

their monetary gift before the Lord. Every liturgical action was accentuated with joyous song, rhythmic claps, and the sound of drums.

Preaching to such an animated congregation was a delight. Loud affirmations sounded from the pews as the message of the sermon unfolded. Chirps of assent, nods of affirmation, and smiles of encouragement accompanied the homily. At the end of the three-and-a-half-hour service, I received my first “negative” comment concerning my words. “Father,” an elderly woman said, “you only preached for forty-five minutes.” First time I have *ever* been told my homily was too short!

Perhaps the most memorable occasion of our trip occurred on our final day in Ghana. The bishop was blessing a Catholic school that had been built through the generosity of a Spanish charitable organization. The Spanish ambassador’s delegate, the local governmental officials, the Catholic hierarchy, and the honored guests from America (Fr. Leo and I) were all in attendance. Even the local television network was present for the opening. The tribal chieftains and the queen mothers with their colorfully dressed entourage were seated across from the podium. The parents of the children of the school were gathered, but the largest contingent of this august gathering consisted of the 250 children, ages five, six, and seven, who were to benefit from this newly constructed building. They were all properly groomed, neatly dressed, and well rehearsed in their English poems, recited to the delight of the crowd. Songs were sung, hands were clapped, and drums were sounded as all (yes, even Fr. Leo and the bishop) danced to the tribal tunes.

When all the formal presentations had come to a close and a light reception commenced, Fr. Leo was swarmed by the horde of little ones. Every child longed to run their fingers through his flowing grey beard. Although at first they were hesitant, once the first youngster braved the touch (and screamed!), the rest jumped into action. Fr. Leo was the hit of the party.

It was finally time for us to say our good-byes. It was a long trip to Accra, and we needed to be on our way. As we were finally shuttled into a waiting van and slowly putted away, Fr. Leo’s admiring fans began to clap and chant and dance once again. At this the Volta Friars began to chuckle with delight as the children sang in their native tongue. When we asked what was so funny, the brothers informed us that it was the words of the spontaneous chant. “What are they saying?” we inquired. The answer: “White man with big beard go bye-bye! White man with big beard go bye-bye!” I simply looked at Fr. Leo and said, “Nice farewell!”

When the Lord inspired our little way of life almost twenty years ago (April 1987), the founding friars imagined that they would be most likely a group of brothers drawn from and focused in their ministry to the New York metro area. Cardinal John O’Connor of New York graciously established us. Our present Archbishop, Cardinal Edward Egan, has continually encouraged us. The Archdiocese of New York has always been a generous support and a welcome home to us.

And yet today our fraternity has grown to over one hundred men who hail from eighteen different countries of origin. At present we are established in six (arch)dioceses in three countries on two continents. We have ten residences and hope to establish two more by next summer. We have fifteen postulants from six different countries and four different language groups. We have numerous invitations to consider new foundations in a number of states in the U.S.A., as well as several requests from other countries. What started locally has certainly taken on an international flavor.

The Church we embrace is truly catholic, that is, universal in nature. Brothers and sisters in the faith can be found in every country on every continent in every corner of the world. What had been entrusted to a few simple men from a backwater province of the Roman Empire two thousand years ago has spread to encompass the whole world. The simple and the great, the ignorant and the wise, the Westerner and the Easterner—all can find a home in our Church. It is a work of grace, a work of God, a miracle of our Lord at work among His people.

It is certainly a privilege from the Lord to our little community to reflect this catholic dimension of our faith. When Brother Francis (our first non-American brother) came to join our ranks from England more than ten years ago, there was no assurance that any Brit would follow. No promises were made to establish a friary in Great Britain. No expectations were given that he would one day be assigned to a friary in his homeland. Yet we now have two foundations in England and another planned for Ireland, and almost ten percent of the community comes from the United Kingdom.

How will it all unfold? We cannot say. But it is clear to us that Our Lord is at work. He is stirring the hearts of men and women throughout the world to work for renewal and the spread of the Gospel. Whether it is a visit to a small diocese in the rural plains of Ghana or a bustling metropolis like London, we have found innumerable men and women who eagerly desire to see the extension of the faith we profess. Bishops, priests, religious brothers and sisters, and generous laity everywhere are seeking to stir into flames the faith of our fathers. What Our Lord has entrusted to us is not for us alone. It is not for a small group of privileged elite. Our faith is a gift for all men and women of every time in every place. We need to be generous to share it. We need to be generous to receive it, even if it comes to us in a culturally distinct packaging.

The trip to Ghana this past summer was a gift. It was a cultural joy. It was an eye-opening and heartrending experience. It gave me a deeper appreciation of our faith, a deeper appreciation of our Church. But it also gave me a deeper appreciation (and expectation) of our community and the privilege we have received in the vocations of brothers from so many different lands. Praise God for our Catholic faith. Thank God for our INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR.



Two new books have been released to encourage you in your spiritual development. *Walk Humbly With Your God*, by Fr. Andrew Apostoli, gives us some helpful clues on how to pray better, overcome temptations, and have a greater trust in the Lord. *The Virtue Driven Life*, by Fr. Benedict Groeschel, demonstrates how the virtues are still in style if we are to have life in its fullness. Both of these insightful books can help to free us from the ego-driven life. They may be ordered from **Spiritual Books, PO Box 2003, Larchmont, NY 10538** or from our website: www.franciscanfriars.com.

“Sunday Night Live with Father Benedict Groeschel”

Tune in Sunday evenings at 7 PM (Eastern Standard Time) to EWTV’s live call-in show where Father Benedict takes calls, answers questions, and shares experiences with viewers.

- Convento San Serafin** 011-504-772-7998
Colonia Francisco Morazan, Comayagua, Honduras, CA
- Most Blessed Sacrament Friary** 973-622-6622
375 - 13th Avenue, Newark, NJ 07103
- St. Crispin Friary** 718-665-2441
420 East 156 Street, Bronx, NY 10455
- St. Fidelis Friary** 011-44-207-474-0766
Killip Close, London, E161LX, England
- St. Felix Friary** 914-476-7279
15 Trinity Plaza, Yonkers, New York 10701
- St. Joseph Friary** 212-234-9089
523 West 142 Street, New York, NY 10031
- St. Leopold Friary** 914-965-8143
259 Nepperhan Avenue, Yonkers, NY 10701
- Our Lady of the Angels Friary** 718-993-3405
427 East 155 Street, Bronx, NY 10455
- St. Pio Friary** 011-44-1274-721-989
Sedgefield Terrace, Westgate, Bradford, BD12RU, England
- San Juan Diego Residence** 505-764-3034
820 Broadway Blvd. S.E., Albuquerque, NM 87102
- Convent of Our Lady of Guadalupe** 718-547-9840
3537 Bainbridge Avenue, Bronx, NY 10467
- Convent of San Damiano** 718-829-9466
1661 Haight Avenue, Bronx, NY 10461
- Convent of St. Elizabeth** 718-293-9180
1027 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY 10452

(Kindly call between 9 AM - 5 PM and 7 PM - 9 PM)

YOUTH 2000 Retreats - 2007

Jan. 12 - 14	Crookston, MN
Jan. 12 - 14	Bronx, NY
Jan. 26 - 28	Midland, TX
Feb. 9 - 11	Hendersonville, TN
Feb. 23 - 25	Evansville, IN
March 2 - 4	Mountain Home, AR
March 23 - 25	Antioch, CA
March 23 - 25	Island Park, NY
April 13 - 15	Fort Worth, TX
April 20 - 22	Alexandria, VA
April 20 - 22	Middletown, NY
May 4 - 6	Chicago, IL
June 15 - 17	Atchison, KS

For more information on Youth 2000 in the New York area, call 718-349-1157. For all other Youth 2000 Retreats, call 214-361-2581.

CFR Parish Mission Schedule - 2007

Jan. 6-11	St. Gertrude	Bayville, NY
Feb. 24-Mar. 1	St. Jude	Blairstown, NJ
March 10-15	St. Rose of Lima	Short Hills, NJ
March 17-22	Holy Rosary	Bronx, NY
March 24-29	St. Charles	Staten Island, NY
April 21-26	St. Mary’s	Middletown, NJ
May 19-24	Our Lady of Fatima	Highland Lakes, NJ
June 2-7	St. Aloysius	Great Neck, NY

For more information, contact the mission office at 973-623-3307.

ETC.

Young men and women interested in discerning their call to our way of life may contact Fr. Luke Mary Fletcher at St. Joseph Friary at 212-281-4355 or Sr. Clare Matthiass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Convent at 718-547-9840.

For daily inspirational messages from the Friars and Sisters of the Renewal, as well as information about their life and apostolates, books, tapes, CD’s, and events hosted by the friars, including the “Catholic Underground,” visit the website: www.franciscanfriars.com.

Oratory of Divine Love: Fr. Benedict provides a weekly meditation on the internet for these meetings which are both instructional and prayerful. Visit the website at www.oratorydl.org.

...awaiting your visit!



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Gray Friar News

Franciscan Friars of the Renewal

Issue 35, Winter 2006

INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR
By Fr. Bernard Murphy, CFR

This past summer Fr. Leo and I had the privilege of traveling to Ghana, West Africa. At the invitation of the Bishop of Ho, His Excellency Francis A. K. Lodonu, we traveled to this distant land to work pastorally with a group of religious brothers, the Volta Friars. Our objective was to see how we might assist them in becoming more firmly established as a religious institute in the Franciscan tradition. What we experienced was an adventure we will not soon forget.

Travel of any sort these days is a bit of an adventure. Heightened security, overstuffed airplanes, understaffed airlines, long lines, and no food make any excursion a test of endurance. Make that jaunt international and you often have the added delight of new cultures, new languages, and often very new foods. Such was the case in Ghana, most definitely!

After eighteen hours of travel Fr. Leo and I were delighted to hear the announcement that we were soon landing at the International Airport of Accra, Ghana. However, the flight attendant went on to make a special announcement. The Ghanaian World Cup soccer team, the Black Stars, and their families were on board our flight (the team that eliminated the U.S. team from the World Cup competition). The flight attendant requested that the team stay on board until all the other passengers had disembarked, since there were a few fans and the local press present to greet the returning athletes. Passengers alighted fore and aft onto the airport tarmac. Fr. Leo and I had been seated in the middle of the aircraft. As fate (or God’s Providence) would have it, we were the last to leave the plane before the crowd would behold their heroes.

The assembled fans were close to twenty thousand strong. Drums were leading the rhythmic chants. Circles of natives danced to accompanying music. Colorfully arrayed national officials were diplomatically lined up to formally welcome home “their team.” Into this fever-pitch foray descended the monks—two long-robed, longer-bearded white men from America. It was too much for the crowd to reserve its greeting for “their team.” The crowd burst into welcome for this foreign surprise.

Immediately crowds started crying out greetings in their native tongue. Children (and adults) danced to chants of welcome. People cheered, the masses waved, and Fr. Leo simply remarked, “Nice welcome.”

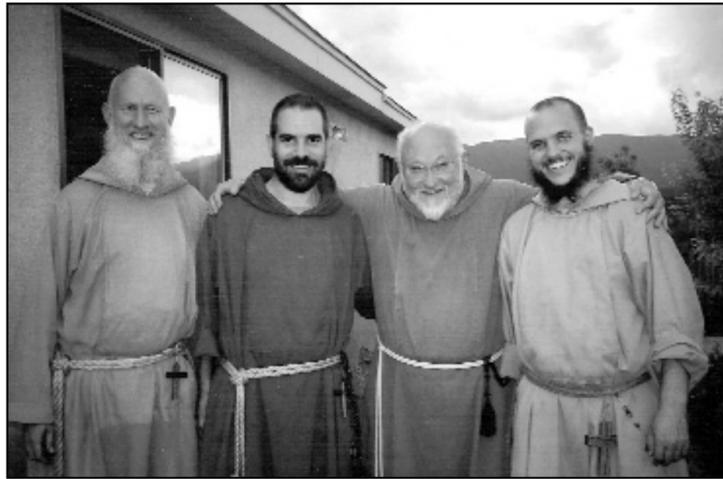
This began a week of tremendous grace as we found ourselves immersed in a generous welcome from all those we met. Food and drink and cultural dancers became a regular, if not daily, occurrence. Food fests of fufu and “bony fish” prevailed. Everyone expressed their delight at our presence and their desire that we might stay. The bishop, his household, the priests and

the laity, the well-off and the needy—all provided for our stay. Their hospitality was overwhelming!

On Sunday, I was invited by Bishop Francis to be the main celebrant and homilist at the Cathedral Mass. It was a celebration of heartfelt worship and exuberant singing. When the time of the offertory arrived, a long procession of fruits, vegetables, and other produce were carried to the sanctuary. Later the offerings would be distributed at the bishop’s discretion. The collection was not a simple basket pass. Each row of worshippers was invited to process forward (they actually danced to the altar) to place



Fr. Leo Joseph Fisher is the bearded guest of this enthusiastic group of children in Ghana. Fr. Bernard’s article relates their Spirit-filled adventure.



There is a new little plant growing in the Southwest. The number of friars at the San Juan Diego Residence in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has increased to the four you see here, namely, (l-r) Fr. Conrad Osterhout, Br. Daniel Marie Williamson, Fr. Robert Stanion, and Br. Bonaventure Mary Rummell. This area of the United States has a rich Franciscan history and the friars feel at home with the beautiful faith and simplicity of the people there.

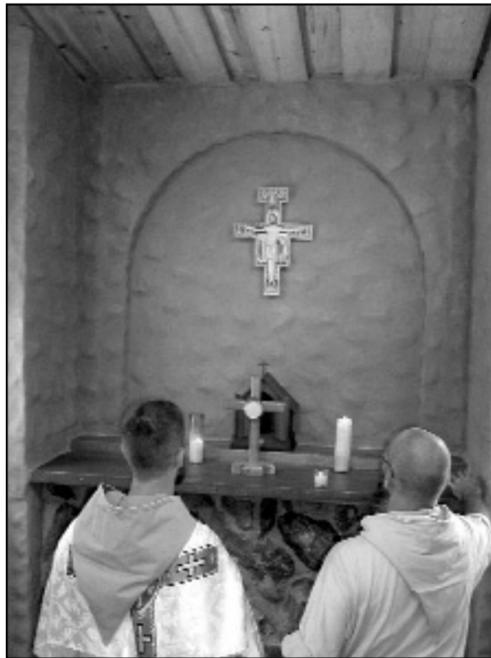
If Fr. Mariusz Casimir Koch isn't "entertaining angels," he is at least hosting men on retreat days at the newly restored chapel at Most Blessed Sacrament Friary in Newark. Formerly the extern chapel of a monastery of Dominican nuns, this chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels (for obvious reasons) is once again being used as a place of prayer and Adoration. Many visitors remark how it is an oasis of peace in an otherwise violent neighborhood. The restoration was made possible by a generous benefactor, the Friends of the Newark Monastery, and the talents of Br. Daniel and Br. Andrew who cleaned and re-painted the scene of adoring angels. Still under re-construction is one wing of the friary which will be used as a retreat area primarily for diocesan priests to enjoy some quiet time with the Lord.



More than a catchy title, this creative mix of Eucharistic Adoration, Confession, music, Catholic culture, and fellowship is catching a growing wave of interest. These monthly gatherings draw a large crowd at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church (and church basement—that's the "underground" part) in Manhattan and are also being held in Yardville, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Hempstead, New York; and very likely in other places soon. Performing in this photo are (l-r) Ana DaCosta and Susan Hookong-Taylor, our guest artists in November, along with Br. Louis Marie Leonelli and Br. Andrew Maria Corsini. Many friars join their God-given talents in this outreach of the new evangelization.



These types of bullet-proof vests are a little out of style in the South Bronx, but they still have an appropriate time and place there. That time is the annual "Live Nativity" play before Christmas in front of St. Crispin Friary. Saint Francis' re-enactment of the Bethlehem scene at Greccio began a popular tradition of Christmas creches and live nativity plays. Friars, Sisters, and Associates bring Bethlehem to the Bronx for the benefit of our neighbors. The kids delight in the sheep, horses, mule, and occasional camel that show up for the occasion. The three well-trained centurion friars pictured are (l-r) Br. Augustine Mary Conner, Br. Dominic Miriam Bormans, and Br. Mariano Joseph Demma.



The friars in Honduras recently blessed a new hermitage near our friary in Comayagua. They are very grateful to have a place to go for monthly days of solitude and prayer. This is required by the Constitutions of our community and goes back to the example of Saint Francis himself. Fr. John Anthony Boughton (left) and Br. Matteo Marie Dengler are shown in Eucharistic Adoration, another essential component of our way of life. Prayer keeps the fire burning for our service to the poor and evangelization. The friars make cultural and apostolic adjustments to serve the poor in the various places where the Lord has called us, but He meets us there in prayer and in His Body and Blood as the One "who is the same yesterday, today, and forever."



Early formation of the friars and sisters includes a class on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The friar postulants and sister candidates are shown here with Fr. Bob Quarato (center), a diocesan priest in the Bronx who has been graciously teaching this comprehensive and insightful class for a number of years. Fr. Quarato is representative of a number of diocesan priests whom we are privileged to work alongside of for a renewal of Catholic faith in its fullness. The Catechism is a great gift for integrating the Tradition of the Church from Scripture through the Second Vatican Council. As public witnesses in the Church, Friars and Sisters of the Renewal are often asked off-the-cuff to explain Church teachings. Along with the Catechism itself, Fr. Quarato is a gift to us to enable us to speak the truth in love.



"Signing their life away" is the appropriate expression when friars make their perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. There is a note of living martyrdom in the call to religious life, but it is a gift of self in freedom and joy because of the love that motivates it. The renunciation of temporal goods is paltry compared with the fullness of eternal life that the Lord promises to us. We bet everything on the Cross and Resurrection of Christ because it is true. The friars who made their life commitment this past summer are (l-r) Br. Louis Marie Leonelli, Br. Daniel Marie Williamson, Br. Nathanael Mary Lysinger, and Br. Columba Maria Jordan. All of these friars testified to the example of their parents' faithfulness to the married vocation which helped them to make a total and committed gift of themselves to the Lord.

Br. Emmanuel Osei (left) is one of three Volta Friars from Ghana who are currently at our novitiate friary in Newark for a time of Franciscan formation. Just as our friars who visited there experienced an "international flavor" distinct from our own (see Fr. Bernard's article), so these brothers are adapting to many new flavors here. Br. José Maria De Jesús (right), who worked previously for a catering company, is one of eleven novices who each add their own spice to the community. The experience of novitiate may be likened in some ways to being cooked(!), in order to purify one of the kind of self-assurance and self-will that could hinder a reliance on the Lord and His strength, and to see if one will blend well with the "community soup."



From the beginning of the Franciscan Order, lay people have prayed and worked together with friars and sisters in the footsteps of Saint Francis. CFR Lay Associates join us for monthly days of work, prayer, and fellowship and occasionally on retreats and pilgrimages as well. This photo shows Fr. Solanus Maria Benfatti (far left) and Br. John Paul Ouellette with a small group of Lay Associates from England on a pilgrimage to Assisi in October. They also visited Greccio, where Saint Francis preached during Midnight Mass in a cave and the local people who were present saw the baby Jesus appear in the "manger" Saint Francis had made. Lay Associates and Third Order members from New Jersey were also blessed by visiting these holy sites on a pilgrimage in September.

