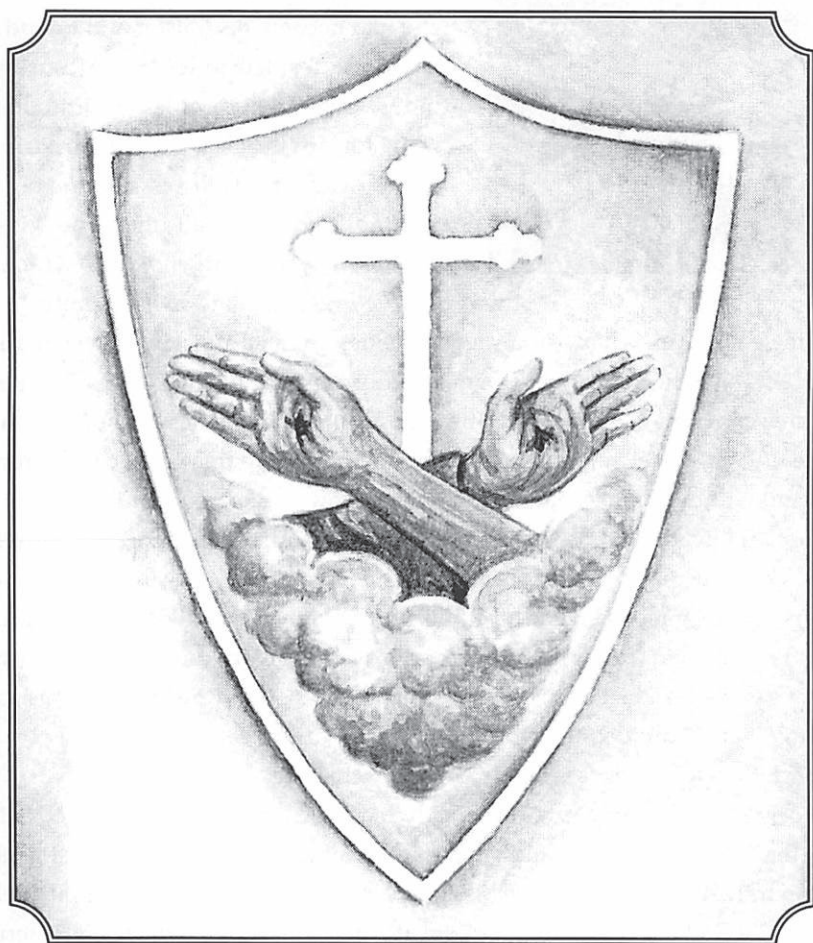


THE
CAPUCHIN
FRIARS MINOR
OF SAINT FRANCIS



OF TRADITIONAL OBSERVANCE

SAINT FRANCIS, FOUNDER



Saint Francis of Assisi

In 1209, a young man from Assisi, rich, well-respected, with a noble and chivalrous soul, leaving behind dreams of human conquest, was won over by Christ Jesus, attaching himself to the Lord forever. His name was Francis Bernardone and he gave himself without reserve to the service of the One who had become his Master and Friend.

Francis wanted to resemble Jesus in all things; thus, like Him, he became deeply loving toward the Heavenly Father, stripped himself of all earthly possessions and became charitable towards all men. The Gospel became his code of chivalry, which he observed radically and in its entirety.

In the past, Francis had astonished his home-town of Assisi by his ostentatious way of life. Now he appeared to them as a fool, until the day the Divine Spirit sent him three companions, who were attracted by the example of such heroism in the service of God. Other souls soon attached themselves to this small community of friars and without Francis having intended, a new religious Order was born.

The friars lived in branch cabins and earned their living by working with their hands. The remaining time was spent in prayer and preaching penance. To this group of friars Francis gave the name of "Minors". The Holy Father, Pope Innocent III, to whom Francis soon led his new family, approved the work thus far accomplished, and gave to the Minors the mission of preaching the Gospel. Fortified by this papal blessing, Francis divided the world amongst his friars, sending them two by two to preach the love of Jesus Crucified to every creature.

The new Order, by the fruits of sanctity that it produced, provoked such enthusiasm that in 1219 five thousand religious assembled in Assisi for the first general chapter. In 1220, the Minors were blessed with their first five martyrs, martyred in Morocco — God's reward, no doubt, for the missionary zeal which characterised the beginnings of this Order.

Francis died in 1226, in Assisi, having borne for the last two years of his life the holy stigmata. All the people and clergy instantly proclaimed his sanctity and in 1228 he was canonised by Pope Gregory IX. From heaven above, Saint Francis continues to protect the family given him by God. Even today, after the vicissitudes of eight centuries of existence, filled with all our catastrophes of history, the Order of Friars Minor finds itself alive and young in our XXI century, faithful to its ideal — to make Jesus Crucified known and loved!



The traditional Hail Mary before recreation

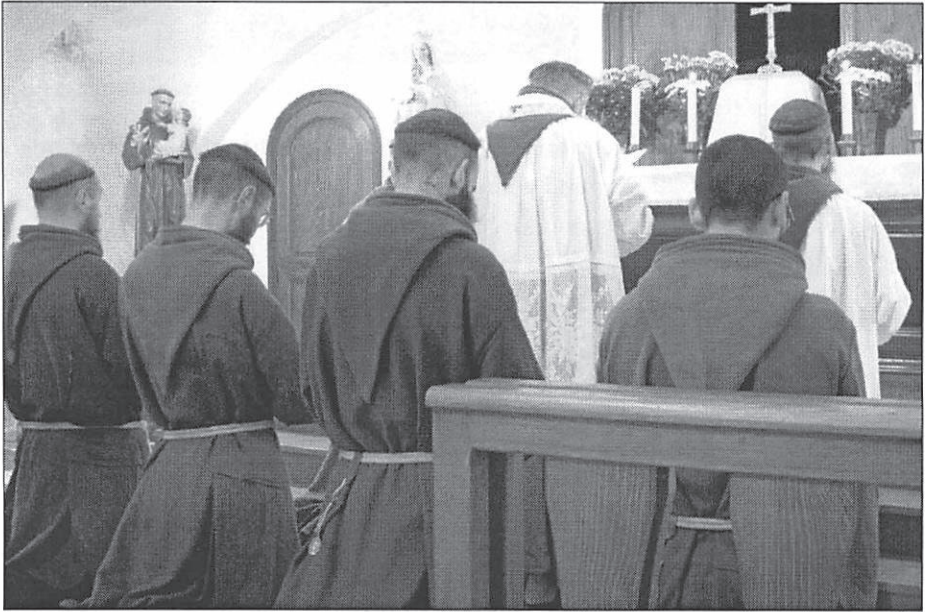
WHAT IS THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR?

The Order of Friars Minor in its appearance since the time of Saint Francis barely resembles the small fraternity which grouped around him in 1209, yet all the essential elements remain. It is a religious Order governed by a Rule, written by Saint Francis, which, according to his word, is "the Gospel observed to the letter and without gloss". The members are consecrated to God by solemn profession, pronounced irrevocably after several years of probation. They are sanctified by the practice of the Rule, where by they live in adherence to the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

The Friars Minor's vow of poverty is the strictest that exists, forbidding not only individual possession, but also all possession in common. Saint Francis wanted this rigorous poverty in order that his friars would resemble Jesus as much as possible, who Himself, during His life on earth, had "nowhere to lay his head". Thus, the love of Jesus is at the heart of the poverty of a Friar Minor, and likewise that same love is the inspiration of his chastity, which obliges the Friars to avoid even the appearance of evil, and thirdly, the love of Christ is necessarily the soul of the friar's obedience, which covers "all that which is not contrary to one's conscience, or to our Rule." This

way of poverty by love tends to generate simplicity, peace and joy, characteristics of the franciscan soul.

The religious are divided into two categories: the clerics and the lay-brothers. The former are received into the priesthood and exercise the holy ministry, whilst the lay-brothers give to manual labour the time that is left to them after prayer. The goal of our Order is first and foremost the individual sanctification of its members by the practice of the holy Gospel and a life of prayer. However, their love for Jesus will urge the Friars Minor to the apostolate. This apostolate is diverse in form, from the direct action



Ceremony of the Solemn Profession

of the preacher and missionary, down to the hidden, but sovereignly fruitful action of the brother who, by his holiness, brings down a shower of divine grace on the ministry of the religious priests.

Personal sanctification and apostolate - such is the double goal pursued by the Franciscan Order. A devoted contemplative and active life, which is the life that Our Lord led here on earth and which is considered by theologians as the most perfect way.

THE CAPUCHIN FRIARS MINOR

As in all human affairs, our religious family has traversed many episodes in its course throughout the ages. Each time that the Order appeared to lose something of its first vitality, God intervened by pouring into the veins of the seraphic tree a reviving and vivifying sap, bringing forth from the old trunk a new branch loaded with flowers and fruit, recalling the golden age of the Franciscan community. Thus was born, in 1528, the famous reform of the Capuchin Friars Minor. It is the third branch of the Franciscan family, along with the Observants and the Conventuals.

The Capuchins were first known under the title of "Hermits of Saint Francis", then later under the name of Capuchins - due to the lengthened form of their hood.

Founded in the Marches of Ancona, Italy, the reform was originally led by an Observant priest, Father Matthew of Baschi, who after its establishment, returned to the Observants, dying a holy death in 1552. The Capuchins are hermit preachers whose mixed (contemplative and apostolic) vocation has for almost five centuries furnished the Church with a beautiful phalanx of Saints. Over 50 Capuchins have been raised to the honour of the altars – of which the stigmatised Saint Padre Pio will remain the most famous.

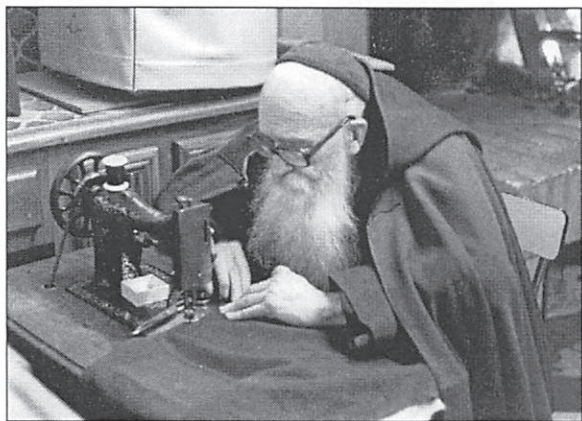


Recreation time

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As our fore-fathers, we wish to follow the original Franciscan Rule, in all its evangelical literalism and simplicity, as Saint Francis did himself, through his ardent love for Jesus crucified and his desire to live in holy poverty - in the foot-steps of Him who willed to be born, live and die poor.

Our community of traditional observance was founded by Father Eugene de Villeurbanne (1904 – 1990), Capuchin of the Province of Lyon, France. A great preacher of missions and retreats and a former missionary in Central Africa, he wanted to remain faithful to the habit that he received as a novice, to the Rule that he vowed to observe on the day of his profession and to the Mass that he celebrated at his ordination. We



The late Father Eugene of Villeurbanne

currently have three foundations in France. The Mother house is situated in the south-east (Morgon, Rhône), our noviciate is in the south-west (Castelnau d'Arbieu, Gers) and our most recent friary has been established in central France (Pontchardon, Loir et Cher).

DAILY LIFE IN THE CONVENT

The Capuchins recite the whole of the Divine Office, the first rising for which takes place at 1am for Matins, lasting for between half-an-hour to one hour. The second rising is at 4:25am for Lauds, followed by mental prayer (begun with a reading on the Passion). At 5:45 am, 45 minutes Scripture reading in one's cell; at 6:30am Prime and Terce followed by the conventual Mass at 7:00am and thanksgiving. Breakfast is at 8:00am (replaced by the *frustulum* during our three lents). In conformity to the will of Saint Francis, abstinence from meat is not perpetual, but limited to Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Every Friday of the year is also a day of fast. The Grand Silence (which



Grace before dinner



A father reciting his breviary

begins the previous evening) is prolonged until 9:15am, during which the friars study or do spiritual reading. The rest of the morning, until 11:35am (Sext and None) is occupied by intellectual work for the clerical brothers - in preparation for apostolic work, and in manual work for the lay-brothers.

The midday meal is preceded by the Chapter of faults¹. After the meal, all clear the table, say grace, and while reciting the *Miserere*, visit the Blessed Sacrament. Prayers for benefactors are then said, during which time the hebdomadary² priest and the acolytes wash the dishes. For their common recreation, the friars have a walk in the vicinity of the friary. The bell is rung at 1:30pm, signalling the beginning of a second Grand Silence and free-time (which may be spent having a siesta) until Vespers and the Rosary at 2pm.

Work continues in the afternoon, excepting Thursdays when the community have a long walk. At 5pm, spiritual reading or devotions. Compline is recited at 5:30pm, followed by evening mental prayer until supper at 6:45pm. A recreation follows the meal, until the Great Pardon³ at 7:45pm, when the final Grand Silence begins. Usually everyone is asleep by 8:30pm.

1. Chapter of Faults - Accusation in community of one's own faults against the Rule.

2. hebdomadary - The priest who leads the Divine Office for the week.

3. Great Pardon - Final prayers of the community in common.

THE MINISTRY OF THE CAPUCHIN PRIEST



Reception in the Third Order

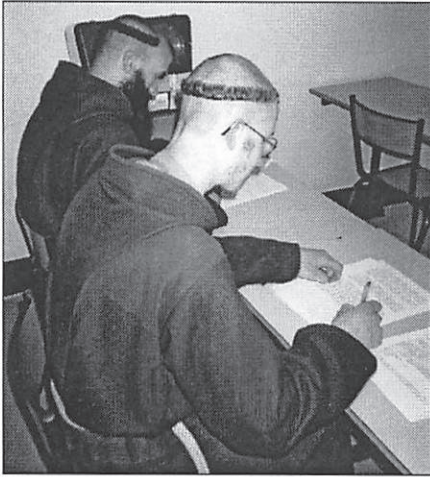
The Capuchin ministry is exercised mainly in the confessional and from the pulpit. Our "speciality" in the past was the preaching of parish missions, where by two or three priests evangelised a parish, giving spiritual exercises over several weeks, both in the church and in the homes... Currently we regret often having to turn down invitations to preach sermons, conferences, retreats, recollections...

Indeed, we must firstly fulfil a number of important ministries closer to home, namely: three-monthly mee-

tings for our Third Order fraternities, retreats, sacramental assistance in hospices and in old age homes, chaplaincy for our Poor Clare sisters, for Girl Guides and for traditional schools in the region. These exterior activities add to a timetable already well occupied at the convent, with confessions, spiritual direction, correspondance, and spiritual and scholastic courses for the novices and student brothers.

THE FORMATION OF THE CLERICS

What is the programme of formation for the brothers who are called to the priesthood? Firstly, in order to be received as a clerical brother, it is necessary to have your school leaving certificate, plus A-levels (GB) or High school Diploma (US) and to be capable of following the ecclesiastical studies (latin and thomist phi-



Student friars

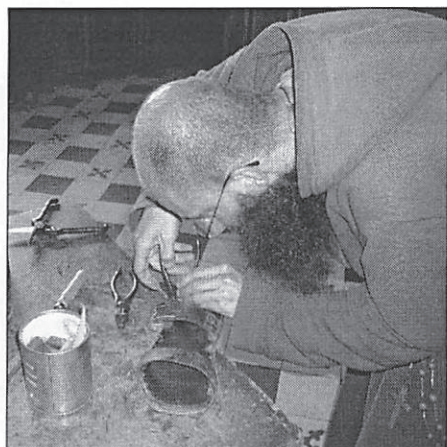
losophy in particular). Between one and six months of postulancy is followed by one to one-and-a-half years of novitiate, which allows us to judge if the subject is capable of combining the observances of the Capuchin life with the studies, and of progressing in the virtues necessary for the religious and priestly life.

At the end of the novitiate the first profession of simple vows takes place, after which there is one year of humanities and three years of philosophy, followed by four years of theology according to the doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Usually, perpetual profession and the first of the major Holy Orders take place during the second year of theology, and the priesthood is received at the end of the third year. During the year following priestly ordination, the young priests preach at the convent but do not hear confessions, continuing their formation in a final year of studies before progressively taking up the different occupations of the holy ministry.

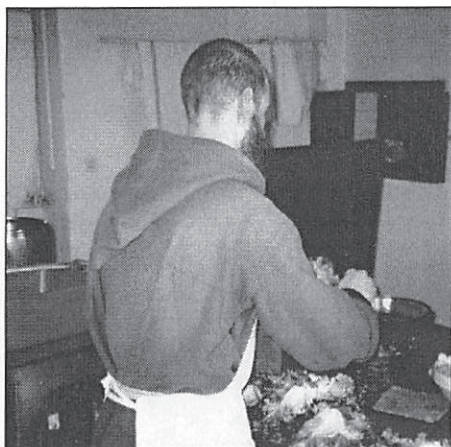
THE LAY-BROTHERS

After six months of postulancy and at least one year of novitiate, the lay-brothers are entrusted with certain manual work (garden, kitchen, repairs, laundry, shoe-making, sewing etc.) or more particular responsibilities within the friary (sickroom, porter,





Brother Cobbler



Brother Cook

secretary, sacristy). On occasion they may be exercised as a builder or joiner. These occupations, though of an obscure nature, reflect the atmosphere of Nazareth, so favourable to the spirit of humility and sacrifice. The lay-brothers participate in the same community exercises as the clerical brothers, they have the same prayer time in the choir and the same voice at the chapter. As with the clerical brothers, simple vows are pronounced at the end of the novitiate and renewed after three years; perpetual vows being professed after a further three years.

Saint Francis considered the lay-brother as the greatest helper to the clerical brothers in the apostolate. The "hidden, latent forces", who by their life completely hidden in God, obtain the graces which alone can save souls. Thus, they make a duty and an honour of supporting the clerical brothers by the unsuspected merit of a life of abnegation, prayer, work and humility.



COMMUNITY WEEKDAY TIMETABLE

- 12:55 am First rising: Matins
(30mins to 1hr)
- 4:25 am Second rising
- 4:45 am Lauds; meditation
- 5:45 am Scripture reading
- 6:35 am Angelus; Prime et Terce ; Conventual
Mass and Thanksgiving
- 8:00 am Breakfast
- 8:15 am Study
- 9:10 am (end of Grand Silence)
- 9:30 am Classes, study or work
- 11:40 am Sext and None
- 12:00 pm Angelus; lunch; prayers in
the choir, dishes, recreation
- 1:30 pm Free-time (Grand Silence)
- siesta or small quiet jobs
- 2:00 pm Vespers; Rosary
- 2:40 pm Work or study (except:
Thursday - walk
Friday - choir practice / liturgy
Saturday - cleaning)
- 5:00 pm Personal devotions (or low mass)
- 5:30 pm Compline; prayers; meditation
(Friday: Stations of the Cross)
- 6:45 pm Dinner; dishes; recreation
- 7:45 pm Angelus; Pardon; lights out
(Grand Silence)



Ringing the bell for the
Divine Office



A spot of weeding



IN CONCLUSION

In the footsteps of Saint Francis - the passionate lover of Jesus Crucified - we, loyally attached to Lady Poverty, faithfully observing our traditions of contemplation and penance, and given to the ministry of preaching, want to work for the restoration of Christendom and the Reign of Our Lord Jesus Christ in joy, peace, simplicity and fraternal charity. Poor in our modern world which hankers after riches, humble in our days of pride, obedient while all aspire to rule, simple in a society where the artificial triumphs, joyful despite the sadness which spreads a gloomy veil over the pleasures of merry-makers. With our eyes fixed on the Cross of Christ, we continue the work of love begun in Assisi 800 years ago, by the martyr of love, crucified on Mount Alverno!¹

May the most holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary deign to arouse ardent and self-sacrificing souls among our youth, and may they come to consecrate themselves to the service of God within our modest religious family, for now more than ever, "the harvest is great, yet the workers are few".



All Capuchin Friars have a filial devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God



For further information write to:
Rev. Father Guardian, Couvent St François,
Morgon, 69910 Villié-Morgon, FRANCE

1 - Mount Alverno - Where Saint Francis received the stigmata