



# Franciscan Friars Conventual

*Living an 800-year Tradition of  
Gospel Fraternity & Service*



# Franciscans

**L**ive with **simplicity**

**P**reach with **compassion**

**S**erve with **humility**

**A**dore the Lord **at all times!**





# Life of St. Francis



t. Francis was born in 1182 to a wealthy merchant family in the Italian town of Assisi.

While his early years were carefree and even frivolous, the depth of Francis' generous spirit drew many loyal and lifelong friends. Baptized "Giovanni," he was nicknamed "Francesco" (little Frenchman) by his father whose cloth business had prospered from trade in France.

Francis loved entertaining his family and friends with the music of the French troubadours, and to his great delight was dubbed the "king of song." However, civil strife ended the hapless days of Francis' youth as he joined the war against the neighboring city of Perugia. His dreams of glory and knighthood were immediately crushed as Francis was captured and held as a prisoner of war. Francis' body and spirit languished in a dank dungeon for over a year.

After he was ransomed by his father, Francis returned home but remained ill and disillusioned for a long time. He wandered aimlessly through the countryside, not knowing what direction his life should take.

Francis often knelt in a dilapidated church called San Damiano, just outside the city walls. He prayed fervently for a sign that would lead him out of his melancholy. Pleading in front of a painted crucifix, Francis heard the voice of the Crucified Christ speak to him. The Lord called to him saying,

*"Francis, Francis, repair my house, for as you can see, it is falling into ruin."*

Suddenly enlivened, Francis embarked on his mission and was soon joined by several of his friends. When they became a band of twelve, Francis and his companions went to Rome to seek official approval for their Gospel way of life. In 1209, Pope Innocent III personally granted this approval. Thus, the Order of Friars Minor or "lesser brothers" was born.



***Francis, Francis,  
repair my house,  
for as you can  
see, it is falling  
into ruin."***





## **"St. Francis Tavola"**

Commissioned by the Conventual friars in Assisi, 1994

Artist - Jennifer G. Holmes

# Conventual Franciscans

**F**rancis and his brothers would be a new light for a tired generation.

**They trusted in a better world yet to come but worked tirelessly to improve this one as well.**

**The friars' joyfulness was infectious, and their influence would have a far-reaching effect in every aspect of society.**

Over 800 years later, the Conventual Franciscans continue to live the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

The title “conventual” is from *convenire* (Latin) meaning “to come together.” The term was introduced by Saint Bonaventure in 1260 as friars started forming communities to minister together in urban centers and universities.

Known as “Friars of the Community,” we live together as brothers in Christ and follow the Gospel way of prayer and humble service.


From these friaries, Conventuals have charted the stars with Galileo, developed math theorems with Da Vinci, assisted in the design of St. Peter's Basilica, composed with Mozart, invented eyeglasses, and offered charity and consolation toward all!





# St. Bonaventure Province

## Midwest USA

ur Chicago-based, Province was established in 1939 to serve the Midwestern region of the United States. Today this includes Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, Michigan, Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado.

### Our Values

- Ongoing conversion of mind & heart to Christ
- Fraternal life in common
- Solidarity with the poor & marginalized
- Sanctification of society through beauty & culture
- Catholic response to the needs of our time

St. Francis' simplicity, love for the Eucharist, and devotion to the Virgin Mary remain at the heart of our Province. This solid Catholic foundation unifies the friars as we live our 800-year tradition of Gospel fraternity and deep love for Christ's Church.

Our Franciscan identity is further shaped by the life and mission of St. Maximilian Kolbe, our confrère who became a "Martyr of Charity" in Auschwitz concentration camp in 1941.

We strive to further his mission of evangelization by promoting Marian Consecration and expanding Catholic media to build up the "Culture of Life."



St. Maximilian Kolbe

# Conventual Franciscans

## in North America

### The United States

Although the friars had been missionaries to the East since the 13th century, by the late 15th century they were inspired to explore new worlds to the West.

Between the 1780's – 1850's, several individual Conventual friars ministered to German and Polish immigrants on the East Coast. In 1852, the friars were able to establish a permanent presence in North America. These dedicated men were given four parishes and twelve missions that extended westward to California and south to Mexico.

In 1854, the friars began ministering in New York state, starting in Brooklyn, and in 1872 established our first Province – the Immaculate Conception Province, headquartered in Syracuse.

From there was born Our Lady of the Angels Province (East Coast), Our Lady of Consolation Province (Lower Midwest & Southwest), St. Joseph of Cupertino Province (California), and St. Bonaventure Province (Upper Midwest).

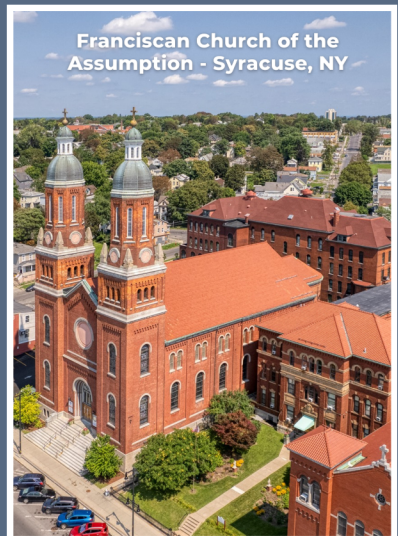
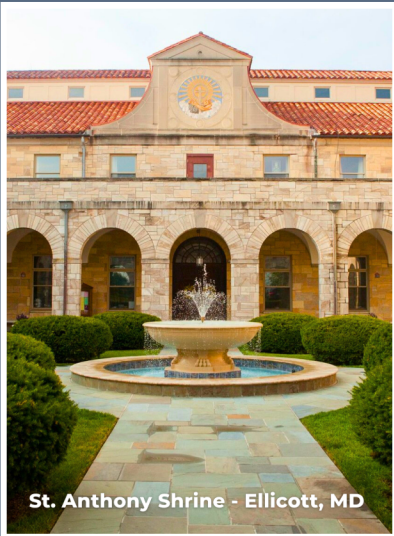
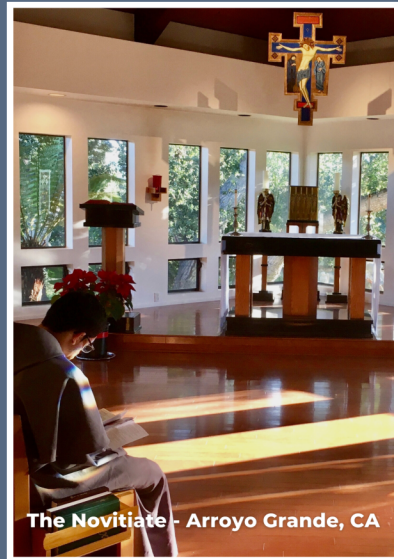
The American Conventuals helped to found a number of missions around the world including Brazil, Costa Rica, Zambia, Canada, Ghana, Mexico, and Australia.

### An Expansion of Franciscan Heritage

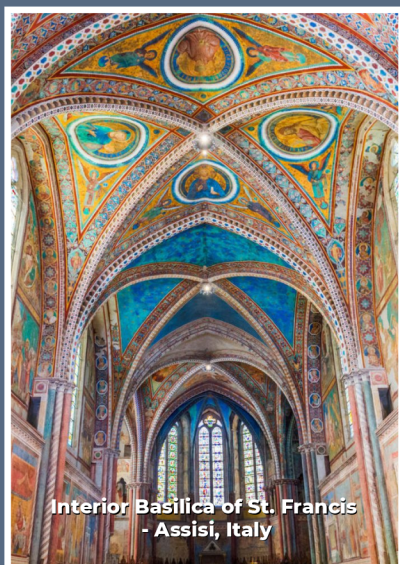
In the intervening years of continued immigration, the Great Depression, and World Wars, Conventual friars began ministering to people of all backgrounds. We have served in many capacities over the years including as...

- Teachers & administrators
- Military, university, prison & hospital chaplains
- Workers of printing presses & founders of publications
- Parochial sacramental ministers
- Pastoral counselors
- Directors of retreat centers
- Facilitators of direct services to the poor including in homeless shelters & soup kitchens





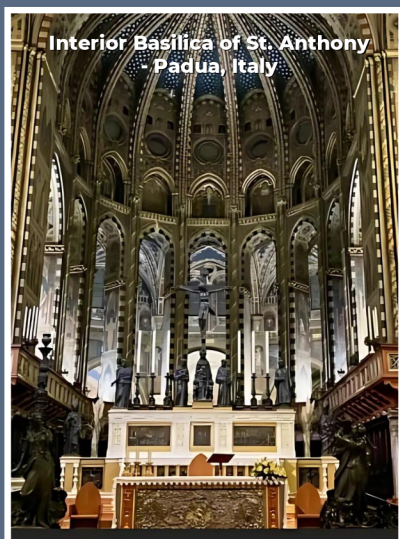
**Basilica of St. Francis  
- Assisi, Italy**



**Interior Basilica of St. Francis  
- Assisi, Italy**



**Basilica of St. Anthony  
- Padua, Italy**



**Interior Basilica of St. Anthony  
- Padua, Italy**



# Universal Presence

The Italian heart of the Order is centered in our continuous communal life and ministry at the 13th century basilica tombs of St. Francis in Assisi and St. Anthony in Padua. Going outward, our Conventual friars now serve in 67 countries on six continents.



# Francis never asked men to follow his way of life; it was his way of life that called men to follow him.

**F**or 800 years, the spiritual sons of Saint Francis have labored for the sanctification of human development around the world.

Each friar contributes to the mission of the Province by engaging his God-given talents. Teaching, preaching, nursing, administering sacraments, cooking, tailoring, and sharing musical or artistic skills are just some of the ways we build up the Kingdom of God. In all our endeavors, we strive to serve the most vulnerable members of society.

The work of the friars flows from the shared fraternal life in our Conventual friaries. We have friaries located at our Basilica of Saint Josaphat in Milwaukee and our Kolbe National Shrine and Retreat Center at Marytown in Libertyville, IL. The friars also live and work at friaries in Chicago and Wenona, IL, and Dearborn Heights, MI.

## Priests & Brothers

### Two Vocations: One Life in Common

- Both priests and brothers live an intensification of their baptismal consecration by professing the vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience.
- Both live a fraternal and common life.
- Both are attuned to the need of balancing their lives between work and prayer, action, and contemplation.
- Priests strive to model the transcendent Christ as preachers and leaders of worship. Brothers strive to model the imminent Christ in ministries of education, health care, and social services.



# How to Become a Franciscan

**Have you or someone you know felt the Lord calling you to a life of service, simplicity, fraternity, and joyfulness?**

Our friars are happy to meet and journey with men who are considering God's unfolding plan for them. The friars will encourage and guide the process of prayerful discernment.

Don't hesitate to contact us for more information.

## Vocation Director:

**friarvocations@franciscancommunity.org**

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### "Come and See"

Organized visits to our friaries and ministry sites.

### Application Process

The vocation director will assist you in completing the application.

## REQUIREMENTS

- Single, male age 18-40
- Practicing Catholic
- Must have received the Sacraments of initiation
- High school certificate
- Good health
- A desire to learn, serve, sacrifice, and share a common life

### Introduction | *Postulancy*

Normally a one-year immersion into the Franciscan way of life. Common prayer, in-house classes, outreach ministries, and regular participation in Franciscan events.

### Incorporation | *Novitiate*

After receiving the habit, the novice participates in "a year and a day" of deepening his understanding of his Franciscan vocation.

### Integration | *Post-Novitiate Priesthood Candidate*

Pursues studies as required for priestly ordination.

### *Brotherhood Candidate*

Pursues studies or attains experience appropriate for his focus of ministry.



If you are interested in the Conventual Franciscan way of life, please contact us:

**FranciscanCommunity.org**

**info@franciscancommunity.org**



**Franciscans of Saint  
Bonaventure Province**

**Friars Minor Conventual**

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Chicago, Illinois 60660

