

Capuchin Constitutions: a Spiritual Legacy

The sessions on the newly approved Capuchin Constitutions, held in Appleton, WI and Washington, MI, were considered as both retreat and workshop, depending on with whom you spoke. 62 friars participated in Appleton, 37 in Washington. In all cases, they were judged a huge success!

Despite the housing/commuting obstacles and distance between the two sites, the communities at St. Fidelis and St. Joseph Parish provided the participants with welcoming fraternity and endless food and drink. This was much easier to accomplish at Capuchin Retreat with its wonderful staff and on site living accommodations. The presenters, Bill Hugo, Dan Crosby, John Celichowski, Christopher Proravak, and John Corriveau each provided the listeners with a different approach. All focused on the Franciscan theology and fraternal values that undergird the legislative parts.

Bill Hugo introduced the sessions with a talk on how we got to where we got, sharing, first hand, some of the tensions beneath the finally approved texts. Dan Crosby spent the next day uncovering the enduring Franciscan themes that continue the legacy of our first constitutions into our present ones, while at the same time proudly showing the Vatican II theology that serves as our new theological lens. John Celichowski pointed out the Scriptural foundations, old and new and centering on Jesus, of obedience and how that chapter of the constitutions invites us to respond. Christopher Popravak invited us to see the present constitutions with new eyes, offering us the opportunity to be re-formed in the power of the Holy Trinity, indwelling in us, calling us to new and re-formed practices as signs of our own ongoing formation. In the afternoon Christopher focused on our Capuchin life or prayer and contemplation as life-giving examples. Bill Hugo returned to present the issue of Capuchin poverty and minority as two dimensions of the same reality, reinforcing both in the Divine outpouring of the love of the Triune God, first in Jesus poor and humble, then in the response of St. Francis, and finally offered to ourselves. John Corriveau crowned the presentations, in the very contagiously energetic way that only John can, with a presentation on Capuchin fraternal life as the glue of the constitutions and of our Capuchin life, and a final presentation on the necessity of pluriformity that living Capuchin fraternal life presumes.

Our final day began with short reflections from participants, Perry McDonald and David Hirt in Appleton, and Vito Martinez and Bob Malloy in Washington. These were followed by reflections from the rest of the participants—and a pervading question: what's next? Where do we go from here?

Leisure, hospitality, communal prayer, and fraternal sharing fed the human spirits throughout the days. The schedule allowed for a siesta after lunch and evenings free, daily morning prayer and Eucharist, (evening prayer as well in Washington), space to reflect, to visit, to read, welcoming rooms to rest and sleep (the AmericInn in Appleton provided 30 rooms for our use, as well as a hot breakfast, pool, exercise room, etc)

All sessions, except the final one, were video taped and will be distributed to the local communities to help us move to the next stage.

We have begun!

What's Next? Where Do We Go from Here?

The plan is this: to spend the next year reading through and discussing the new constitutions, one month at a time, one chapter at a time, *in the local community*.

Two chapters could be omitted, Chapter 5 (on work) (since there will be a CPO on this chapter) and Chapter 8 (on governance). Each month friars will be supplied with one-page reflections on the chapter from various friars who participated in the sessions, to stimulate the local communities in their own discussions.

Schedule

September: Chapter 1: The Life of the Capuchin Friars Minor

October: Chapter 2: Formation of the Brothers

November: Chapter 3: Our life of Prayer

December: Chapter 4: Our Life of Poverty

January: Chapter 6: Our Life in Fraternity

February: Chapter 7: Our Life in Penance

March: Chapter 9: Our Apostolic Life

April: Chapter 10: Our Life in Obedience

May: Chapter 11: Our Life in Consecrated Chastity

June: Chapter 12: The Proclamation of the Gospel and the Life of Faith

Invitation to those who participated in the sessions:

Would you like to write a one-page reflection on some aspect of one of the chapters of the constitutions to be shared with the rest of the brothers?

Please contact Bill Cieslak (wcieslak@thecapuchins.org) (510) 847-0949.

Reflections need to be ready to be sent out on the *first of the month*.

Thank you!

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