Father Francesco “Frank” Iacona is a parochial vicar at Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Ponte Vedra Beach. But before entering religious life, Father Frank was a teacher, lawyer and CPA for more than 25 years.

“After discerning the call to the priesthood, I chose the path of religious life because I wanted to live in a community that would affirm me in order to help bring out the best in me and also challenge and confront me when I might deceive myself and not be at my best,” Father Frank says.

Father Frank was born in 1947 in Montelepre, Sicily. In order to ensure a better future for their children, Father Frank’s parents moved the family to Canada when he was 8 years old, then to the United States four years later.

When he decided to enter religious life 20 years ago, Father Frank chose to join the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, or more commonly known as the Claretians.

He picked the Claretians, he says, because of their active ministry among the poor, something he witnessed first-hand during his time in the inner-city of Chicago, and later, Guatemala.

As a Claretian, Father Frank spends much of his time visiting the sick, working with parishioners by providing spiritual guidance, and celebrating daily Mass at his church and the accompanying grade school, Palmer Catholic Academy.

He also works with the Christ Renews His Parish (CHRP) ministry, serves as a chaplain at Gabriel House, a home for those awaiting or receiving organ transplants in the Mayo complex, and works with the homeless and victims of human trafficking.

Favorite book? “Love Poems from God, the Poetry of Twelve Mystics – Six from the East and Six from the West”

Who do you admire most? Pope Francis.

Favorite saint? St. Francis of Assisi.

Something about you that would surprise others? That I have a son, Steven, of whom I’m very proud. Not only has he donated one of his kidneys to a total stranger, and opened his home to those in need, he has dedicated his life to serve God, and hopes to be a missionary in Africa.

Thoughts on wearing a habit? Claretians tend to work side-by-side among the poor; our ‘habit’ is jeans or a suit, depending on whether the poor are hungry materially or spiritually, doing whatever is necessary to bridge the two.

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