

Living Your Vocation



The Sacro Convento in Assisi, Italy

May the Lord give you His peace! In discerning a vocation to religious life, a young person may think that once he makes a decision, then his discernment is done and he then knows what path he is taking in life. Well it may be true that he has made a decision, but where the path may lead might be full of surprises. As men who live out a vocation to holiness in Gospel fraternity, we continue to grow in our personal as well as communal relationships with the Lord. At one point in our respective lives, we chose this vocation. Throughout our

lives, the depth and breath of the holiness that we are called to embrace continues to unfold and in that loving relationship, God continues to ask more of us. This requires prayer and reflection on the part of each friar. In order to facilitate such prayerful reflection, the Conventual Franciscans of North America are participating in a spiritual renewal program called "Sacro Convento." The article inside explains how this program helps each friar and the Order on this continent to understand more deeply the spiritual dimensions of the life we have chosen.

Two men whose vocations as friars took seemingly unexpected turns are our new minister general, Marco Tasca and William Callahan who was recently ordained a bishop. They entered the Order to be friars and as these two men lived their vocations, God and the Church asked more of them. Both men have generously given themselves to the service of leadership, one as minister general of the Order and one as an auxiliary to the Archbishop of Milwaukee. The beauty of our fraternity is that whether someone is minister general, an auxiliary bishop, a young student friar in formation or an elderly ailing friar, we are all brothers to one another and to the great man Francis of Assisi. As brothers, we live our fraternal call to holiness as our relationships with God grow deeper even when the paths of our lives take unexpected turns. Peace and all good!

- Friar Michael Lorentsen, OFM Conv.

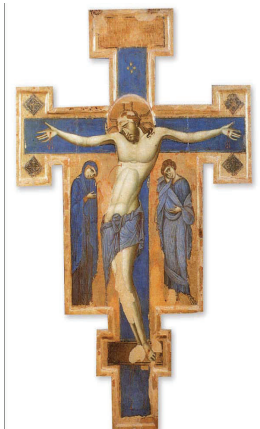


Pope Benedict XVI with Friar Marco Tasca on the right

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Franciscan Vocation Renewal: The Sacro Convento Experience



The Conventual Franciscan Friars of North America are participating in what is called the *Sacro Convento Experience*. This nationwide program of prayer and renewal gets its name from the friary attached to the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy which is the center and heart of the Franciscan Order.

The *Sacro Convento*, which translates the *Sacred Convent*, houses an international group of friars who reside and minister at the Basilica of St. Francis. The Basilica of St. Francis is under the care of the Conventual Franciscan Friars.

The word *convento* comes from the Latin word *conventus* which means *to come together*. It is also the root word for our title *Conventual* which identifies us as the *Friars of the Community* and distinguishes us from the two other branches of the First Order of St. Francis.

The Sacro Convento Experience is a coming together of all the Conventual Franciscan Friars in North America for the purpose of fraternity, renewal, prayer and the consideration of our future. We are being exhorted to rediscover what it means to embrace our call and, through a deeper understanding of our charism, to renew our commitment to the Gospel life. There are five geographical areas or provinces of the Conventual Franciscans in the United States numbering almost 500 friars.

Our Baptismal call to conversion and holiness is a lifelong process. Therefore, we recognize that formation, or the process of forming men as friars, does not end with solemn vows and final commitment. We call this period *initial formation*. Once solemnly professed, we continue the process of growing as friars through what we call *ongoing formation*, a process of ongoing conversion and growth in holiness.

The Sacro Convento Experience stands out as a historic moment in the life of our community. It is the first time all the friars of North America will come together for such a purpose, except for those impeded by health or age. The program, which lasts for twelve days, is being offered in seven different locations throughout the United States over almost a two-year period. It consists of three phases: a) to reflect upon our vocation and share our individual stories in an effort to get to know each other better; b) to experience a retreat together reflecting upon our Conventual Franciscan charism; and c) to enter into a process to identify what is most valuable about our way of life and how we can plan for the future.

Friar-Bishop William Callahan



Friar-Bishop William Callahan in Rome

Born in Chicago in 1950, friar "Bill" felt a call to the priesthood at a very young age, even choosing to enter the friars' high school seminary. The hallmark expression of a man who is thoroughly in love with his chosen life is best stated by his older sister who said that as a boy Bill was "always smiling." Bill completed his undergraduate studies in Chicago at Loyola University where he earned a BA in Radio and Television Communications. He completed his theological studies at St. Michael's College, Toronto. Shortly after his ordination in 1977, Fr. Bill was asked to serve his community as the Vocation Director. In that position he helped to guide many young men toward their true calling. Another prize assignment was as rector and pastor of St.

Josaphat's Basilica in Milwaukee where he undertook a major renovation of the church. At the end of his term he was invited to serve as a Spiritual Director at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. In December 2007, noticing his spiritual passion and his administrative skills, Pope Benedict XVI asked Fr. Bill to return to the States to serve Milwaukee as an "Auxiliary" or assistant bishop; as a co-shepherd who would teach, advise, preach, administrate, and lead by his example. As a bishop, Bill remains a member of our religious community however certain aspects of his vows are commuted to the Holy See. He may continue to wear the habit of the Order when appropriate but now he will also wear a zucchetto and pectoral cross.



Friar-Bishop William Callahan's coat of arms



New Minister General Visits US and Jamaica



Friar Marco Tasca at a meeting with ministers provincial

Early in February of this year, the recently elected minister general of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, Friar Marco Tasca, paid his first visit to the United States to meet ministers provincial from North America

at St. Lucie Parish in St. Lucie, Florida.

After his meeting with the ministers provincial, Friar Marco and his assistant Brother John-Joseph Dolan flew further south to Jamaica where they visited St. Mary's, Above Rocks, and Missions. St. Mary's is a multi-purpose mission run by the Conventual Franciscans and Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist. It provides a selection of services to the local population, ranging from pastoral care to schooling and literacy programs.

El Padrecito's Online Church



El Padrecito

El Padrecito's Online Church at www.elpadrecito.com is a safe place of creative expression, socializing, and advice for teenagers largely from the Latino community in the United States. Started by Friar Maseo Gonzalez, OFM Conv., El Padrecito's Church works to help keep teenagers away from gangs and drugs through spiritual empowerment.

Friar Maseo seized on the opportunity to help troubled youths through the internet as soon as he realized the medium's power. And judging from the hundreds of young people who visit www.elpadrecito.com with questions for Fr. Maseo, the need for this ministry is urgent.

After eight years of existence, El Padrecito's Online Church continues to have a strong following and now includes the Hiz-Kidz Club, a rap ministry also led by Friar Maseo. The church itself was inspired by the El Padrecito Homies character, created by David Gonzalez, Friar Maseo's brother.

Friars Blog On Franciscan Life



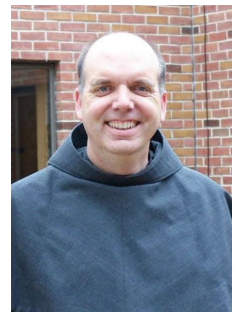
Friar Matt Foley

Friar Matt Foley is in his late twenties and teaches religion at Archbishop Curley High School in Baltimore, Maryland. Friar Michael Lorentsen is in his forties and works as a vocation director for the Conventual Franciscans. He lives in Syracuse, New York. Friar Michael and Friar Matt are the leading bloggers at Blogging Friars, a franciscans.org ministry, where they share their views about vocations and living life as a Conventual Franciscan friar.

The word vocation can be overwhelming for those who are initially considering it. Friar Michael's reflections in Blogging Friars will help these individuals begin to understand what God is calling them to do. A vocation does not happen instantaneously. It is a long wonderful process in which as Friar Michael paraphrasing the words of Thomas Merton says, "I just need to trust and let God lead me."

The beauty behind Friar Matt's blog is that it reflects the development of his vocation during everyday life. Friar Matt teaches, attends baseball games, watches movies and prays. He is living his vocation and moving to what God has called him to do – profess his solemn vows and enter priesthood. Friar Matt's joy for his vocation frequently shines through his words such as in this instance when he writes about this year's Ash Wednesday school mass: "I felt an overwhelming excitement that some day I may be able to minister to these young men as a friar priest."

With such uninhibited joy, readers can easily get an idea of what true vocation is really like.



Friar Michael Lorentsen

The Blogging Friars are found at <http://www.franciscans.org/bloggingfriars.cfm>.

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