

Part I

THE CONVENTUAL CHAPTER

I

INTRODUCTION

12. Together with liturgical prayer and common meals conventual Chapters, the gathering of all the friars of a community, is one of the mainstays of fraternal life.¹ Chapters make a reality of that presence the Lord promised to disciples gathered in his name (cf. *Mt* 18: 20); they are an expression of our communion of life.²

13. In every Chapter we pray that the Spirit will enlighten our fraternal dialogue, the decisions we must make according to the *Constitutions* and in the spirit of the Gospel and provide guidelines for our common life.³ At the end a Chapter we give thanks to God for the gifts granted us during this meeting that will help our fraternity grow.

14. It would be wise to set aside time in each Chapter for reflection on a passage of Sacred Scripture. The passage should correspond to the items on the Chapter agenda. The community will renew its life commitment in the light of the Word of God. The community will renew its obedience to that Word and will continue its service to God and to its neighbours.⁴

THE CHAPTER HALL

15. The conventual Chapter should meet regularly;⁵ communities that do not have a special Chapter room should designate a specific place to hold Chapters. The room should have a crucifix, the symbol of Christ's presence in the midst of the community, an image of Our Lady in a prominent place, the *Book of the Gospels* with a candle to be lit during Chapter meetings.

CELEBRATION FORMULAS

16. To assist communities in holding Chapters that fit the nature of the discussion or the items on the agenda, this Ritual is providing eleven possible formulas, each of which can be adapted to the needs the community and the items on its agenda:

1. Ordinary Conventual Chapter (II);
2. Conventual Chapter of Elections: the Prior is elected by the community (III);
3. Conventual Chapter to initiate the Prior's service after election by the community (IV);
4. Conventual Chapter to initiate the Prior's service after election by the Provincial or Vicarial Council (V);
5. Conventual Chapter for the election of house officials (VI);
6. Conventual Chapter for the admission of candidates to the Order (VII);
7. Conventual Chapter for the admission of candidates to Holy Orders (VIII);
8. Conventual Chapter for business and finance decisions (IX);
9. Conventual Chapter for review of and renewed commitment to fraternal communion (X);
10. Conventual Chapter for review of and renewed commitment to service (XI);
11. Conventual Chapter for the closure of the Canonical Visitation (XII).

¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 64.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 34.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 3, 6, 12, 24b, 31a, 80, 116.

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 37.

II

ORDINARY CONVENTUAL CHAPTER

17. This *Chapter Ritual* arranges the events of an ordinary meeting so that specifically legal acts alternate with appropriate ritual sequences.

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

18. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.*

PRAYER

19. After the Marian antiphon the Prior says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

20. The Prior then invites the friars to pray:

P. Let us pray.

Then:

In your loving kindness, Lord,
break the chains of our sinfulness.
Through the intercession of blessed Mary, Mother of God,
our Seven Holy Fathers,
your servant St. Philip
and all the saints,
assist and make holy
preserve from evil and fill with virtue
N., our pope,
N., our brother and Prior General,
our communities
and all our benefactors;
deliver our parents, relatives, and friends from evil
and fill them with every gift of life;
grant us peace and health;
drive far from us all enemies seen and unseen

and repel every sinful desire.
Give us wholesome air and fruitful soil;
free the world from hunger, war, and every disaster,
and protect this city (country, place) and all its inhabitants
from every misfortune.
Pour out your love
upon our friends and upon our enemies,
and grant eternal rest to all those departed in faith.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

21. Prayers for other events or occasions can be found in the Appendix 3.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

22. At this point a passage from Scripture (see Appendix 4) related to the items on the agenda is read. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the Prior will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

THE AGENDA

23. The minutes of the previous Chapter are then read and approved. Then, directed by the Prior, the community examines the items on the agenda.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

23. Once the items on the agenda have been discussed the friars will sing the *Salve Regina*, the *Servite Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

25. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.
All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.
All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

III

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER OF ELECTIONS PRIOR ELECTED BY THE COMMUNITY

26. According to the *Constitutions*: “The method for electing the Prior is determined by the *Directory*. For priories dependent on the Prior General, the method is determined by the General Council.”⁶ If the *Directory* says the prior is to be elected by the community the following procedure should be followed.

27. The eldest friar by profession (counting from first profession) shall preside at the Chapter.

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

28. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

PRAYER

29. After the Marian antiphon the friar presiding says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

CONCLUSION OF OUTGOING PRIOR’S MANDATE

30. If the outgoing prior is present he will say a few words to the community and then hand over the keys, seal of the priory or perform some other act (according to local custom) that marks the end of his mandate. The friar presiding will thank the outgoing prior for all he has done for the community.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

31. The passage suggested here – or some other appropriate passage (see Appendix 4) – is then read.

From the Acts of the Apostles 1: 15, 21-26.

During those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers (there was a group of about one hundred and twenty persons in the one place). He said, “it is necessary that one of the men who

⁶ Cf. *Const. OSM*, 200 c.

accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus came and went among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which he was taken up from us, become with us a witness to his resurrection.”

So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away to go to his own place.” Then they gave lots to them, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was counted with the eleven apostles.

32. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the friar presiding will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

ELECTION OF THE CONVENTUAL PRIOR

INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

33. The friar presiding at the Chapter then invites the community to call upon the Holy Spirit with these or other appropriate words:

P. Brothers,
let us ask God the Father, the Giver of everything good,
for the light of the Spirit
to show us
which brother he has designated
for the service of Prior in this community.

Everyone will pray in silence for a moment. Then the *Veni Creator* – or some other appropriate hymn – is intoned.

Veni Creátor Spiritus,
Mentes tuórum vísita;
Imple supérna grátia
Quae tu creásti péctora.

Qui díceris Paráclitus,
Donum Dei altíssimi,
Fons vivus, ignis cáritas,
Et spirítalis únctio.

Tu septifórmis múnere,
Dextrae Dei tu dígitus,
Tu rite promíssum Patris,
Sermóne ditans gúttura.

Accénde lumen sénsibus,
Infúnde amórem córdibus,
Infírma nostri córporis
Virtúte firmans pépeti.

Hostem repéllas lóngius,
pacémque dones prótinus;

Ductóre sic te praévio,
Vitémus omne nóxium.

Per te sciámus da Patrem,
Noscámus atque Fílium,
Te utriúsque Spíritum
Credámus omni témpore.

Deo Patri sit glória,
Et Fílio quia mórtuis,
Surréxit, ac Paráclito,
In saeculórum saécula. Amen.

BALLOTING

34. After the invocation of the Holy Spirit the friar presiding appoints two “*scrutatores*” to count the ballots.

35. Articles 43-50 and 197-200 of the *Constitutions* along with those articles of the *Directory* that treat of the Prior and his election are read.

36. After the reading the election of the conventual Prior takes place according to the norms laid out in the *Constitutions* and the *Directory*.

37. When a friar has sufficient votes to be elected Prior, the friar presiding will put the following question to him:

Brother *NN* Mary,
The Chapter has elected you the Prior of this community.
Do you accept this mandate of service and love?

The friar elected will answer with these or other appropriate words:

I accept,
trusting in the mercy of God
the protection of the Blessed Virgin, Our Lady,
and your collaboration.

38. If the friar elected does not accept the office the community will proceed to another vote.

39. Since the election of a Prior must be confirmed by the Prior or Vicar Provincial⁷ the Chapter concludes at this point – unless the Prior or Vicar Provincial is present at the Chapter⁸ in which case one follows the procedure described in nos. 49-53.

Together with the secretary the presiding friar will report the results of the election to the Prior or Vicar Provincial.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

40. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the *Servite Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 200a.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 224.

DISMISSAL

41. Then the presiding friar will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.

All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.

All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

IV

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER TO INITIATE THE PRIOR'S SERVICE AFTER ELECTION BY THE COMMUNITY

42. Until the newly elected and confirmed Prior has made the profession of faith according to the *Constitutions* and expressed his commitment to service, the Chapter is presided over by the eldest friar by profession (first profession).

43. The following objects should be at hand:

- the *Book of the Gospels*
- the Book of the *Constitutions*
- the keys of the Priory and the seal of the community or some other appropriate symbol of the Prior's mandate.

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

44. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

PRAYER

45. After the Marian antiphon the friar presiding says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

46. He then invites the friars to pray:

P. Let us pray.

Then:

Almighty Father, look kindly
upon our brother, *NN* Mary,
who has been elected the prior of our community:
may your grace
and the maternal protection of Our Lady
support him;
may the example of St. Augustine
and our Seven Holy Fathers
guide him;
and may our eager and loyal collaboration comfort him.

Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

LISTENTING TO THE WORD OF GOD

47. One of the two following passages (or some other appropriate passage) is read at this point.

From the Gospel According to Matthew 13: 8-11

At that time Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: do not be called ‘Rabbi’, You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Or:

From the Gospel According to John 13: 12-15

At the last supper when he had washed their feet (and) put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Master’, and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the Master and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do”.

48. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the friar presiding will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CONVENTUAL PRIOR

PROFESSION OF FAITH AND COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

49. The Chapter secretary reads the letter from the Prior or Vicar Provincial that confirms the election of the new Prior.

50. The presiding friar welcomes the new Prior and invites him to continue the Chapter. The newly elected Prior recites the Profession of Faith (See: Appendix, p. ???) in accordance with the *Constitutions*.⁹ He then places his hand on the *Book of the Gospels* and commits himself to carrying out faithfully his mandate with these or similar words.

I, Brother *NN* Mary, commit myself before God and you my brothers
to carry out the mandate of Prior,
I will obey the Word of God,
the Servite Constitutions and all Chapter decisions
in faithfulness to the Church and to the Order.

May the grace of God,
the intercession of Our Lady, our Saints,
and your charity, brothers, sustain my commitment.

⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 173.

He then kisses the *Book of the Gospels*.

51. From this point the new Prior presides at the Chapter. According to local custom he is given the keys of the priory, the community seal or some other symbol of his mandate. If he thinks it appropriate the new Prior will then address the community.

KISS OF PEACE

52. The Prior will exchange the kiss of peace with the friars. At the same time the following (or some other appropriate) anthem is sung:

United in the name of Christ,
we live in harmony in fraternal service,
with one voice we praise God.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

53. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the *Servite Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

54. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.

All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.

All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER
TO INITIATE THE PRIOR'S SERVICE
AFTER ELECTION BY THE PROVINCIAL OR VICARIAL COUNCIL

55. According to the *Constitutions*: “The method for electing the Prior is determined by the *Directory*. For priories dependent on the Prior General, the method is determined by the General Council.”¹⁰ If the *Directory* says the prior is to be elected by the Provincial or Vicarial Council the following procedure should be followed.

56. Until the newly elected Prior has made the profession of faith according to the *Constitutions* and expressed his commitment to service, the Chapter is presided over by the eldest friar by profession (first profession).

57. The following objects should be at hand:

- the *Book of the Gospels*
- the Book of the *Constitutions*
- the keys of the Priory and the seal of the community or some other appropriate symbol of the Prior's mandate.

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

58. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.*

59. After the Marian antiphon the presiding friar says:

*P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.*

CONCLUSION OF OUTGOING PRIOR'S MANDATE

60. If the outgoing prior is present he will say a few words to the community and then hand over the keys, seal of the priory or perform some other act (according to local custom) that marks the end of his mandate. The presiding friar will thank the outgoing prior for all he has done for the community.

PRAYER

61. He then invites the friars to pray:

P. Let us pray.

Then:

¹⁰ Cf. *Const. OSM*, 200 c.

We, friar Servants of Mary, ask you, Father,
to make us feel the presence
of Christ, your Son,
in our midst.
This was promised to all gathered in your name.
In the Spirit of truth and love
make us experience an abundance
of light, mercy and peace.
Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

ELECTION OF NEW PRIOR ANNOUNCED

62. The Chapter secretary then reads the letter from the Prior or Vicar Provincial that notifies the community of the election of the new Prior.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

63. The following passage (or some other appropriate one) is read at this point.

From the Second Letter of the Apostle Paul to Timothy 2: 15, 22b, 24

Be eager to present yourself as acceptable to God, a workman who causes no disgrace, imparting the word of truth without deviation. Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord with purity of heart. A slave of the Lord should not quarrel, but should be gentle with everyone, able to teach, tolerant, correcting opponents with kindness. It may be that God will grant them repentance that leads to knowledge of the truth.

64. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the friar presiding will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

PROFESSION OF FAITH AND COMMITMENT

65. The newly elected Prior recites the Profession of Faith (See: Appendix, p. ???) in accordance with the *Constitutions*.¹¹ He then places his hand on the *Book of the Gospels* and commits himself to carry out faithfully his mandate with these or similar words.

I, Brother *NN* Mary, commit myself before God and you my brothers
to carry out the mandate of Prior;
I will obey the Word of God,
the Servite Constitutions and all Chapter decisions
in faithfulness to the Church and to the Order.

May the grace of God,
the intercession of Our Lady, our Saints,
and your charity, brothers, sustain my commitment.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 173.

He then kisses the *Book of the Gospels*.

PRAYER FOR THE NEWLY ELECTED PRIOR

66. The community then prays for the newly elected Prior. The presider says:

P. Hear, Father, the prayer we are raising to you
for our brother, *NN* Mary,
who has been elected Prior of this community.
Look upon him kindly,
send your Spirit down upon him
and support him with your grace.
May he be recognized
as a leader by his wisdom
as a brother by his availability
and as a servant by his love.
Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

67. From this point the new Prior presides at the Chapter. According to local custom he is given the keys of the priory, the community seal or some other symbol of his mandate.
If he thinks it appropriate the new Prior will then address the community.

KISS OF PEACE

68. The Prior will exchange the kiss of peace with the friars. At the same time the following (or some other appropriate) anthem is sung:

United in the name of Christ,
we live in harmony in fraternal service,
with one voice we praise God.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

69. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the *Servite Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

70. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.
All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.

All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

VI

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER ELECTION OF HOUSE OFFICIALS

71. “Every community elects the number of officials necessary for the administrative needs of the priory; it specifies their duties and their term of office.”¹² The community itself determines the method for electing officials.

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

72. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

PRAYER

73. After the Marian antiphon the Prior says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

74. He then invites the friars to pray:

P. Let us pray.

Then:

Almighty Father, look kindly upon our community
we strive to serve you and our neighbour
by following in the footsteps of Christ
with the help of Our Lady’s maternal protection
and the example of St. Augustine and our Seven Holy Fathers.
Lord, help us to discern
which friars are pleasing to you
for the offices of our community
so that each friar’s service
strengthens our harmony
and builds fraternal communion.
Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

¹² Cf. *Ibid.*, 201 a.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

75. The following passage (or some other appropriate one) is read at this point.

From the Gospel according to Mark 10: 42-45

Jesus summoned them and said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

76. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the Prior will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

ELECTION OF COMMUNITY OFFICIALS

77. If he has not already been appointed the prior should at this point choose his vicar.¹³ The community then appoints its officials in accordance with the *Constitutions* and the *Directory*.

78. The Prior appoints two “*scrutatores*.”

79. Article 201a of the *Constitutions* and the articles of the *Directory* that treat of community officials are then read.

80. Once the reading is finished the election of officials is held.

81. The community officials elected will express their commitment to service with the following words:

We share our commitment to service
and will carry out this service
under the auspices of Mary, the Servant of the Lord,
in accordance with our *Constitutions*
in a spirit of fraternity
and in loyal collaboration with the Prior
and with respect for the decisions of the Chapter.
May the Lord support us with his grace.
All. Amen.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

82. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the *Servite Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

¹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 198.

83. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.
All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.
All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

VII

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER FOR THE ADMISSION OF CANDIDATES TO THE ORDER

84. According to the *Constitutions* a consultative vote of the conventual Chapter is required to admit candidates to the novitiate¹⁴, temporary profession¹⁵ and solemn profession.¹⁶

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

85. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

GREETING

86. After the Marian antiphon the Prior says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

87. The Prior reminds Chapter members of the importance of this Chapter with these or similar words:

P. This Chapter, my brothers,
is a community act of great importance.
We are called
to express our opinion on whether
candidate, *NN*, should continue on the path he has chosen,
a path of special commitment to following Christ.
Each Chapter member should therefore act
with a sense of responsibility,
leave his own feelings aside
and vote in a way that corresponds to his conscience -
his only criterion should be the good of the candidate and the Order.

PRAYER

88. He then invites to friars to pray:

¹⁴ Cf. *Const. OSM*, 196.

¹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 196, 140.

¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 196, 151.

P. Let us pray.

Then:

We lift our prayer up to God:
through the intercession of Mary,
Our glorious Lady
and of our saints, the brothers and sisters of the Servite Family
may we be granted the necessary discernment
and may our decisions conform to God's plan.

89. We then sing the first part of the *Servite Litany of Saints*:

Lord, have mercy.	Lord, have mercy.
Christ have mercy.	Christ have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.	Lord, have mercy.

Christ hear us.	Christ hear us.
Christ graciously hear us.	Christ graciously hear us.

Father, who art in heaven, Son, Redeemer of the world, Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, Holy Trinity, One God,	Have mercy on us.
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Holy Mary, Mother of God, Holy Mary, Servant of the Lord, Holy Mary, Sorrowful Mother, Holy Mary, Queen of your servants,	Pray for us.
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St. Joseph,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin,

St. John the Baptist,
Precursor of Christ,
Sts. Peter and Paul,
Glory of the Church of Rome,
St. Augustine,
Monastic lawgiver,

Seven First Fathers,
Holy Founders of our Order
St. Philip,
Model of our service,
St. Peregrine,
Example of patience and penance,
St. Anthony Mary,
Good shepherd of God's flock,

St. Juliana,
Mother and sister,
St. Clelia,

Least of the little ones,

Blessed James,
Defender of the poor,
Blessed Joachim,
Servant of the sick,
Blessed Andrew,
Austere and generous
Blessed Bonaventure of Pistoia
Servant of the Gospel and guide of saints,
Blessed Francis,
Meek and affable,
Blessed Ubaldus,
Faithful friend,
Blessed Thomas,
Simple and kind,
Blessed James Philip,
Devoted to the holy liturgy,
Blessed Bonaventure of Forli,
Preacher of the kingdom,
Blessed Benincasa,
Tireless hermit,
Blessed John Angel,
Contemplative and friend of children,
Blessed Ferdinand Baccilieri,
Founder and sharer of our service,

Blessed Joan,
Innocent and penitent,
Blessed Elizabeth,
Intercessor with Our Lady,
Blessed Maria Guadalupe,
Heroic witness to Christ,
Blessed Maria Maddalena Starace,
Compassionate mother,

All you brothers and sisters, saints,

Pray for us.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

90. The following passage (or some other appropriate one) is read at this point.

From the Acts of the Apostles 4: 32-35

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favour was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the

proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.

91. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the Prior will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE CANDIDATES

92. The Prior acts as a moderator and the Formation Master presents each candidate to the community which then casts its consultative vote.

CONCLUSION

INTERCESSION

93. The second part of the *Servite Litany of Saints* is sung or recited:

That all our friars
follow Christ generously
and observe the evangelical counsels,

We pray, hear us Lord.

That harmony
and common goals and aspirations
may remain alive in our midst,

That our Order
may give constant witness of love and service
to the Church and to the world,

That the Servite Family
may listen to the Word
and in its light promote justice and peace.

That men and women Servites
may always stand at the foot of Christ's cross
bringing relief and comfort to those who suffer,

That the Servite Family
may grow and expand
enriched with new members,

That in simplicity of life
we may nourish a love of wisdom
and a taste for the beautiful,

That the Order may always foster
devotion to our glorious Lady.

94. At the end of the litany the Prior says:

Graciously accept our prayers, O Lord,
And make *NN (Brother NN)* receptive to the voice of the Spirit,
and if it is your will
let him/them become (a) Friar Servant(s) of St. Mary,
(a) faithful disciple(s) of our first seven Fathers,
And our brother(s) in communion of life.
Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

95. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the Servite *Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

96. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.
All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.
All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

VIII

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER FOR THE ADMISSION OF CANDIDATES TO HOLY ORDERS

97. According to the *Constitutions* for ordination to the priesthood¹⁷ or diaconate a consultative vote is required from the Chapter of the community in which a candidate resides *de familia*.¹⁸

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

98. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

99. After the Marian antiphon the Prior says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

100. The Prior reminds the Chapter members of the importance of this Chapter with these or similar words:

P. This Chapter, my brothers,
is a community act of great importance.
Its purpose is to discern
The authenticity of our Brother, NN. Mary's special vocation
And whether he should be admitted to the diaconate (or priesthood).
These Orders will involve him in a special service to the Church.
Each Chapter member should therefore act
with a sense of responsibility,
leave his own feelings aside
and vote in a way that corresponds to his conscience -
his only criterion should be the good of the candidate, the Order and the Church.

101. Psalm 23 [22] is then sung followed by the appropriate psalm prayer; if the candidate is being admitted to the priesthood Psalm 110 [109] may be sung.

Ant. The Lord leads me to green pastures and safe waters.

Psalm 23 [22]
The Good Shepherd

¹⁷ Cf. *Const. OSM*, 169.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 196, 170.

The LORD is my shepherd *
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures *
where he gives me repose.

Near restful waters he leads me; *
he revives my soul.
He guides me along the right path, *
for the sake of his name.

Though I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death †
no evil would I fear, for you are with me. *
Your crook and your staff will give me comfort.

You have prepared a table before me *
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil; *
my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me *
all the days of my life.
In the LORD's own house shall I dwell *
for length of days unending.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son *
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now *
and will be forever. Amen.

Ant. The Lord leads me to green pastures and safe waters.

PRAYER

P. Let us pray.

Then:

O God, Shepherd of Israel,
who have led your Son along the paths of life
and do not cease to watch over your Church, your flock,
give us your spirit of wisdom and understanding
so we can discern the authenticity of our brother NN. Mary's
vocation to the diaconate (priesthood).
May your grace, O Lord, enlighten us
so that our free and responsible judgment
may help carry out your loving plan.
Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

102. Or in the case of candidates for the priesthood:

Ant. A priest forever is Christ the Lord.

Psalm 110 [109]
The priesthood of the Messiah

The LORD's revelation to my LORD: *
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your foes your footstool."

The LORD will send from Sion
your scepter of power: *
rule in the midst of your foes.

With you is princely rule
on the day of your power. *
In holy splendor, from the womb before the dawn,
I have begotten you.

The LORD has sworn an oath he will not change: *
"You are a priest forever,
in the line of Melchizedek."

The LORD, standing at your right, *
shatters kings in the day of his wrath.

He brings a judgment among the nations,
and heaps the bodies high; *
he shatters heads throughout the wide earth.

He shall drink from the stream by the wayside *
and therefore he shall lift up his head.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son *
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now *
and will be forever. Amen.

Ant. A priest forever is Christ the Lord.

P. Let us pray.

Then:

Almighty and eternal God
who has made Christ a king and a priest, the head of your Church,
give us the spirit of wisdom and understanding
so we can discern the authenticity of our brother NN. Mary's
vocation to the priesthood.
May your grace, O Lord, enlighten us
so that our free and responsible judgment
may help carry out your loving plan.
Through Christ, our Lord.

All. Amen.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

103. The following passage (or some other appropriate one) is read at this point.

* Admission of candidates for the diaconate:

From the First Letter of the Apostle Paul to Timothy 2: 8ab, 9-10, 13

My beloved: Similarly, deacons must be dignified, not deceitful, holding fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. Moreover, they should be tested first; then, if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. Thus those who serve well as deacons gain good standing and much confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

* Admission of candidates for the priesthood:

From the First Letter of the Apostle Peter 5: 1-4.

So I exhort the presbyters among you, as a fellow presbyter and witness to the sufferings of Christ and one who has a share in the glory to be revealed. Tend the flock of God in your midst, (overseeing) not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for shameful profit but eagerly. Do not lord it over those assigned to you, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

104. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the Prior will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE CANDIDATES

105. The Prior acts as a moderator and the Formation Master presents each candidate to the community which then casts its consultative vote on each.

CONCLUSION

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

106. The Prior invites the community to pray:

P. We ask the Lord
to raise up many holy vocations
in the Church and in the Order.
Let us say together:

R. *Send workers, Lord, into your vineyard.*

- For young people, they may be generous
and answer the call of the Spirit, we pray. R.

- For all disciples of Christ:
that they may listen to the Word of the Master
and carry it out every day, we pray. R.

- For all ministers
that they may grow more zealous
and win everyone over to Christ, we pray. R.

- For candidates for the diaconate:
that they may be merciful and energetic
in the service of charity and assistance, we pray. R.

- For candidates for the priesthood:
that they be Christ's presence
and teach the Word of life,
that they may continue to work signs and miracles of mercy
and go everywhere doing good, we pray. R.

Personal intentions.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

107. Then the Prior says:

P. We gather all our intentions together
and make our requests in the Lord's prayer
the Lord we are called to serve as humble workers.

All. Our Father who art in heaven
hallowed by thy name,
thy kingdom come
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

PRAYER

108. Then the Prior says:

P. Father, send new workers into the vineyard
who will follow the example Christ your Son
who came to serve and not be served;
make our brothers *NN*

tireless in their gift of self,
constant in prayer
joyful and welcoming in their service to the Community.
Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

MARIAN ANTIPHON

109. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the Servite *Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

110. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.
All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.
All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

IX

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER FOR BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL DECISIONS

111. “Aware that it is administering God’s gifts, the community will use what it possesses for the service of its own brothers, as well as for the needs of the province, the Order and the poor.”¹⁹

112. On the agenda of many Conventual Chapters there are financial and administrative items of moderate importance. These Chapters can follow the procedure of an ordinary conventual Chapter (nos. 17-25). If however financial or administrative agenda items are significant it would be better to use the following procedure.

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

113. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

PRAYER

114. After the Marian antiphon the Prior says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

115. The Prior then invites the friars to pray:

P. Let us pray.

Then:

God, our Father,
you have called us to follow Christ.
your poor and obedient servant
in fraternal communion,
help us place all our energy, ability, resources,
time and the fruit of our labour
at the service of the community and humankind
so that we may live in inner freedom
and the spirit of the Gospel beatitudes.
Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

¹⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 62.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

116. The following passage (or some other appropriate one) is read at this point.

From the Gospel according to Matthew 6: 19-21.

At that time Jesus said to his disciples: do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

117. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the Prior will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

118. With the Prior acting as moderator the Chapter will discuss thoughtfully the financial and administrative items on the agenda and make the appropriate decisions.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

119. After discussing all the items on the Chapter agenda the friars will sing the *Salve Regina*, the *Servite Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

120. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.
All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.
All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER
REVIEW AND RENEWED COMMITMENT
TO FRATERNAL COMMUNION

121. On our journey toward perfect charity, we fall and make mistakes because of human weakness. For this reason our relationships should reflect the Lord's admonition: "Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate; forgive and you will be forgiven."²⁰

122. "The community in Chapter also examines its fidelity to the gospel and the *Constitutions*. In particular, it examines the adequacy of its response to the needs of others, the Church and the Order, the authenticity of its witness and if its use of material goods reflects the spirit of poverty."²¹

123. For a Chapter of revision and renewed commitment to be successful there must be an atmosphere of mutual respect and fraternal confidence. The Prior must show sensitivity to and respect for what the brothers feel and think. When it comes time to reach a decision he must bring the discussion to a conclusion inspired by Gospel values. If need be he will postpone discussion of problems or agenda items to a later date if a clear consensus cannot be achieved.

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

124. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

125. After the Marian antiphon the Prior says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

126. Then the Prior addresses the community using these or similar words:

P. My dear brothers,
after Jesus ascended into heaven,
the apostles, disciples,
women and brethren of the Lord
who had followed him (not all) to the Cross
were together in the upper room.
Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was with them.
They were joined in fervent prayer
awaiting the coming of the Paraclete,
to determine their mission and how they would proclaim the Gospel.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 52.

²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 36.

Our community finds itself in a similar situation:
We too are in the upper room
with the presence of the Spirit and Our Lady;
with their help we prepare to review
the adequacy of our commitment
and the authenticity of our fraternal communion.

127. Psalm 25 [24], some other psalm or an appropriate hymn is sung;

Antiphon. God has called you to freedom!
Let yourself be led by his love
And you will live in tranquillity and peace.

Psalm 25 [24]: 4-11
Prayer in danger

O LORD, make me know your ways. *
Teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth, and teach me; †
for you are the God of my salvation. *
I have hoped in you all day long.

Remember your compassion, O LORD
and your merciful love, *
for they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth,
nor my transgressions. *
In your merciful love remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

Good and upright is the LORD; *
he shows the way to sinners.
He guides the humble in right judgment; *
to the humble he teaches his way.

All the LORD's paths are mercy and faithfulness *
for those who keep his covenant and commands.
O LORD, for the sake of your name, *
forgive my guilt, for it is great.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son *
And to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, *
Is now and will be forever. Amen.

Antiphon. God has called you to freedom!
Let yourself be led by his love
And you will live in tranquillity and peace.

REVIEW IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD

LISTENING TO THE WORD

128. The Prior proposes a subject for this review with these or similar words:

P. My brothers,
today, in light of the Word
and the laws of our life
we will review the authenticity of our fraternal communion
the foundation stone of the *Rule* of St. Augustine,
the spirituality of our Seven First Fathers
and our life as Servants of Mary.

129. Appropriate passages are read from Sacred Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, the Magisterium and the documents of the Order. Here is an example of the kind of thing we are talking about: passages from Scripture, the *Rule* of St. Augustine and our *Constitutions* read one after the other by one or more lectors.

I R. From the First Letter of the Apostle John 4: 7-8

Beloved,
let us love one another,
because love is of God;
everyone who loves
is begotten by God and knows God.
Whoever is without love does not know God,
for God is love.

From the *Rule* of St. Augustine no. 3

Before all else, live together in harmony, being of one mind and one heart on the way to God. For is it not precisely for this reason that you have come to live together?

From the *Constitutions OSM* no. 8

Our communities are formed of persons who have chosen the way of life of the Servants of Mary and want to live in fraternal communion and mutual esteem in order to achieve the perfect dignity and freedom of the children of God and dedicate themselves in love to the service of others.

130. The readings are followed by a period of silence or discussion.

131. Review continues with other readings from the same sources and in the same order:

2 R. From the First Letter of the Apostle John 4: 11-12

Beloved,
if God so loved us,
we also must love one another.
No one has ever seen God.
Yet, if we love one another,
God remains in us,
and his love is brought to perfection in us.

From the *Rule* of St. Augustine no. 9

You are all to live together, therefore, one in mind and one in heart,
and honour God in one another, because each of you has become his temple.

From the *Constitutions OSM* no. 10
We are loyal to the community
in good times and in bad.
Within community
we strive for brotherly friendship
by giving of ourselves
and accepting one another
with each one's talents and limitations.

132. The readings are followed by a period of silence or discussion.

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS

133. After listening to the Word the Prior, if he thinks it appropriate, will speak to the community and urge them to renew their life commitment. He will then say:

P. Against you alone, O Lord, have we sinned.

All. Wash away our faults with your love.

P. Forgive, O Lord, the sins we have committed
against fraternal communion.

All. Grant that we may be of one hear and one soul.

P. Purify and renew our community, O Lord.

All. Make it a faithful witness to your command of love.

P. Convert our heart, O Lord.

All. And give us peace.

P. Give us your Spirit of holiness and justice.

All. And we will rejoice in the joy of a renewed heart.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

134. Then the Prior says:

P. Let us recite the Lord's prayer
In which we ask God the Father
To forgive our sins
And we promise to forgive each other.

All. Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

P. Deliver us, Lord, from the evil of discord
and through your mercy
make our fraternal communion grow constantly
so that we can be like our First Fathers
united in one.

All. And give us your peace.

KISS OF PEACE

135. The Prior and the friars exchange the kiss of peace. At the same time they can sing the following antiphon or something similar:

United in the name of Christ,
we live in harmony in fraternal service,
with one voice we praise God.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

136. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the Servite *Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

137. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.

All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.

All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

XI

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER REVIEW AND RENEWED COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

138. Service is a constituent element of our Order's charism. The Constitutions see it as service to God, humankind,²² Our Lady,²³ the Church,²⁴ the community,²⁵ and our brothers in need.²⁶ It is therefore appropriate that the community periodically review the authenticity and quality of its service.

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

139. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

PRAYER

140. After the Marian antiphon the presiding friar says:

P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.

141. Then the Prior and the community will recite the following prayer:

P. Let us pray.

Then:

Look kindly, Lord, upon our family
that trusts in you,
as we celebrate
a special moment in our fraternal life:
a time when we meet to review our commitment to the Gospel.

All. Help us hear the voice of your Spirit
and receive your Word in faith;
renew within us ideals of true service,
love for your Church

²² Cf. *Const. OSM*, 1.

²³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 157.

²⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 14. 157b.

²⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 89.

and zeal for your kingdom.

P. Give us wisdom in discernment,
prudence in judgment,
firmness in decision,
and vision in planning.

All. May nothing hinder our true harmony
and may the diversity of views
be reflected in common goals.

P. Respecting our traditions
and attentive to the signs of the times,
may we act always with true concern
for the present and future of the Order.

All. May we be supported the motherly presence of the Virgin Mary
so that what we do may benefit
the Church and our Order
and so witness our love for you and all your people.
(We ask this) Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

REVIEW IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD

LISTENING TO THE WORD

142. The Prior proposes a subject for review with these or similar words:

P. My brothers,
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,
Moses, David and the Prophets
were servants of God;
and Jesus of Nazareth
was the most eminent of the Lord's servants.
Our Lady, Mary, was the Lord's humble servant.
The apostles were servants who followed their Master.
Our First Fathers were servants for love.
And following Gospel teaching
we too have promised to be servants.
Today, in the light of God's Word
and the rules of our life
we will review the authenticity
and evaluate the quality
of our service.

143. Appropriate passages are read from Sacred Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, the Magisterium and the documents of the Order. Here is an example: texts from Scripture, our *Constitutions* and the Chapter Document *Servants of the Magnificat* are read one after the other by one or more lectors.

I R. From the Gospel according to Matthew 20: 25-28

Jesus said to his disciples: You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

From the Servite Constitutions no. 1

Moved by the Spirit, we commit ourselves, as did our First Fathers, to witness the Gospel in fraternal communion and to be at the service of God and all the people, drawing abiding inspiration from Mary, Mother and Servant of the Lord.

From the 210th General Chapter document *Servants of the Magnificat* no. 100

Like their Lady, Servites cannot lie back and ignore the immense problems of our times. They must rather be ready to reach out sincerely and constructively to their brothers and sisters. They must do so without counting the cost (cf. *Mt* 10: 8) and be ready to serve those considered useless and weak in a society set on efficiency and power.

144. The readings are followed by a period of silence or discussion.

145. Review continues with other readings from the same sources and in the same order:

2 R. From the Gospel according to Luke 12: 35-38.

At that time Jesus said to his disciples: Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants.

From the Servite *Constitutions* no. 73.

Urged by the grace of baptism, the stirring of the Holy Spirit and our religious consecration, we Servants of Mary set out to live and witness Christian love. Desiring to express the charism of the Order, we give ourselves in service to others and so prolong the active presence of the Mother of Jesus in the history of salvation.

From the 210th General Chapter document *Servants of the Magnificat* no. 96

The Magnificat is the song of definitive, messianic liberation [...] The liberating power of the God of the exodus (cf. *Ex* 3: 19-22; *Dt* 26: 8; *Ps* 136: 12) came to action again, this time in Mary. [...] God always looks down and cares for those who count least (cf. *Ps* 102: 20f; 33: 18-19; 34: 16; 138: 6). God's preferential option for the poor runs through and characterizes all of salvation history.

The Blessed Virgin feels herself to be a most special object of this option. She, the "lowly handmaid," the Lord's poor one, the least of all, has become the first. She who was insignificant in the world's eyes has become the blessed one of all history: "from now on will all ages call me blessed" (*Lk* 1: 48).

Mary exults but she does not exalt herself. She does not proclaim herself liberator but liberated. God is the liberator. She is a servant, a servant of the Liberator par excellence, a servant in the sense of one who cooperates with God, an instrument in the liberation worked by God.

146. The readings are followed by a period of silence or discussion.

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS

147. After listening to the Word the Prior, if he thinks it appropriate, will speak to the community and urge them to renew their life commitment. He will then say:

P. God, forgive our negligence
in serving Our Lady and our brothers.

All. Make us careful and hard-working servants.

P. Purify and renew our community, O Lord.

All. Make it a faithful witness to your command of love.

P. Convert our heart, O Lord.

All. And give us peace.

P. Make us carry out our given tasks
with eager generosity.

All. So that your Son will find us awake and watchful
on his return.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

148. Then the Prior says:

P. Let us recite the Lord's prayer
in which we ask God the Father
that the Kingdom we serve may come
and his will be done.

All. Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

P. Deliver us, Lord, from the evil of selfishness
and through your mercy
give us the spirit of service:
service to you and humankind
service to Our Lady and the Church
service to the Word and to Life
mutual service in fraternal communion.

All. And give us your peace.

KISS OF PEACE

149. The Prior and the friars exchange the kiss of peace. At the same time they can sing the following antiphon or something similar:

United in the name of Christ,
we live in harmony in fraternal service,
with one voice we praise God.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

150. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the Servite *Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

151. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.
All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.
All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

XII

CONVENTUAL CHAPTER CLOSURE OF CANONICAL VISITATION

152. The purpose of the canonical visitation is to examine the community life and work of the friars and the administration of the priory. It should have a predominantly fraternal and spiritual character and conclude with a Conventual Chapter in which the problems brought to light are discussed with charity, firmness and moderation. Adequate documentation regarding the visitation should be kept in the archives of both the priory and the provincial curia.²⁷

153. The Prior Provincial accompanied by his Assistant (or some other friar)²⁸ shall carry out the canonical visitation at least once a year when it has not been carried out by the Prior General.²⁹
The time and manner of the visitation can be agreed upon with the community itself.
The prior provincial, for particular reasons, can delegate another friar to make the visitation.³⁰

OPENING THE CHAPTER

ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

154. The Chapter begins with singing the *Ave Maria* or some other Marian antiphon.

*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.*

155. After the Marian antiphon the Prior Provincial says:

*P. In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
All. Amen.*

PRAYER

156. The Prior Provincial then invites the friars to pray:

P. Let us pray.

Then:

*In your loving kindness, Lord,
break the chains of our sinfulness.
Through the intercession of blessed Mary, Mother of God,
our Seven Holy Fathers,
your servant St. Philip*

²⁷ Cf. *Const. OSM*, 227.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 226c.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 269.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 228.

and all the saints,
assist and make holy
preserve from evil and fill with virtue
N., our pope,
N., our brother and Prior General,
our communities
and all our benefactors;
deliver our parents, relatives, and friends from evil
and fill them with every gift of life;
grant us peace and health;
drive far from us all enemies seen and unseen
and repel every sinful desire.
Give us wholesome air and fruitful soil;
free the world from hunger, war, and every disaster,
and protect this city (country, place) and all its inhabitants
from every misfortune.
Pour out your love
upon our friends and upon our enemies,
and grant eternal rest to all those departed in faith.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

157. Or:

P. You have gathered us, Lord
so that together we might seek your will
in the light of Christ and of the Gospel.
May your Spirit of love and peace
foster in us the desire for what is true;
let us understand what you are asking of us
and help us understand it with speed and determination,
with one heart and one soul.
Through Christ, our Lord.
All. Amen.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

158. The following passage (or some other appropriate one) is read at this point.

From the Second Letter of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians 3: 9b-10, 12-17

You have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator.
Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

159. The reading is followed by a silent pause. Then, if opportune, the friar presiding will comment briefly on the text read and if appropriate on the *Constitutions*, or the friars might engage in a community discussion.

CLOSING THE CANONICAL VISITATION

CLOSING REPORT

160. At the close of the canonical visitation the Prior Provincial delivers a report That highlights the community's good and bad points and make suggestions for the community's improvement.

160. After his report the Prior Provincial should make himself available for questions from the friars. The friars should say what is on their mind and should engage in fraternal dialogue.

THANKS AND SUPPLICATION

162. At this point there is a prayer of thanksgiving and supplication. The Prior Provincial will say the following or similar words:

P. At the end of this visitation
let us turn with confidence to God the Father
the source of our vocation.
Let us thank him for the graces he has given us
and ask pardon for our negligence and weakness.

It would be good for two member of the community (*1 R, 2 R*) to recite the following invocations alternately:

1 R. To you be glory, Lord
you have made man out of dust
you have made him in your image
in spite of his weakness you have put him in charge of nature.

All. Blessed are you, Lord!

2 R. We are victims of our own pride
we have schemed for power and prestige.
Overlook our sin
and pardon us, Lord.

All. Have mercy on us.

1 R. To you be glory, Lord
we are the work of your hands
we belong to you
and only in you will our heart find rest.

All. Blessed are you, Lord!

2 R. We forget that you are
the source of living water
and quench our thirst
in pools of stagnant water:
forgive us Lord.

All. Have mercy on us.

1 R. To you be glory, Lord
in your goodness you have made your Son
our brother and our teacher.
He has revealed your boundless love
and the path of salvation.

All. Blessed are you, Lord!

2 R. We have been reluctant
to give up our selfishness
and follow as disciples
in your footsteps on the path of the cross:
forgive us Lord.

All. Have mercy on us.

1 R. To you be glory, Lord
You give the Spirit to the Church continually
it makes your Church a people of harmony,
a holy assembly,
devoted to prayer,
listening to the Word and breaking the bread.

All. Blessed are you, Lord!

2 R. But we ignore your gift
We are not eager to encounter the Word
nor are we fervent in celebrating the Divine Liturgy
we have let the seeds of discord
enter our heart
forgive us Lord.

All. Have mercy on us.

1 R. To you be glory, Lord
your Son came to serve, not to be served
and give his life for the salvation of humankind.

All. Blessed are you, Lord!

2 R. But we are tepid and neglect our brothers

we have rejected our commitment to serve,
our commitment to bear the burdens of others
to love not just in words
but in action and reality:
forgive us Lord.

All. Have mercy on us.

I R. To you be glory, Lord
you inspired our seven First Fathers
to sing your wonders
along with the Blessed Virgin Mary
and to serve you in our brothers.

All. Blessed are you, Lord!

2 R. But often we are self-absorbed
and slow to proclaim your praise
we do not hear songs of joy or cries of anguish
we are indifferent to renewal
we are lethargic when it comes to helping our brothers:
forgive us Lord.

All. Have mercy on us.

P. O Lord,
you are slow to anger and love abundantly
hear our prayer:
forgive our trespasses
and through your grace
strengthen our fraternal life and mutual service.
Through Christ, our Lord.

All. Amen.

Or:

Second text: Members of the community say together:

To you be glory, Lord
for in out of goodness
you have created us in your image and likeness;
we are your children, the work of your hands
the brothers of your Son Jesus,
the Spirit of holiness dwells within us
because you deign to look down on us from on high
and you have written our names on the palm of your hand.

To you, Lord, our thanksgiving.

Today we come before you
and seek pardon for our sins:
we have been hard of heart

and have committed offenses against fraternal life;
we have been slow to abandon selfishness
and follow Christ on the path of the Cross;
we have been lukewarm listening to the Word
and the voice of the Spirit.

Forgive us, Lord.

We have been reluctant to help the needy
and to bear each other's burdens;
we forget the example of our seven First Fathers
and are slow to serve Mary
our glorious Lady;
instead of protecting the integrity of the environment
we have damaged its beauty.

Forgive us, Lord.

Have mercy on us, Holy Father,
you who are slow to anger and abundant in love
through Christ in the Spirit who gives life. Amen.

KISS OF PEACE

163. The Prior Provincial says:

P. Let us exchange a kiss of peace and fraternity.

Meanwhile the following antiphon is sung:

How beautiful it is, Lord, to be together
to love each other as you love us
God is in our midst, alleluia!

Or:

Gathered in the name of Christ
we live in harmony in fraternal service
praising God with one voice.

Psalm 133 [132] or some other appropriate hymn.

Psalm 133 [132]
Joy of brotherly love

How good and how pleasant it is, *
where brothers live in unity!
It is like precious oil upon the head, †
 running down upon the beard,
 running down upon Aaron's beard *
upon the collar of his robes; *Antiphon*

Like dew of Hermon,
which runs down on the mountains of Sion. *
For there the LORD bestows his blessing:
life forever. *Antiphon*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son *
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now *
and ever shall be. Amen. *Antiphon*

PRAYER

164. Then the Prior says:

P. Let us pray.

Then:

O God, the friend of humankind
the abundance of your gifts far exceeds
anything we ask for
look with kindness on this community:
pour down upon it your Holy Spirit
make it quick to perceive your promptings
so that it may, like our seven blessed Fathers,
live joyfully in your service and service to our neighbour
with our eyes fixed on the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady.
All. Amen.

CONCLUSION

MARIAN ANTIPHON

165. The friars will then sing the *Salve Regina*, the Servite *Supplica* or some other antiphon appropriate to the season.

DISMISSAL

166. Then the Prior will bring the Chapter to a conclusion with one of the following phrases – or something else appropriate:

P. May Our Lady protect us
and guide us along the path of life.
All. Amen.

Or:

P. Nos cum Prole pia.
All. Benedicat dolorosa Virgo Maria.

Note: All Bible texts are taken from: The New American Bible <http://www.vatican.va/archives/>