

## **Is a monk a priest or a brother? And what is a friar?**

This is a much more involved question than it first appears. In general there are three states of life for members of the Church: clergy, religious, and laity.

The clergy consists of men who have been ordained, i.e. they have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. These are bishops, priests, and deacons.

Religious are men and women who profess the evangelical counsels (counsels of perfection). They take solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; or no money, no honey, no say. Women religious are called nuns or sisters. Men religious are called monks or friars depending on their religious order. Monks belong to orders such as the Benedictines, Trappists, and Carthusians and focus more on solitude and contemplation. Friars belong to orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Carmelites and focus more on preaching and public ministry.

Some monks and friars are also ordained to the priesthood and are addressed as *father*. They are called “order priests” in contrast to the “diocesan priests” who minister at most of our parishes. Order priests usually serve at retreat centers and monasteries. (Diocesan priests do not take a vow of poverty.) Friars and monks who are not ordained are commonly called *brothers*; friar comes from the French word *frère* which means brother. So in answer to the first question, a monk can be either a priest or a brother.

**Deacon Joe**