

# *The* Capuchin Franciscan Vocation



**CAPUCHIN  
FRANCISCANS**  
PROVINCE OF IRELAND

## ► A message from our provincial minister



The chances are by virtue of the fact you are reading this booklet that you are seeking direction for your future way of life. I remember learning in secondary school during religious education that a Vocation is “the manifestation of the will of God”. What we were not told was how long it would take the will of God to manifest itself in our lives and by what means.

What is God calling you to be? Is your vocation to the single life, married life, religious life, or priesthood? To answer this question takes a lot of discernment. If you believe you are being called to religious life or priesthood but are uncertain of what to do, you have taken the first step by reading this book of information. The important elements in discernment are first and foremost prayer along with spiritual direction, asking questions of vocation directors and, as you are doing now, reading vocation material from different religious orders.

God’s will can manifest itself in many different ways such as events in your life that you found deeply spiritual, during conversations with friends or even strangers, during meditation and prayer but it will always be at a time when God knows you are ready to answer His call. I worked for 17 years in a textile factory in Co. Longford and 5 years in a door manufacturing plant in Co. Leitrim before I discerned my vocation was with the Irish Capuchin Franciscans at the age of 42. It was at a time when I finally felt confident enough to say ‘yes’ to God and begin a new journey as a follower of St Francis of Assisi. I can honestly say that it was the best decision I ever made. I belong to a worldwide family of Capuchin brothers who try our best to live the joy of the gospel and who reach out to the poor and marginalised in our society. Every day is a new blessing and a reason for being grateful to God for calling me to this way of life.

If you are interested in exploring our way of life further I encourage you to contact our Vocations Director Br. Antony Kurian, OFM, Cap. May God bless you and guide you in your vocation journey.

**Br. Seán Kelly, OFM.Cap**  
Provincial Minister



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## ► A few words from our Vocation Director

Jesus Christ told his disciples **"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last"**

(Jn 15:16). The saintly lives of St. Padre Pio, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Teresa of Calcutta, St. Thérèse of Lisieux are more than enough to prove that vocation to religious life bears "fruit that will last." According to Pope Francis, **"Your vocation inspires you to bring out the best in yourself for the glory of God and the good of others. It is not simply a matter of doing things, but of doing them with meaning and direction"** (Christus Vivit, 257).



To discern a vocation, it is essential that one listens to the voice of God who speaks to them in their heart. St. Francis of Assisi was attentive to the voice of God speaking to him in his heart. He heard God's voice asking him the question **"Francis, is it better to serve the Master or the servant?"** Later, at the ruined Church of San Damiano, Jesus spoke to Francis from the crucifix, **"Francis, go now and repair my church which, as you see, is falling down."** It is the same Jesus who chose St. Francis to repair his Church that continues to choose new disciples to repair the Church in our days by following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

Our Capuchin Franciscan way of life is centred on the Gospel. It is a life-long journey to live according to Jesus' supreme



command: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and to “love your neighbour as yourself.”** (Matt 22:37-39). It is an exciting and challenging journey to follow Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis. This life gives you an opportunity to use your skills and creativity to live the radical Gospel values in the 21st century Ireland. As Capuchin Friars we serve God and the people around us through our various ministries such as the Capuchin Day centre in Dublin; by ministering as chaplains in schools, hospitals, and hospices; as priests in parishes ministering Sacraments to God’s people and by being available to people, listening to them and praying with them.

St. Francis’ vocation to follow the poor, crucified Jesus Christ became clearer to him only through his further encounters with God and the people around him, especially the poor and the lepers. Like St. Francis, most people who hear the voice of God to follow him as a consecrated religious obtain clarity about their call through encounters with God, religious communities, and the people around them. If you believe God is calling you to be a Capuchin Franciscan, to live a life of prayer, brotherhood, and minority; then as Vocation Director I would be more than happy to accompany you in your vocation discernment.

God taught St. Francis to do what was His will for him and, may God teach us to do what is His will for us.

Pax et Bonum!

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## ► A little about St Francis of Assisi



St Francis was born in Assisi in 1181 / 82 to parents Pietro and Pica Bernardone. He had one brother, Angelo. At birth Francis was given the name Giovanni and it's believed that Francis was a nickname given to him by his father. Pietro Bernardone was a wealthy cloth merchant who made his money from the spoils of war and his mother was reported to be a quiet and prayerful person. Francis went to school near the church of San Giorgio in Assisi and learned to read and write in Latin. Francis' mother Pica came from France and so the young Francis learned some French which, by all accounts, he always enjoyed speaking. At that time the people of Assisi

mostly spoke in a local Umbrian dialect as the Italian language, as we know it today, was not yet used. As he grew Francis was enthralled by the travelling musicians, the **Troubadours**, and their street-performing sidekicks, the **Jongleurs**. These often sang and entertained the people of Assisi and Francis particularly loved the popular stories of knights, maidens, King Arthur and Royal Court of Camelot.

### Francis – the aspiring Knight

Like so many young middle-class men in Assisi at the time, Francis dreamed of becoming a Knight and serving in the Assisian army. Francis had a very good head for business and as he grew, he worked alongside his father in the family business. His father often left Francis in charge while he was away buying



cloth. Francis loved to socialise with his friends and was known as the **'King of Revels'** because of his love for parties, song and music. In many ways he was a man typical of his time, place and social position. Francis got his chance to fight in a local insurrection and in a war between Assisi and their neighbours across the valley in Perugia. In a battle at Collestrada Francis was captured and imprisoned for over a year. However, he attempted once more to fulfil his dream of becoming a knight and joined another campaign only to withdraw early when he had a disturbing and unnerving dream.

### His conversion begins

In this dream Francis heard a voice asking him a very direct question: **"Who is it better to serve the servant or the Master?"** "The Master" Francis replied in his dream. **"So why then do you waste your time following the servant?"**

asked the voice. As he awoke from the dream, the scales of youthful idealism began to slowly fall from his eyes. Immediately Francis realised that to follow the Master was to follow the Lord and the servant was the empty pursuit of worldly fame and glory. From that day on, Francis began his conversion from the things of the World to the path the Lord was beginning to illuminate for him.

Conversions are rarely instantaneous. Francis' conversion took time and careful discernment. In many ways the path of conversion was to become the true quest Francis was to go on. Three experiences stand

as significant milestones in Francis' conversion: the meeting of the leper on the road; hearing the voice speak to him from the cross in the ruined church of San Damiano and hearing the Gospel of the sending of the Apostles on mission. These events can be seen as very personal encounters with Christ; encounters that were to further change the course of Francis' life.



### The encounter at San Damiano

While praying one day in that ruined church of San Damiano in the Assisian countryside, Francis heard a voice speak. This voice resonated with him to the very core of his being. The voice clearly said: **Francis, Francis – Go rebuild my church as you can see its falling to ruin.** Francis took the voice to be that of God and set to work immediately. He collected stones from the fields and even sold some of his father's stock from his shop in order to buy materials so he could begin repairing the ruined churches around Assisi. As he worked on these ruined churches, he naturally drew some attention and also gained his first follower; a noble man called Barnardo di Quintavalle. The two men were to become life-long friends and companions.

### The encounter with the Leper

While riding near Assisi, Francis met a leper on the road. Before his conversion to the Lord, Francis hated and feared lepers in equal measure. This wasn't an unusual reaction at the time. However, on this occasion, compelled by a deep desire inside of him, Francis got down from horse and embraced the leper. This would have been something unheard of. Francis said about this encounter that **"what had seemed so bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body"**. As Francis rode off, he looked back, and the leper had vanished from sight. Francis saw this as an encounter with Christ in the leper. From that day on he sought to find Christ in each and every person he met.

### The encounter with the Word of God

In the Church of St Nicolas in Assisi, Francis along with his first companion, Bernardo, came to seek guidance from God. They longed to know what God's plan was for them and the small band of brothers who had gathered around Francis. After speaking with the Parish Priest and praying for guidance, Francis was inspired to open the Book of the Gospels three times to see what message it contained for them. The book first opened on Matthew 19: 21, then Luke 9:3, and then Matthew 16:24.

Matthew 19: 21: **"If you seek to be perfect, then go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."**



Luke 9:1-6: **“Take nothing for the journey, no staff, no bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.”**

Matthew 16:24-28: **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow me.”**

The words of these scripture passages soaked to the very core of Francis' being and he left the church content that the Lord had spoken to them. From these three passages emerged the earliest rule of St Francis of Assisi and the foundation for the life of the Friars Minor.

### **The life of the Friar Minor**

Francis went with a small number of companions to Rome to have their simple rule of life approved. What they brought with them wasn't the usual high-level documents the Roman Curia were used to reviewing but rather a simple desire to live, with all their heart and strength, according to the manner of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This request so shocked the Pope, Innocent III at the time, that he initially sent them away declaring that this was too difficult for anyone to live this rule!

However, that night God spoke to the Pope in a dream in which he saw the Poor Man of Assisi holding up the crumbling basilica of St John Lateran; the premier church of the Roman Catholic Church and the seat of the Bishop of Rome. This changed the Pope's thinking and the next day the Pope called Francis back to speak with him. Innocent III was very moved by the genuineness and authenticity of these holy men from Assisi and he gave them his blessing; approving this primitive rule in 1209. The definitive rule was the approved by Pope Honorius in 1223.

### **Francis the Saint**

Francis lived his life close to God and close to the poor. Much of his time was spent tending to the lepers who lived in the valley outside of Assisi or deep in prayer and contemplation in caves and forests where he could be alone with God. The final years of his life were marked with much ill-health and of course his own body was marked in another way, by the Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus which he received two years before he died. The stigmata have often been

seen as a seal of approval from God on **'his little one and his servant'**. During this time of great suffering for Francis, he penned the sublime **'Canticle of the Creatures'** widely recognised as one of the greatest poems of the medieval era. From this canticle we get the beautiful imagery of **'Brother Sun and Sister Moon'**.

Francis died on the evening of the 3rd of October in 1226 surrounded by the Friars. While lying on the floor of the Portiuncula, the little church that became the cradle of the Franciscan movement, Francis sang songs and prayed with the Friars. In a very touching and intimate moment, Francis encouraged the Friars to allow God show them his plan for them just as God had shown Francis. These were some of the last words of guidance he spoke to his brothers. He was canonised by Pope Gregory IX in 1228. Today his tomb is housed in the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi. Almost half a million people visit Francis' tomb in Assisi each year. Francis of Assisi is the patron of peace, ecology and animals. He is also the founder of the First Order of St Francis (the Friars); the Second Order with St Clare of Assisi (the Poor Clare nuns and Franciscan Sisters) and the Third Order, now known as the Secular Franciscan Order (Lay Franciscans).

Eight hundred years on the message of St Francis still holds value and meaning in our modern World. Every moment of everyday we are faced with so many choices. For Francis there was really only one choice worth taking - to follow the Master, our Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the Gospel. As Capuchin Franciscans, this is the choice we make each day, with God's help of course and the support of our Capuchin brothers. May the Lord and St Francis, enlighten your path.









## ► Who are the Capuchins?



The Irish Capuchin Franciscans are part of a story that goes all the way back to St. Francis of Assisi. In 1209, having heard the call of Christ from the Cross to **“Go and Rebuild my Church!”**, St Francis dedicated himself and his first followers to the living of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Recognised for his holiness of life and joy filled contemplation of creation by all people, of all spiritual traditions, since then St. Francis remains the inspiration and the model for Franciscan life to this day.

In 1528 the Capuchin reform took place within the Franciscan movement. The early Friars desired to more closely live the rule and life of St Francis of Assisi. In 1528, Pope Clement issued the Papal Bull **Religionis Zelus** approving the Capuchin way of life and ever since the Capuchins have been **‘marked by a particular attachment to prayer and care for the poor and sick’** ([www.ofmcap.org](http://www.ofmcap.org)).

Coming to Ireland in the early 1600’s the Capuchins have been known as friars who have stayed with and supported the Irish people in some of the most difficult times in history. Through persecution, famine, poverty, and pain the brothers continued to be a comforting and healing presence to one and all, and as advocates of religious freedom, cultural expression, and relief of the poor, theirs was a voice that was heard at key times in the formation of the modern Irish identity.



## What We Do...

As Capuchin Franciscan Friars ('Friar' is a word which simply means brother), we of the Irish Province seek to incarnate this vision anew today. Living in chastity, poverty and obedience at the service of the Church, we work in parishes, hospitals, schools, friaries and many other places, both at home and abroad, bringing the Joy of the Gospel to all we meet. We reach out to the poor and the marginalised, speaking out for justice and living in simple community. We share our gifts of prayer and meditation with one another and with all those who come to us. In joy, we follow Francis, the poor man of Assisi, who gave everything away so as to receive Christ fully into his heart and so was able to find Him in every creature he met along the way.

Inspired by the example of our Capuchin Franciscan saints like Padre Pio, Leopold Mandic and Felix of Cantalice we centre our lives on the Eucharist, meditation and prayer, and joy filled service of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Today we have six Friaries in Ireland: Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny and Donegal. From there we serve the needs of the people we minister to whether they come to the Friary or we go to them. We believe strongly that God continues to call men to serve him as Capuchin Friars in our Province and we need generous and courageous men to join us in living the Gospel and bringing the Gospel to others.

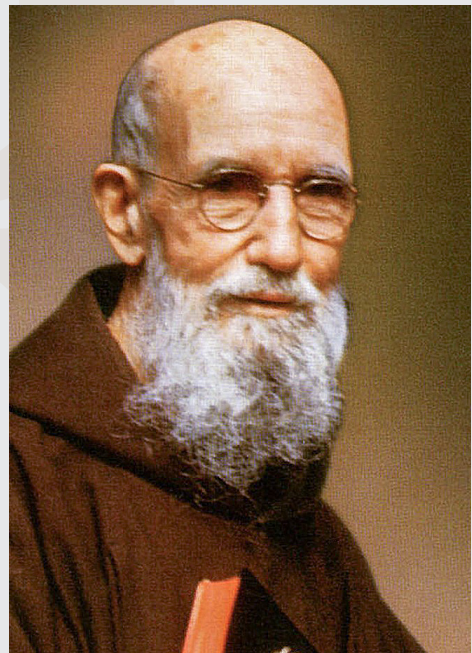


## ► Capuchin Franciscan Vocation

We believe that everyone is called by Jesus. In many ways we could say – If I exist, then I am called! Your life is important and what you do with it is very important. Jesus Christ calls us in many ways and ultimately all of these ways lead us into deeper relationship with God, others, ourselves and the world around us.



Padre Pio celebrating mass



Blessed Solanus Casey

A vocational calling is a call to live in the way that feels most authentic to us. This could be as a person who chooses to marry and start a family or a person who remains single. It can also be an invitation to explore the option of religious life.

As Capuchin Franciscan Friars we vow to live in poverty, chastity and obedience. These three vows help us connect at a deeper level with God as well as the brothers we share our life with and the people we serve through our various ministries. We follow the rule of life given to us by St Francis of Assisi over eight hundred years ago. This rule is steeped in ancient wisdom and is the means by which we aim to follow the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ in our daily lives.

The earliest name for the Capuchins given to them by the Irish was **'The Brothers of the people'**. This was a name given to

us by those whom the early Friars served and it's a testament to the love and care the Friars had for these people. When the Capuchins were founded in 1525, Europe was a place of war, famine and plague. The early Friars listened deeply to the cry of the poor and did their best to respond to it. These Friars entered into some of the most difficult and challenging situations imaginable and often put their own lives at risk. Why? Simply, because they saw those in need as their brothers and sisters. They had to reach out and help in whatever way they could. Even though our name may have changed to **'Capuchin'** (referring to the long hood we wear on our habits) at our core we are still **'Brothers of the people'**.

You may well ask how we live this vocation today. Firstly, we live in community as a fraternity of Brothers. The word fraternity meant more to St Francis than simply a gathering of Friars – it was a radically new way of living. To live in fraternity means to commit our lives, energy, talents, hopes, joys, fears and sorrows to each other. It means walking together as brothers towards Christ in good times and not so good times. It means living, praying, eating, laughing and sharing together all that we have. This was the dream of St Francis who believed that this model of life could be a way of peace and reconciliation in a troubled World.

As Capuchins we prefer to use the title **'Brother' – this is important for us as it links us back to St Francis'** dream of fraternity and the early Capuchin Friars. Some of our Friars are ordained as priests and some are not. Either way we are first and foremost, brothers. That's **our** vocational call – to pray, work and live as brothers of St Francis and brothers to each other.



Pope Francis meeting Br. Kevin at The Capuchin Day Centre.



Responding to a vocational call takes courage. Pope Francis encourages us to take risks for Christ. If you feel the Lord is calling you to explore a religious vocation, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you and trust that God has a plan for you and your life. And remember - Be brave! Take a risk for Christ!

Here are some practical pieces of information that you may find helpful as you find your way.

### **What are the basic criteria for joining the Capuchin Friars?**

We invite applications and inquiries from single men aged between 18 and 45 years of age. You must be a practicing Catholic who takes part regularly in Mass and avails of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession). You need to be resident on the island of Ireland and have achieved an education of at least Leaving Certificate or its equivalent. It would be important to have some work or volunteering experience under your belt.



## ► Vocation Contacts

If you would like to know more about life as a Capuchin Friar, you are welcome to contact any of our Friaries. In addition to this, we have a dedicated Province wide vocations team, who would be delighted to hear from you:

**Br. Antony Kurian OFM Cap.**

(Vocation Director Capuchin Friary – Church Street, Dublin 7)

E-Mail: [vocations@capuchins.ie](mailto:vocations@capuchins.ie)

Brother Antony is supported in this ministry by the Provincial Vocations Commission made up of:

**Br. Seán Kelly OFM Cap.**

(Provincial minister, Dublin)

**Br. Martin Bennett OFM Cap.**

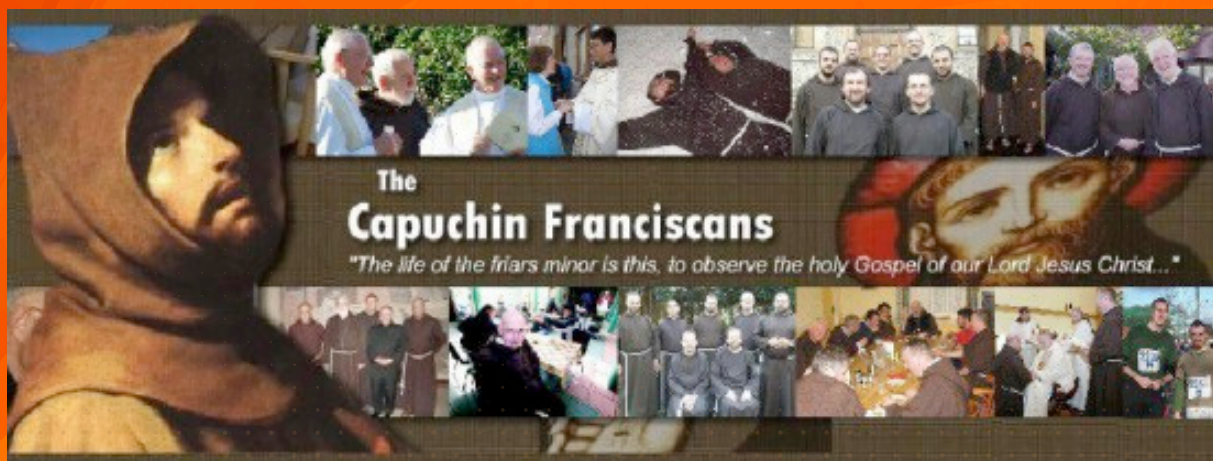
(Parish Priest – St Francis of Assisi Parish, Priorswood, Dublin 17)

**Br. Krzysztof Przbylski OFM Cap.**

(Delegation of Great Britain)

We also have a team of Friars who minister as Local Vocation Contacts and represent each of our Friaries.

Our website: [www.capuchinfranciscans.ie/vocations](http://www.capuchinfranciscans.ie/vocations)





## ► What is formation and what happens in formation?

Formation is the name we use for the process of becoming a Capuchin Friar. There are three main stages of formation: initial formation, special formation and on-going formation. **Initial formation** begins as soon as a man is accepted into the first stage called Postulancy and continues right up to Solemn (final) Profession. This process takes at least six years.



During **special formation** a Friar undertakes studies and training relating to ordination or some ministry they will undertake. This stage takes at least two years.

Finally, **on-going formation** is the longest stage as it lasts for the rest of our lives! Each Friar is encouraged to undertake formation that supports them in their life and ministry. This could mean participating in formal study courses, on-line programmes, seminars, conferences, counselling, spiritual direction, and retreats. As Friars we recognise that we are always in need of human, personal, spiritual and psychological development and support.



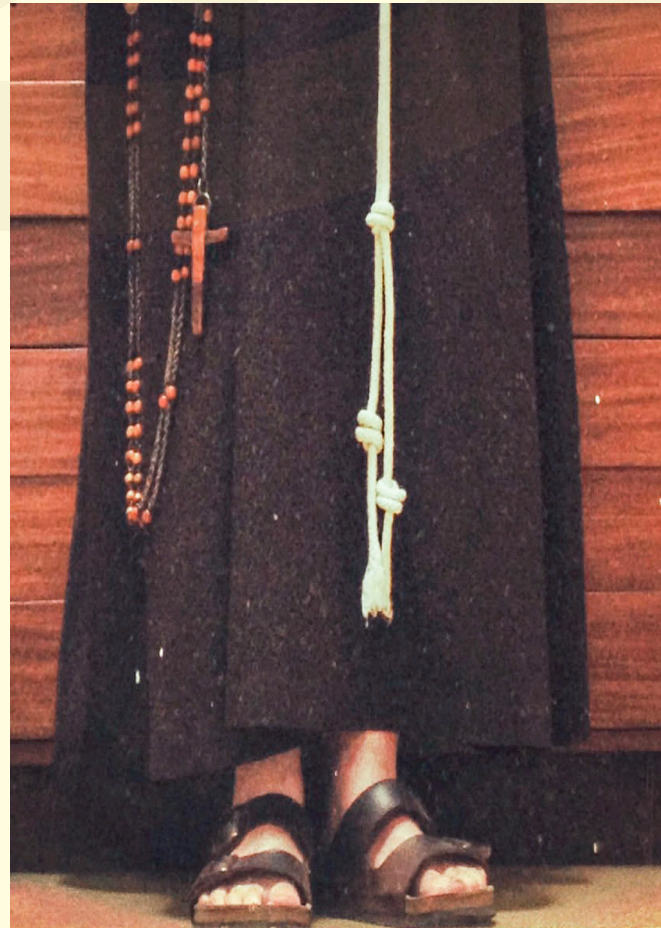
## What stages does a person go through before becoming a solemnly professed Capuchin Friar?

### Aspirant

The very first stage is called Aspirant whereby a man aspires to become a Friar. At this stage you will be in contact with the Vocations Director, doing some spiritual reading on the life of St Francis of Assisi, attending vocation workshops and availing of some spiritual direction from a suitably qualified Spiritual Director. We encourage people not to rush too fast through this stage and we like to accompany Aspirants for about 12 months. This is a time of prayerful listening to what God is saying in your heart. It is also a time for the Order to listen to what God is saying to us about the suitability of the Aspirant for our way of life.

### Postulant

So, you've spent time as an Aspirant, and you feel that the Lord is calling you to follow St Francis as Capuchin Friar? Great! The next stage is Postulancy. Postulancy is a residential programme based in one of our Friaries and lasts nine months. During this time, you will live with the Capuchin Fraternity and share prayer and meals with them. At this stage you are not a member of the Capuchin Order and don't wear a habit. The Postulancy Programme is very holistic and touches on areas of spiritual, human, and Franciscan formation. You will be invited to participate in some pastoral work with a voluntary organisation. During Postulancy you will discern at a deeper level by living with the Fraternity and the Fraternity in turn discerns if they feel God is calling you to be a Capuchin Friar. The discernment is always mutual.





## **Novitiate**

As a Novice you officially become part of the Capuchin Franciscan Order and receive the Novice's habit also known as the 'clothes of probation'. This is a time of deeper discernment, prayer and reflection. You will live as part of a Novitiate Community within a wider Capuchin Fraternity – you will join the wider community for meals and prayer but will also have activities within your own Novitiate Community. Novitiate lasts 366 days and towards the end of it you will be asked if you wish to apply to take your first vows. If your application is successful you will be accepted to take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for a period of three years. These vows are not any lesser vows than the other Friars take but rather just for a shorter period of time.

## **Post-Novitiate**

This is a two-year period of study, pastoral work and personal development. You will live in a Capuchin Fraternity as a temporary professed Friar and take part in all aspects of Fraternal life. What you do during Post-Novitiate is designed in conversation with your Post-Novitiate Director; a more senior brother assigned to help you as you take your first steps into Capuchin fraternal life. During this time, you will discern more closely if you feel called to priesthood or not. This decision will influence the course your studies will take.

## **Student Life & Special Formation**

As a Capuchin student you begin more formal studies leading to either Priestly ordination or a professional qualification. Much like Post-Novitiate, the programme for this stage will emerge as a result of conversation and discernment with your Director. This stage always includes preparation for





Solemn (final) profession whereby you make application to the Provincial Minister to take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for the rest of your life. You renew your temporary vows each year before you make Solemn Profession.

Following Solemn Profession, you will continue to prepare for ordination if that's the path you are taking or begin preparation for your assigned ministry if that's other than Priestly ministry.

The entire process can take up to nine or ten years. At every stage both you and the Fraternity are invited to discern if God is calling you to the Capuchin Franciscan way of life. A person is free to leave at any stage and the Order is also free to ask a person to leave at any stage.



We understand well that a lot of jargon is often used when speaking about vocations, so we've put together this next section to throw some light onto some of these words and phrases. We hope you find this helpful.



## ► The Language of Vocation



Words such as **discernment, charism, vows, profession, formation, postulancy, novitiate, ministry, minority** and **fraternity** all seemed an alien language to someone beginning a vocation journey. Here is some of the technical language you might encounter:

**Charism:** Means gift in Greek. We often use this word to describe the various gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church. The charism of a religious order is what makes the order what it is. In other words it's what is at the heart of the order. As Capuchins our primary charism is **Fraternity** (brotherhood), for another order it may be educational or medical or preaching. As individuals we all have our own charism (our uniqueness) and so with religious orders. Our charism is our collective response to God's invitation and call to be witnesses of God's presence in our world.

**Discernment:** Simply means to figure out. It is a process by which a person creates the space necessary to listen to the voice of God. It partly takes place alone and partly with the help of a vocation and / or spiritual director. Someone to bounce emerging thoughts and feelings off to help you figure out what's going on. The Holy Spirit is the primary director of all discernment.

**Formation:** Formation is another process! It is our time of training so to speak. It is a very special time whereby we work, in conjunction with our Formators (those responsible for accompanying us), to integrate more deeply our initial call to religious life. We study theology and philosophy as well as learning more about what it means to BE a Capuchin

Franciscan today. Formation is a lifelong process and is divided into three stages: **initial** formation, **special** formation and **on-going** formation. Initial formation, as the name suggests, covers the time up to perpetual (life) profession. Special formation allows us to prepare for ministry and on-going formation continues for the rest of our life as we work to deepen our love of God and neighbour.

**Fraternity:** Last but not least, Fraternity. Fraternity means brotherhood and is the core charism of the Capuchin expression of Gospel living. We are brothers to each other and Brothers to those we minister to. We live in fraternities. These are both schools of prayer and of service for each Friar regardless of age or experience. Our fraternities are homely and welcoming places. They are places of prayer, of mercy and of peace. In and through living in fraternity we learn who God is and who we are in light of this great mystery.



**Ministry:** Ministry is more than what we do or what we work at. It is how we bring the merciful and healing presence of Jesus Christ to others. This can take many forms and usually does. As Capuchins our call is to be '**Brothers of the People**' and to be men of '**reconciliation, peace and forgiveness**' (Pope Francis, 2015). We minister to those in need in hospitals, hospices, in parishes and in our Friaries. The important thing is not so much what we do but rather how we do it; as men of mercy, compassion, forgiveness and peace.

**Minority:** For us Capuchins 'minority' is a driving force. Minority means walking side by side with others, as brothers. It's why our official title is 'Brother' and not 'Father'. Minority means to enter into the lived experience of those we share our 'common home' (Pope Francis, *Laudato Sii*) with and to bring Christ's healing presence to these lived experiences.

**Novitiate:** This is a very special year (366 days to be exact!) whereby the Novice takes time, in a very structured environment, to deepen their vocation through prayer, study and community life. At the end of Novitiate the Novice takes their first Vows for three years.

**Profession:** As religious we profess or speak out our vows in public. Just as a couple do at their wedding, declaring their vows in front of the gathered congregation, so we declare our vows in the church. During our time of training we take temporary vows and towards the end of our training we profess perpetual (life) vows. Our profession binds us to our community and to the Church. We profess these Vows freely, assured of God's help.

**Postulancy:** When a man makes a decision to join the order he applies to become a Postulant. Literally a Postulant is 'one who asks'. Postulancy is a time whereby a man lives within the fraternity and experiences at a tangible level what life as a Capuchin Friar is really like. Postulants have classes in human development, spiritual development, Franciscan Spirituality and scripture. They also contribute to the life of the fraternity and wider community through their pastoral work. In the Irish Capuchin Province Postulancy lasts an academic year, usually from September to June.

**Vows:** This may seem an obvious one to some. Vows are the commitments we make before God. Commitments to leave our own claim on people, places and things (poverty). Our commitment to love inclusively rather than exclusively (chastity) as brothers to all and our commitment to live as part of a community, attentive to the voice and needs of that community (obedience). It takes a lifetime to grow into these as we learn how to integrate the gift of ourselves and others with these great gifts.

In the end only one **Word** is needed; **Jesus Christ**, the Word made flesh. He calls, he guides and he supports all vocations. If these words are resonating with you and you would like to hear more, contact us through our dedicated Vocations Director. You can email [vocations@capuchins.ie](mailto:vocations@capuchins.ie)



## ► Frequently asked questions

There are questions that we are often asked so we've decided to bring together some of the most popular questions with some answers. You will have your own questions and when you do, let us know and we will be happy to answer them for you. In the meantime these might be helpful.



### **How do I know if I am called to be a Capuchin Friar?**

The process of discovering what God is calling you to is called discernment. It oftentimes begins with a feeling or an experience or encounter that invites and compels us to seek deeper relationship with God, others, and all of Creation. This takes time, patience, prayer and guidance. It requires of us that we open our hearts and begin to trust in God in a whole new way. In many ways, it requires a step into the unknown.

### **Who can help me discern my vocation?**

The Irish Province of the Capuchin Franciscans takes the discernment process very seriously. We are committed to helping men discover their call by means of a comprehensive vocation accompaniment programme. This programme enables people explore the questions they have and to discover some new ones. The aim of accompaniment is to walk with you as a brother as you discern, listen and reflect, offering sound guidance and practical support. Each and every vocation journey is blessed and unique.

### **How long does it take to train as a Capuchin Friar?**

Our training is known as formation and usually takes between six to ten years. A Friar in formation will study, work, pray and minister while growing into what it means to be a Capuchin Friar in the world today. Formation is an exciting and deeply meaningful time.

### What are the vows that you take?

We take three vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. Poverty allows us to develop a deeper respect for the world around us and for all the good things that God provides. Chastity encourages us to live with hearts centred on God and obedience invites us to listen deeply to God's plan for us.

### Do you wear a habit?

Yes! Capuchins wear a simple brown habit and white cord. The cord has three knots that serve as a reminder of the three vows we profess.

### Was Padre Pio a Capuchin Friar?

Yes, the Capuchin Franciscan Order are blessed to have many saints and St Pio is certainly one of the best known, particularly in Ireland. Saints like Pio, all went through a time of discernment, in fact it was something they did throughout their lives. As St John Paul II reminds us **'we are all called to be Saints'**



So that's our story. Thank you for taking the time to read it. If after reading these pages you begin to feel like you want to know more about our way of life, we'd love to hear from you. If you feel our way of life is not for you, please continue to pray for us. We leave you with this prayer that St Francis himself prayed asking God to enlighten his heart and mind:

#### **St Francis Prayer for Enlightenment (Discernment)**

Most high, glorious God,  
enlighten the darkness  
of my heart and give me Lord,  
a correct faith, a certain hope,  
a perfect charity, sense and knowledge,  
so that I may carry out  
Your holy and true command.  
AMEN





"As Capuchin lesser brothers, we follow the poor and humble Christ, spread His message to people everywhere, especially to the poor, and offer a public and social witness of the Kingdom of God."

(Capuchin Franciscan constitution, 2: 16,4)



# **CAPUCHIN FRANCISCANS**

PROVINCE OF IRELAND

Produced by the Vocations and Communications Commissions on behalf of the  
Capuchin Franciscan Province of Ireland,  
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CRN: 20009434.

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