

OFFICE OF INITIAL AND CONTINUING FORMATION  
CAPUCHIN PROVINCE OF ST. JOSEPH  
**ST. CLARE FRIARY**  
3407 SOUTH ARCHER AVENUE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60608

January 5, 2017  
St. John Neumann

Dear Brothers:

Peace and all good!

With the beginning of another year, it is time for us to begin to prepare our personal, community, office and ministry budgets for FY 2018. Among these are our budgets for Continuing Formation.

Chapter II of our Capuchin Constitutions reminds us that formation in the consecrated life is “a journey of discipleship guided by the Holy Spirit” that “must be life-long” and involve “the whole person...human, cultural, spiritual, pastoral, and professional” (23:1, 2). Its purpose is “to make the life of the brothers and fraternities become conformable to the Gospel,” our First Rule, “according to the Capuchin-Franciscan spirit, taking into account the diversity of times and places” (23:3).

These concerns are not new. Over 35 years ago, the Formation Guidelines established by the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary Council of the Order (Rome 1981) devoted an extensive section (70-76) to continuing or ongoing formation. PCO IV challenged us:

While it embraces the whole person as a unit, on-going formation has a twofold dimension: that of spiritual conversion through continual return to the sources of Christian life and the spirit of the Order, in view of greater fidelity to them; and cultural and professional updating by means of “technical” adaptation, so to speak, to the conditions of our day. This twofold dimension must always be seen in relation to different phases of human life.

On-going formation, more than methods and external aids that are concrete and structured—though these too are necessary—consists in acquiring a frame of mind, a spiritual attitude, which makes us conscious that formation, in other words our human and Christian commitment on the spiritual, scientific and professional level, is never-ending because it can and must continually be worked at, improved and perfected.

One who has ended his period of initial formation cannot claim to be right for the rest of his life. Instead, a genuine “formative attitude” is acquired during initial formation with the realization that basic formation is only an introduction—certainly necessary—to our continual conversion that

lasts as long as we live. Indeed, this is one of the most decisive accomplishments of the initiation period. Ongoing-formation is not identified with or fulfilled by participating in a few “updating” projects, but it is a continuous, living process.

Without a doubt, making oneself responsible for one’s own ongoing formation is firstly a personal obligation of the individual religious. It is a duty, but also a right, to which everything else must be subordinate, because on-going formation is nothing but the continuous unfolding of our vocation (71-72).

For many years I have found it curious and sometimes troubling that those of us who are doctors, lawyers, social workers, counselors or teachers (among other professions) are required to do a certain amount of continuing education or face losing our licenses but few if any such requirements exist for clergy or religious who are charged with preaching God’s word, administering the sacraments, and providing pastoral care and other services to God’s people. Can we “raise the bar” for ourselves, even those of us who may be retired from ministry but not Capuchin life? Please consider a plan and budget for your continuing formation this coming fiscal year!

For the first time we also invite *communities* to submit requests for continuing formation. If you are a local minister and would like to organize a community outing to a play or musical performance, purchase a set of DVD’s for a video lecture series, subscribe to a webinar series, host a small play by local artists, or set up a book club for the friars in your house or area to read and discuss a compelling work of literature, please feel free to do so. Feel free to be creative, keeping in mind our vows (for example, a community outing to see *Tosca* at the local opera house is fine, but a community outing to see *Tosca* in Milan...probably not).

You will find that the format of the Continuing Formation Budget Request Form is similar to that of previous years. *Please submit your Continuing Formation Budget Form by February 15, 2017.* It may be submitted via e-mail or “snail mail” (USPS). If you have any questions or concerns about the form or process, please do not hesitate to contact me at [jscelichowski@gmail.com](mailto:jscelichowski@gmail.com) or (414) 232-9705. Thanks for your consideration and for your efforts to grow as a friar and minister in the Church.

Fraternally yours,



John Celichowski, OFM Cap., Director  
Office of Continuing Formation