



# Conventual Franciscan Life

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**Called to Serve**  
*How do I know what  
God wants me to do?*

Left: Friars John Bamman and Pablo A.  
Carvajal Espinoza

**Friar Symposium**  
*How do I discern God's call in my  
life?*

**Called to Serve**  
*An Invitation to Friendship  
Being a Brother in Service  
On the Periphery*



***Praise and bless my Lord  
and give Him thanks  
and serve Him with  
great humility.***

from the Cantic of Creatures  
St. Francis of Assisi

## A Note From Fr. John

Dear Friends,

After St. Francis of Assisi heard the call to rebuild the Church, it took him a while to realize that Jesus was not talking about buildings.

Instead, Francis was called to build up God's Kingdom here on earth by serving the least of God's people.

In the same way, each of us is called to serve, to continue responding to the challenge of Jesus in the Gospel: *"When you do this for the least among you, you do it for me..."*

**Let us continue to pray for one another, that we serve God's people with love.**



I am amazed and I do believe it is no accident that Jesus' first followers came from a diversity of careers. Scripture does not describe the backgrounds of all of Jesus' disciples; however, it does reveal that Peter, Andrew, James, and John, were fishermen (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11). Matthew was a tax collector (Matthew 10:3). The professions of the other seven disciples are unknown.

What we do know is that Jesus, inspired by his relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit, called each one of them into a friendship. Through this friendship, each came to the realization of their distinct role and began the ministry of serving the People of God.

Today, the call to serve is still given to a diversity of people. The Spirit of God invites all people of different cultures into a relationship with the Trinity. Within this call to serve, some of us respond by seeking to live the Rule and Life inspired by St. Francis, primarily to follow the teaching and footprints of Jesus Christ. Through this response, our Franciscan community serves and speaks to the hearts of many people throughout the world.

Jesus spoke about sheep to shepherds, fields and seeds to farmers, and fish to fishermen. And so, within our community, each friar is able to serve, to speak, and to minister to a variety of people through their God-given talents and abilities that are gifts to be shared with others.

I have been fortunate to be in university ministry for almost a decade, where my initial desire to teach is fulfilled by engaging and animating university students to discover their own encounter with Christ and to take on the willingness to serve the People of God.

It is truly a gift when we recognize, surrender to, and ultimately come to realize, that God meets us where we are and, through God's merciful love, challenges us to get in relationship with God and others. When we fully



Friar Mario currently serves as Campus Minister at the University of Texas, El Paso. He is also one of the Province Vocation Directors, along with Friars Andy Martinez and John Bamman (who are both featured in this issue's Symposium.)

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**Contact**  
Fr. John Elmer  
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eddie@franciscansusa.org

**In Thanksgiving**

Dear Fr. John,  
I am thankful for my loving, wonderful family. Being a single mother, I had our Blessed Mother's help in raising them.  
S.D. & V.D.

Dear Fr. John,  
I am thankful to St. Anthony for answering my prayers for a medical diagnosis that has turned out upon further testing to be negative. Thank you with all my heart!  
Mr. and Mrs. M.P.

Dear Fr. John,  
I am thankful that my husband, now deceased, converted to the Catholic Church in college. We were married 49 wonderful years. God Bless Him!  
J.B.F.

*Do you know someone who would make a great Friar?*



**Poverty. Chastity. Obedience.**

For information about discerning a Conventual Franciscan religious vocation check out

**[Franciscans.org](http://Franciscans.org)**

Basic requirements: Single Catholic male, 18 to 40 years of age, in good health with a desire to learn, serve, sacrifice, and share a common life

# On the Periphery

by Friar Charles McCarthy

## Where is the Periphery?

I once attended a seminar where the speaker said that our preaching needs to be to the people who make the 4th 3rd of the Sunday assembly. He observed that there were three groups of people present in the church: (1) those in front who have bought your message; (2) the folk in the middle who have heard it and are moving forward; (3) and the folk in the back who have one foot in and one foot out the door.

Then there is the 4th 3rd: those outside who are listening to the 3rd 3rd's assessment of what's going on inside.

People in the periphery, of whom Pope Francis speaks frequently, are that 4th 3rd as well as the 5th and 6th 3rds. They live beyond the 200 yards' influence of the parish bell tower (the distance one can see the bell-tower or hear the bell sing).

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Friar Charles (pictured at Ysleta Mission Church in El Paso, Texas) is part of a team of Franciscans working with members of the Navajo Nation and other indigenous peoples in and around Albuquerque, New Mexico.

# Being a Brother in Service

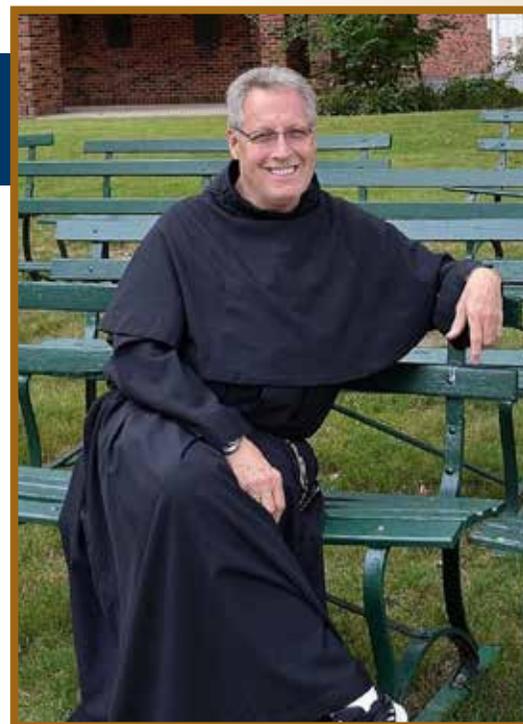
by Friar Randy Kin

Working for more than 25 years in the Province of Our Lady of Consolation has taught me that if you continue growing your prayer life while keeping your ministry in mind you will find plenty to do. Religious life as a vowed brother has its ups and downs just as any other vocation. Most people think religious life is just kneeling in the chapel praying all day. That would be easy! In my experience religious life is lots of hard work along with a strong prayer life.

Looking back on my years as a brother, I have had many jobs. I started out as a Special Education teacher, then went on to work in our parishes as a pastoral associate, then served as a retreat leader for young adults in our retreat Centers and Houses in Ohio, Indiana, New Mexico, and Minnesota. I spent time working in the vocation office, listening to young men who were thinking about becoming Franciscan Friars. I worked as a pilgrimage and retreat director at the Basilica and National Shrine of our Lady of Consolation in Carey, Ohio.

All these jobs were different but what they had in common was hospitality and service to others. I have found that the most important thing people want from a Brother is to be acknowledged that they are loved, and their life is important to the world.

About a week ago, a Jewish man from Ohio, whom I used to see on a retreat each year, called. He broke down crying and said, "brother Randy, just hearing you laugh makes me happy."



Brother Randy awaits the arrival of pilgrims to the Basilica and National Shrine of our Lady of Consolation in Carey, Ohio. He currently serves as director of retreat ministry at the Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality in Mount St. Francis, Indiana.

***That's why I love being a brother. It's the people that remember you, pray for you, and love you even when you aren't nearby anymore. Just by being yourself is enough for God.***

Friar Ian Bremar



When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples he said to them, “...as I have done for you, you should also do” (Jn 13:15). As such, to be a Christian is to be a servant to others; it is a commandment of Jesus. But not everyone is called to serve in the same way. We are all given different gifts to put at the service of God’s kingdom. How, then, do we know how God is calling each one of us to serve?

Discerning God’s call to anything in our lives can be challenging, and perhaps you are wondering how you can give of yourself in service – be it locally once a week or perhaps in a long-term program, like FrancisCorps. Maybe you are even discerning life-long ways of service. Whatever the case may be, here are some tips for hearing God’s call in your life.

**1. Pray.** Speak to God in prayer, making known your desire to serve and asking God to show you the way. The answer may not come immediately, but there are many ways God speaks to us. Sometimes in prayer God clearly places a desire in our heart for that which also serves the needs in our world.

**2. Read the Scriptures.** People often say that they don’t know what God is saying to them, but we have the gift of God’s Word here in Sacred Scripture. The Gospels are alive with passages of Jesus modeling ways in which to help and heal others. St. Paul speaks eloquently in 1 Corinthians 12 about the variety of gifts and how they are all at the service of the one Body, which is Christ.

**3. Talk to Someone.** St. Teresa of Avila said, “A good means to having God is to speak with his friends.” As we are given God’s Spirit in baptism, it is especially helpful to talk with and listen to others in our process of discernment. Seek a prayerful and faithful person. They can be an excellent sounding board and can give you the encouragement that you need.

### *Discerning God’s call in our lives can be challenging, and perhaps you are wondering how you can give of yourself in service*

**4. Look.** There are so many opportunities for service out there; sometimes the answer is right under your nose. You may not know what God is calling you to, because you don’t know what options are available. Consider what your gifts and desires are and do a little research. You may just find that there’s something out there that meets your interests and talents perfectly.

*So how does one conform one’s life to God’s will and not our own selfish will? Not an easy question.*

Friar John Bamman



When we do good discernment, we make a good decision. So how do we conform our lives to God’s will and not our own selfish will? Not an easy question. In the time of St Francis of Assisi it was more simple. He opened the Bible and played “Bible roulette” with his index finger. Where his finger landed, on whatever Bible verse, was the answer to the question. I wouldn’t recommend this for big decisions, but it can be fun to see if a theme surfaces when you spin the Bible roulette wheel three times.

Every person wants to make a radical decision and give themselves away to something larger than themselves. We call this a person’s higher calling. It is part of our DNA and gives us a sense of purpose. People discover satisfaction when they find their higher calling. This could be a calling toward parenthood, military service, charitable work, ministry in the church, or simply using your talents to help that one person in need of your skills.



Affirmations of our call surface when people respond, “*you gave me just the thing I needed.*” When we sense a joyful exuberance bubble to the surface, a peaceful sensation of interior delight, and an interior calm that could withstand any storm - these are all affirmations that we are doing what God wants us to do. A certain excitement takes over and the human person flourishes.

I find it insightful to project thought experiments toward the future. Imagine you are lying on your deathbed tomorrow, any doubts? Any unfulfilled dreams? Any regrets? Imagine your eulogy and all your loved ones and friends gathered to weigh in on what type of person you were. What would your friends and family say about you? What do you want your friends and family to say about you?

If God truly desires the human person to flourish in life, and he does, then what can you do to bring about an abundant flourishing? Now with a farsighted vision of where you want to be, all you need to do is draw a map to get there. I have confidence that the Lord will ride shotgun and get you where you most need to go. Northward Ho!

***People discover satisfaction when they find their higher calling. This could be a calling toward parenthood, military service, Catholic charitable work, ministry in the church, or simply using your talents to help that one person in need of your skills.***

### Friar Jim Kent



How do I know what God is calling me to do?

I think it begins with discernment and ends with a leap of faith.

***We can never know what God wants us to do until we decide, take that first step, and begin to live with it.***

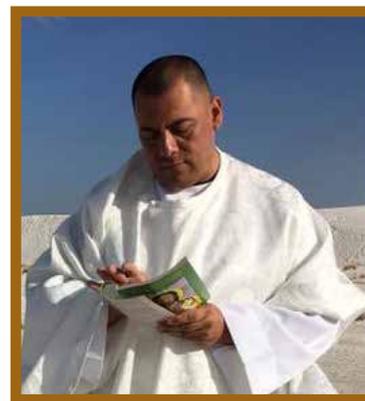
Discernment is a deliberate process that involves both internal and external elements. It begins by clarifying the choice(s) involved. Am I called to get married and to this particular person? Should I take a new job or make a career change? Should I get more involved in my parish? How am I to spend my years in retirement? Naming the matter at hand is crucial. Second, gather as much information and facts about the choice(s) you have. What would this entail, what would it expect or require? Third, pray about it. Take this before God in silence. You might do this in a church, in a quiet place in your home, or by taking a walk. Fourth, talk to family and friends, to those who know you and whose input you value. What do they say? What further insights or questions did they raise, what affirmations did they make? If the choice is still not clear, talk to an independent observer

or professional. This might include a mentor, pastor, or spiritual director. And after all these steps, take it back to your prayer.

Finally, no matter how certain or uncertain you may feel about your decision, a leap of faith is needed to act on that decision. Whether it was a long and arduous process, or a relatively easy one, there is still a chasm that needs to be crossed. We can never know what God wants us to do until we decide and take that first step and begin to live with it.



### Friar Andy Martinez



After being a priest for ten years, I stopped to reflect: when did I actually start knowing God was calling me for this way of life? I would even dare to say, how did I hear God's voice? Maybe this is a question several young people ask themselves because they want to be sure that God is truly asking them to follow as a priest, brother, or sister.

In my personal journey, I felt or heard God's voice through other people I was close to. In my high school



days I was involved in several parish ministries and I often heard comments from those closest to me that God was calling me to something different. At first I dismissed the comments as “if you say so,” but not giving it much thought. But I reached a point in my life when I had to sit and question myself was God trying to tell me something through those friends and mentors?

After several months or a full year of hearing this, praying, and asking a priest what God could be calling me to, I began to try and picture myself as a priest. Could I be a leader? Could I see myself in the place of the priest? And the answer was yes. My calling began with hearing God’s voice, but through others, in my friends and mentors.

As time went on and I discerned to join a seminary or religious life I realized God was not done speaking to me. Of course we run into challenges, and we might question if God is still calling us. Is God still speaking to me and wanting me to stay in formation and in the path of priesthood? The answer was yes but now the voice of God was speaking to me through my directors of formation when they challenged me but affirmed what I was doing. I had to get

rid of old habits and be open to new challenges to become a healthy individual who would be a mentor to others.

In reality God did not stop speaking me, but continues to do so. First it was through friends and mentors and later through directors in formation. God has not stopped calling me, speaking to me. **I often tell people that God never stops speaking to us - that many times the problem is that we aren’t listening. When and where does God speak? He speaks to us through others like friends, family, and mentors. God speaks to us when we learn to sit and be still. God speaks to us through scripture. God speaks to us through sacraments where we also receive God’s grace.**

Anyone who is discerning whether or not God is calling them to be a religious priest, brother, or sister should first learn to be open to what others are saying and then listen. It’s all about discovering God within ourselves and then discovering God in others and then discovering what God wants of us. God speaks, but let us always listen.



Photo by Friar Charles McCarthy: The door into the hogan church serving members of the Navajo Nation in Chinle, Arizona

## **An Invitation to Friendship**

**Continued from page 2**

experience and accept God’s merciful love, we are thrust into bearing witness of the teaching and footprints of Jesus Christ by the way we live in relationship with ourselves, others, and all of God’s creation.

Pope Francis, in his most recent Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and the Entire People of God, *Christ is Alive*, asks a series of questions inviting us to imagine that these questions are from our friend, Jesus. The Jesus who called his early disciples and St. Francis into a friendship is now calling you and me.

*“When seeking to discern our own vocation, there are certain questions we ought to ask. We should not start with wondering where we could make more money or achieve greater recognition and social status. Nor even by asking what kind of work would be most pleasing to us. If we are not to go astray, we need a different starting point. We need to ask: Do I know myself, quite apart from my illusions and emotions? Do I know what brings joy or sorrow to my heart? What are my strengths and weaknesses? These questions*

*immediately give rise to others: How can I serve people better and prove most helpful to our world and to the Church? What is my real place in this world? What can I offer to society? Even more realistic questions then follow: Do I have the abilities needed to offer this kind of service? Could I develop those abilities?”*

*“Then the most important question of all. So often in life, we waste time asking ourselves: ‘Who am I?’ You can keep asking, ‘Who am I?’ for the rest of your lives. But the real question is: ‘For whom am I?’ Of course, you are for God. But he has decided that you should also be for others, and he has given you many qualities, inclinations, gifts and charisms that are not for you, but to share with those around you.”*

I can’t wait to hear and see how you respond to this friendship! May it be in sharing your life with all, as God shares life and love with all.

## From a Place to a Home *On the Periphery* Continued from Page 3

Jesus walked among the 4th 3rd of his day – in the streets, highways and bi-ways. The disciples came from the 4th 3rd and didn't get Jesus' message until after the Resurrection. Becoming the apostles (i.e. the "sent"), they took Jesus' mission likewise to disenfranchised people. Missioners have done so since.

Francis of Assisi didn't fit in with the activity of his father, nor with the monastic route others chose in his day. When Francis encountered the Living Word in the reality of the Cross (i.e. at San Damiano and in the World), his eyes opened to see lepers. He left the door of the church behind to walk among the 4th, 5th and 6th 3rds. Francis came to know Jesus, the Incarnate One, at society's and the Church's peripheries.

Pope Francis challenges us as Franciscans, as well as all people of good will, to focus on the Word that becomes flesh all around us – within the community (outside as well in-house), with eyes open and ears attuned beyond the walls to a living presence "outside" the known and comfortable.

More than a mission to a specific linguistic, ethnic, national, or class of society, the Mission of the Church is to the periphery. We who gather as "Church" (both laypeople

and we religious) are challenged by Jesus, Creation, and the Gospel, to step out the door and breathe in the neighborhood!

To walk the periphery is to be transformed from having closed doors to being open doors: first the doors of our hearts, then of the buildings in which we live, move, and come to know our true being.

When I was asked to write something about ministry at the periphery, I came to realize that I have, over time, moved to the periphery. The periphery is often what is central to what I do: criminal justice ministry, serving at a soup kitchen or shelter now and again, opening the ears of people to hidden languages, honoring young people. Finally, it is setting importance on the worshipping community being a reflection of the entire community around them, working to grow the knowledge of those with whom I interact (the lesser and the movers-and-shakers).

Who is at the periphery? Everyone who I keep on the outside!!

Who are the oppressed? Those who cling so hard to what they will certainly lose!!



This is an illustration created by Eugene Burnand for a book titled **The Little Flowers of St. Francis** (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. London, 1919). Burnand set up a studio in Assisi to work on this project, taking advantage of the setting and the Umbrian light, and using local people for models to create his trademark realism.

We must never desire to be above others, but instead we must be servants and subject *to every human creature for God's sake.*

*And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon all those men and women who have done and persevered in these things and will make a home and dwelling place in them. And they will be children of the Heavenly Father, Whose works they do.*

St. Francis of Assisi  
*Later Admonition and Exhortation*

# Making a Gift from Your IRA



If you are 70 1/2 or older, the **IRA charitable rollover** provision of the Internal Revenue Code allows you to transfer directly from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) any amount up to \$100,000 in the aggregate annually to all qualified charities, including **The Province of Our Lady of Consolation**. *This gift counts against your required minimum distribution amount and is not subject to federal tax.*

## How do I make an IRA Charitable Rollover Gift to the Province of Our Lady of Consolation?

- Contact your IRA custodian to obtain the appropriate form to make an IRA charitable rollover. The form may refer to the rollover by its technical name, “qualified charitable distribution,” or QCD. If your IRA custodian requires you to submit your request by letter, please contact Shaunna Graf at [s.graf@franciscansusa.org](mailto:s.graf@franciscansusa.org) for a sample.
- On the form, specify the amount to be transferred to the Province of Our Lady of Consolation to receive and include our tax ID no. (35-6019627), if asked.
- The IRA plan custodian should make the check payable to The Province of Our Lady of Consolation and mail it to:

**The Province of Our Lady of Consolation**  
**Mission Advancement Office – Attn: Shaunna Graf**  
**103 St. Francis Blvd**  
**Mount St. Francis, IN 47146**

- Please instruct the IRA plan custodian to reference your name and address on the check; otherwise, it may be difficult to identify that you are the donor when the check arrives.
- If the IRA plan custodian makes the check payable to the Province of Our Lady of Consolation but mails the check to you, please mail the check with a cover letter to The Province of Our Lady of Consolation, Mission Advancement Office – Attn: Shaunna Graf, 103 St. Francis Blvd, Mount St. Francis, IN 47146

***Please let us know!*** Contact Shaunna Graf at 812-923-5250 or [s.graf@franciscansusa.org](mailto:s.graf@franciscansusa.org)

## Please pray for the intentions of those here, and for all your Franciscan family:

Holly Delohery  
Ms. Margaret Klempa  
The Klempa Family  
Frank and Angie Sartor  
Alan L Amann  
Barbara C Taylor  
Caroline Babbist  
Cuc Ngo  
Dan & Toni Senn  
David and Rita Kulik  
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