant or overly dependent?
9. Does he participate fully and transparently in house chapters and other community meetings?
10. Is he beginning to identify with the community as “we”?

Key areas of identifiable growth:

- Observation and feedback from the local fraternity
- Evaluation by director, staff, and self
- Reflection papers and class work
- The postulant’s ability or level of sharing within a fraternal setting

3. Catechesis

Questions to gain a broader perspective:

1. Does the postulant possess a basic knowledge of the Catholic faith?
2. Does he have a certain familiarity and understanding of Catholic tradition?
3. Can he “think with the church” in relation to the signs of the times?
4. Can he discuss matters of faith within a group setting?
5. How did he perform in the course of instruction given in postulancy?

Key areas of identifiable growth:

- Studies, classes, workshops, quizzes, written papers and reflections
- Observation, feedback and evaluation by director and staff
- Feedback from community members, church groups and ministries

4. Franciscan Traditions

Questions to gain a broader perspective:

1. Does the postulant know the story of St. Francis?
2. Can he “think and feel” with Francis in relation to the signs of the times?
3. Does he show any aptitude or interest in the Franciscan ideals?
4. Does his personal lifestyle in some way reflect his growing association with the Franciscan tradition?
5. Does he consider the friary his home and thus care for it?
6. Does he demonstrate both poverty and minority in his relationship to others?
7. Is he able to distinguish between what he truly needs and what he wants?
8. Does he exhibit integration through well-reasoned and value-based choices in leisure?

Key areas of identifiable growth:

8. Studies, classes, workshops, quizzes, written papers and reflections
9. Observation, feedback and evaluation by director and staff
10. Feedback from community members, church groups and ministries

5. Personal Maturity

Questions to gain a broader perspective:

1. Is the postulant free of the need for long-term psychological counseling?
2. Have any serious mental, emotional, or personality disorders surfaced?
3. How does he function under stress, tension, and anxiety?
4. Does he have difficulties with any impulsive behaviors, i.e. sex, substance abuse, food disorders, anger?
5. Does he have an ability to own and express emotions and inner yearnings?
6. Can he make decisions and accept responsibility for those decisions?
7. Is there a correspondence between behavior and stated values and ideals?
8. How consistent is his behavior?
9. Does he achieve according to his potential?

10. Has he shown increasing initiative for his personal development?
 11. How has he grown in self-knowledge with regard to his personal: sexuality, feelings, choices taken and their consequences?
 12. Does he take reasonable care of his health?
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13. Is he open and flexible in his own world-view?
 14. Does he interact with members of the fraternity with a natural sense of honesty and ease?
 15. Can he respect and dialogue with others who maintain contrasting points of view?
 16. How faithful is he to commitments, to the daily community schedule?
 17. Does he see himself as an integral part of the community and contribute to its well-being?
 18. Generally speaking, is he positive, well balanced and peaceful in life?

Key areas of identifiable growth:

- Evaluation and report by counselor when necessary,
- Observation and evaluation by community, director, staff, and self
- Reflections papers and class work
- Fraternal verbatim with group sharing

6. Prayer Life

Questions to gain a broader perspective:

1. As a result of his prayer, has the postulant felt challenged to make certain changes with regard to his behavior, mindset and attitude?
2. Does spiritual reading contribute in meaningful ways to his life?
3. Has he met regularly with a spiritual director, and how does he evaluate this experience?
4. Do his written reflections reveal:
 - An encounter with the person of Christ?
 - A deeper appreciation of how Christ is active in his life?
 - An awareness of the distinction between his own desires and those of the Spirit?
5. Does his practice of prayer make him less self-centered and more aware of the presence of Christ in others, especially in the downcast and the poor?
6. Is he present, on time, and attentive at community prayer?
7. Does he show interest and fully participate in liturgical prayer?

Key areas of identifiable growth:

- Observation
- Reflection papers and class work
- Group sharing
- Evaluation by self, director, and staff

7. Apostolic Ministry

Questions to gain a broader perspective:

1. Is he beginning to regard ministry or work as something sacred?
2. Does he bring a spiritual dimension to the workplace?
3. Is he beginning to appreciate the concept of domestic work rendered to the local community as related to ministry?
4. Does he approach the poor and marginalized as his brothers and sisters?
5. Does he serve the needy with an attitude of dignity and respect as opposed to an attitude that reflects superiority?
6. Is he faithful and responsible in his apostolic and fraternal service?
7. Does he adequately meet the demands and commitments associated with ministry?
8. What has the postulant learned from his ministerial experience with the poor and marginalized?

Key areas of identifiable growth:

- Observation and feedback from the people or community served
- Evaluation and feedback from ministry supervisors
- Ministerial verbatim and group sharing
- Reflection papers and self-evaluation
- Assessment by director and staff

Introduction

The fractured social context of our world creates special difficulties in the affective development of all persons including those called to religious life. This experience also complicates fraternal interaction. The absence of experience of the communal dimension of Christian life and the lack of a consistent faith-practice over many years, means that the experience of faith has not taken deep root in the lives of our candidates. For these reasons, even though candidates come to our Order at a more mature age than in former years, they still require **more time**. Affective maturity, adult faith and the interiorization of the values of our Capuchin Franciscan life require more than one year. For this reason our Constitutions wisely insist that formation in and for our life have **priority** during the entire period of initial formation **including the post novitiate phase**.¹

Since it is naturally a critical time of vocational discernment, it should be seen as a resource, not as a problem.²

Each stage of formation has its own particular charism or personality. Each phase has its own specific goal, platform of commencement and portal of departure. The post-novitiate may be likened unto Confirmation in a certain sense. In Confirmation we publicly commit ourselves to the virtues and values that were promised vicariously for us at our Baptism. Now that we are standing on our own two feet, we begin to pronounce and put into practice the faith we profess. The post-novice now has the opportunity to practice his new-found faith and experience of religious life in a different environment, outside the confines of the well regulated novitiate. There is more scope and range of movement for his fledging aspirations to take flight.

Eager to be tried and put to the test, confident of abilities and fired with the enthusiasm of early dreams, the newly professed venture forth. While at certain times it may seem like there is more stumbling and stuttering along the way than glittering success and triumphant accomplishments, it must be stated that such occasions are not to be shunned or hidden from view. Rather, they are moments of grace to be acknowledged and embraced. They are learning experiences that provide us with insight into the areas of light and shadow found within our common human nature.

The post-novitiate is the adolescence of religious life, awkward and at times clumsy, not yet confident and at the same time seeming to know all things. Holding two or more contradicting views in tension; learning that the world is not always white or black, but that a large amount of grey makes up what we call life; rubbing shoulders with mystery and befriending the unknown and the uncertain are the unseen undercurrents that travel beneath this period of formation.

Post-novitiate formation is a deepening and maturing of the Franciscan Gospel life, while being a witness in itself, it is also a preparation for perpetual profession and for later ministry. It is especially a period of seeking an integration of these two aspects, keeping a

¹ Br. John Corriveau, Cir. Letter no. 9

² Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 6

priority for prayer and evangelical brotherhood. It is a time to determine how an individual's call finds expression within the life of the Church, just as Francis' call did.³

But the post-novice is not left alone in his attempt to mature and develop into the kind of religious God has intended from all eternity. The post-novice is placed within a certain context or framework that is designed to facilitate and safeguard such growth. There are three basic components that must be present throughout this period of formation.

- The first being: **Accompaniment**, in the sense that there is always the presence and availability of a brother / formator to serve as a guide, or point of reference.
- The second is the actual content or syllabus of **Formation**. The nuts and bolts of the program; horarium, duties, apostolates and services to offer, subjects to be learned, obligations to be kept, occasions both solemn and jovial. It is the raw material from which the image is fashioned.
- Thirdly, the **Experiential**, i.e. the actual event or happening is interiorized, recognized, articulated, appraised, acknowledged and seen in the light of the bigger picture. I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.

Guiding Principles

The post-novitiate, which begins with temporary profession and concludes with perpetual profession, is the third stage of initiation. During this period the brothers progress further in maturity, and prepare themselves to make a definitive choice of the gospel life in our Order.⁴

Because of its essential reference to religious consecration and to perpetual profession, the formation journey undertaken in the post-novitiate must be the same for all the brothers. Since the fraternal gospel life holds the first place in our vocation, it must also be given priority during this period.⁵

The post-novitiate is the period in which the young professed brother, gradually and in a faithful, creative way, integrates the Capuchin charism (history, tradition) with his own individuality, and also when his integration into the local and provincial fraternity takes place progressively and with ever increasing determination.⁶

The goal of the post-novitiate is to achieve a mature identity, through the experience of an encounter with Christ, with the brothers of the fraternity, with the poor and with the culture of the people. It aims to lead the brother to a fuller understanding of the faith and a greater compassion for the world.⁷

³ Mid American Post Novitiate Formation, 2009

⁴ Const. 32, 1

⁵ Const. 32, 2

⁶ cf. IV PCO, 67

⁷ cf. Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 6

Post-Novitiate Formation Program

I. *Accompaniment*

The post-novice experiences being accompanied through the support and presence of the visible, tangible, local fraternity. Accompaniment is more of ‘walking with’ than pointing the way. It is a real solidarity expressed by being attentive to the spiritual and moral lives of each post-novice, setting them an example, listening to their concerns and offering them encouragement. Such personal involvement stirs up the flame of their love for Christ and their commitment to religious life.⁸

Fundamental Objectives

Facilitate the emergence of the new identity of the brother in formation, enabling his God given potential to develop within the fraternity

Invite the post-novices to come face to face with the values that are proper to our charism

Provide a stable presence for the formation journey of the brothers

Structure

The personalized accompaniment of the young brothers throughout the post-novitiate period entails:

- the ability to listen
- accepting the brother in his actual reality
- valuing his personal experiences and history
- seeking to discern with him the will of God

1.1 Local Fraternity

The interiorization of the fraternal and contemplative values of our Capuchin life requires the involvement of the entire local fraternity in the search for ever more authentic expressions of our life.⁹ It is best described as an evangelical fraternity that is a school of communion.

⁸ cf. Pope Benedict XVI Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland, March 2010

⁹ John Corriveau, Convention of the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p.4

The formation fraternity is composed of the entire group of brothers – perpetually and temporarily professed – since all are engaged on a journey of continuous formation, though at different levels and with different tasks. It is important that the post-novitiate house be composed of perpetually professed brothers who are open to participating in the work of formation with interest and enthusiasm. By living in conformity with Capuchin – Franciscan values, they help the post-novices experience the truth of what is being proposed to them.¹⁰

It is desirable that the formation fraternity be composed of different generations of brothers, to help the young men come to grips with diversity and grow in mutual acceptance.¹¹

“The formation fraternity, by holding the local chapter frequently and using team work or other forms of sharing, fosters harmony and integration between the community plan and one’s personal plan, within the wider ambit of the circumscription and the Order.¹²

1.2 *Director of Post-novices*

The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation. To discern His action is the primary task of the director and the post-novice, in a relationship of accompaniment that is open to the transcendent.¹³

Discernment must be understood as a continuous process in which the brother purifies the motivations for his choice. In particular, it is the task of the formator to help the brother in formation to discern his own specific vocation.¹⁴

The period of post-novitiate seeks to achieve a balance of ministerial, communal, academic and reflective experiences and skills. This is the context for holistic Capuchin discernment.¹⁵

Open dialogue, observation of actual lifestyle, and the mutual assessments made with the post-novice, are some of the more common instruments that contribute to this period of formation.

The director should make himself fully available for this task, aware that other responsibilities and concerns, when left unchecked, can undermine his personal attention to those in formation. For these and other reasons, it is also recommended that the director reside in the friary that has been designated as the post-novitiate house.

¹⁰ Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 8

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 7

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 20

¹⁵ Detroit Province, Post-novitiate Formation, 2009 p. 69

II. *Formation to our way of life*

The brothers are to be guided towards a living contact with Christ, so that they may be more and more conformed to Him and find their identity in Him. According to each one's gifts of nature and grace, let them be introduced to a more profound study of sacred scripture, spiritual theology, liturgy and the history and spirituality of the Order, and initiated into the exercise various forms of the apostolate and of work, including domestic work. This process of initiation should always unfold by taking account of their life and gradual growth to maturity as persons.¹⁶

Fundamental Objectives

Growth in affective maturity

Adult faith

Interiorization of the fraternal and contemplative values of our Capuchin life

Structure

It appears that the **academic-experiential model** is the one that is best suited to a harmonious integration of all the aspects of formation (adult faith, shared responsibility, affective maturity, an understanding of the faith and of our charism), by means of a program common to all brothers in formation.¹⁷

The aim of the first year of the post-novitiate is to provide for the newly professed an opportunity to participate in and experience the Capuchin religious life found within the province at large. It is a non-academic year with the focus upon the primacy of our shared life as lesser brothers.

After the first year of this program, formal studies may come into the fore once the individual has reached a discernable level of maturity and stability in our way of life. This decision is made in conformity with the Provincial Minister, the formation team and the post-novice himself, taking into consideration his desires and abilities.

In the remaining years of temporary vows, each brother's program is tailored to his needs and interests with a view to his future. This is the time when a brother begins his "Special Formation" (cf. Const. 39) for the ministry and in the program as discerned the previous year. This special formation may continue beyond his perpetual profession, and usually does in the case of candidates for Holy Orders. Those brothers who are pursuing priesthood or other ministry preparation will study philosophy, theology, or other subjects at an educational or trade institution.¹⁸

¹⁶ Const. 32, 3

¹⁷ Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 7

¹⁸ Mid American Post Novitiate Formation 2009 p. 36

The principles and fundamental objectives of the post-novitiate program, i.e. formation for our way of life, are to be continually implemented throughout the years leading up to perpetual profession. It is the responsibility of the post-novitiate director and the formation team to ensure that this objective is not overshadowed by other concerns.

2.1 Formation in understanding the Franciscan-Capuchin charism

In continuity with what was done in the novitiate, the post-novices should be guided in a deeper study of the specifics of the Capuchin-Franciscan life, in its historical, theological and prophetic dimensions. Therefore, particular attention should be devoted to:

- reading the Franciscan sources historically in a way that feeds the mind and spirit
- the principles and incarnation of Franciscan spirituality
- reading the history of the Capuchin-Franciscan Order so as to move from spirit to prophetic action
- Franciscan philosophical-theological thought
- the history and identity of the Second Order and the SFO
- the life and institutions of Franciscanism today and the documents of our Order
(Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 21)

2.2 Formation in developing Adult Faith

The post-novice is helped to achieve a harmonious integration between his life and faith, theory and practice, individuality and communion. As his personal story of salvation unfolds and develops, the post-novice grows in the confident awareness of his beliefs as a consecrated follower of Christ and is able to give an account of this faith.¹⁹

Their identity as a person who has embraced the evangelical counsels in response to Christ's invitation gradually becomes more significant. Listening attentively to the word of God and meditating on it prayerfully, and the regular celebration of the sacraments are the ordinary means for such growth.²⁰

The following areas are seen as essential to faith development:

- Eucharistic adoration
- creative liturgies
- Lectio Divina
- theological reflection
- monthly spiritual direction
- recommended readings
- monthly conferences with the post-novitiate director
- reflection papers
- days of recollection and the annual retreat

¹⁹ Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 13

²⁰ *ibid.*

2.3 Formation in Affective Maturity

In continuity with the formation given in the Postulancy and in the novitiate it is important that growth in human maturity should continue, especially in relation to emotional and sexual relationships, work and responsibility, and transparency regarding the reality of actual life experiences.²¹

Avenues of exploration and development that help to facilitate on-going conversion and in turn commitment are:

- Evangelical Counsels
- human development / human sexuality
- crossing cultural boundaries
- mission effectiveness
- justice, peace and care for the earth
- addressing critical questions in the church, society and ministry
- art, literature and music appreciation
- cultivating the sense of wonder / mystery

2.4 Guidance to discern a lay or priestly vocation

As a general rule of thumb, it shouldn't be assumed that those joining our way of life know without a shadow of doubt which expression of the Franciscan vocation they feel called to in terms of lay or cleric. Each vocation is unique and requires its own time and space for the workings of the Divine to manifest itself.

The post-novitiate is a period of common formation for all the brothers, since it gives priority to formation in our charism. In the post-novitiate, the option for the lay brotherhood and the priestly brotherhood coexist, and it is possible to harmonize both with formation itineraries adapted to the individual brother. This time of formation leads the brother to discern both his choice of consecrated life and his specific ecclesial vocation within the Order.²²

2.5 The post novice

As responsible for his formation, being an effective member of the fraternity in which he lives is part of its structures and shares in the task of building up the fraternity, like any other brother. He is an active builder of brotherhood, overcoming any attitude of being simply a 'consumer of fraternity'.²³

²¹ Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 16

²² *ibid.*, p. 19

²³ *ibid.*, p. 7

Taking account of diversities in age and levels of maturity, the post-novice is called to gradually assume responsibilities and to devise and implement initiatives in the framework of his personal formation, in dialogue with the formation director, the spiritual director and the fraternity.²⁴

Newly professed friars living at the post-novitiate house are expected to participate fully in the common life of the friars. Such involvement includes: the daily common liturgical prayer, days of recollection, house chapters, business meetings, ordinary roles of common service, domestic chores, manual labor, and the regular fraternal presence at meals and recreation.

The goals to be sought by the recently professed friar involve the following:

- an integration of a contemplative prayer dimension into a less structured daily routine than the novitiate provided
- an opportunity to accept responsibility for the care of the local fraternity and to develop patterns of generous service to the friary
- an opportunity to serve in an explicitly Capuchin ministry with other Capuchins and in which the friar witnesses publicly to his identification with the friars
- a chance to offer fraternal presence to the local community, fostering fraternal interaction, seeking to balance responsibilities with personal needs

(Pittsburgh Province Post-Novitiate Plan 2003 p. 28)

III. *Experiential*

This approach is based upon two essential factors; namely the material being presented, and the actual lived experience of the participant. The purpose is to build a bridge or link between what is being taught or explained and the person's individual reality or story. The result is the ability to situate the principles, values or beliefs against the backdrop of their own experience or expectation.

Fundamental Objectives

Maturation of attitudes, values and beliefs

Interiorize personal commitment to Gospel values

Greater appreciation of one's own personal and unique vocation

²⁴ Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 7

Structure

The areas listed below provide fertile ground for a variety of experiences related to our life of prayer and service.

- ministry to people especially on the level of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy
- guided reflection on what it means to be a lesser brother in the world today
- an intense fraternal life of prayer and common life
- a spiritual accompaniment equal to that already provided in the novitiate
- regular (e.g., weekly) theological reflection with other brothers on the same level of formation and with the director on the integration of these values
- regular periods (e.g., every three months) of spiritual retreat and prayer away from the intensity of work to personally interiorize the experience

N.B. Integration and interiorization require **time** in a brother's life.

(cf. Br. John Corriveau, Cir. Letter no. 9, February 1996)

3.1 Evaluation

Throughout the entire post-novitiate period evaluations are to be made. This essential practice contributes to the process of discernment and further growth. Different aspects of our life and ministry shall receive the focus in any given evaluation.

Evaluation in the post-novitiate formation program is a process, not a moment. No single evaluation erases prior history, or negates recurring concerns that may not be highlighted in a particular evaluation. The challenge to the friars in the post-novitiate program is to demonstrate the ability to live a balanced Capuchin life that attends to the communal, spiritual, personal, ministerial, education, and multi-cultural dimensions of our way of life.²⁵

3.2 Time and Setting of the Post-Novitiate

The 'post-novitiate' is the period extending from first profession to perpetual profession.²⁶

Where possible, the post-novitiate should be located in poor, marginalized areas, in houses and fraternities suitable for this purpose.²⁷

²⁵ Detroit Province, Post-novitiate Formation, 2009 p. 73

²⁶ cf. Const. 32.2

²⁷ Convention on the Post-Novitiate, Sept. 2004 p. 7