

## Part II

# PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

## XIII

### INTRODUCTION

**167.** The Provincial Chapter, whether it is a Chapter of elections or an intervening Chapter, is a significant event in the life of the provincial community. It is an occasion for renewal and growth in fraternal communion. It is also a time for making plans, electing officials and taking care of business.

**168.** Liturgical prayer is an important part of the days devoted to a Chapter. The community celebration of Mass, lauds and vespers are at the very heart of Chapter liturgy. Special attention should be given to daily devotion to Our Lady.

**169.** Provincial Chapter liturgy provides an excellent occasion for:

- experimenting with the kind of ritual that is not always possible in local communities;
- celebrating votive Masses and offices in honour of Our Lady and the Servite Saints – to the extent liturgical norms allow;
- practicing the Servite devotions found in the two series: *Mariale Servorum* and *Laudemus viros gloriosos*;
- reviewing liturgical celebrations and liturgical outreach in the Province communities;
- giving each Chapter member a chance to perform his particular liturgical office: priest, deacon, acolyte, reader.

### THE CHAPTER MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LITURGY

**170.** The Provincial Council will appoint a friar with liturgical and organizational skills to be responsible for the Chapter liturgies. The appointment should be made a sufficient amount of time before the Chapter.

**171.** The friar responsible for the liturgy must discharge the following tasks: prepare all the items necessary (prayer sheets, etc); take charge of each day's liturgy; encourage all Chapter members to take an active part in the liturgy.

### CALENDAR

**172.** With the direction of the Provincial Council the friar responsible for the liturgy should set up a schedule (calendar) of the Chapter's liturgical celebrations. This schedule should take into account the General Roman Calendar (*Ordo*) and the Calendar of the local church.

**173.** Since the calendar is an instrument for celebrating the Christian Mysteries, when possible whole days should be devoted to specific subjects: the missions, vocations, prayers for our deceased confrères, commemorations of Our Lady and the Servite Saints.

### ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

**174.** The Province is a community of brothers and like any family it celebrates the anniversaries of its members. In some provinces it is the custom to celebrate anniversaries of religious significance: the 25<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> of profession and of Holy Orders: the 25<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> of ordination to the priesthood or diaconate. The celebration of these and other anniversaries linked to the life of the province provide an occasion to thank the Lord for his gifts and reinforce our fraternal communion,

### PENITENTIAL CELEBRATION

**175.** Since the Chapter is an occasion for reinforcing our fraternal communion it is also an ideal time for a penance service which could be held towards the end of the Chapter – possibly the evening before the closing day. Among the appropriate readings and rituals we might suggest *John* 13: 1-17 accompanied by a washing of feet or *John* 3: 1-21 with holy water sprinkling or a symbolic light ceremony.

## THE CHAPTER HALL

**176.** Over the centuries the Chapter Hall has assumed special importance in our Order. If there is no special room for the Chapter the place chosen for this purpose should be appropriate. The furnishings should be sober as befits a place for work and prayer. Traditionally there should be a crucifix in the room – a symbol of the Lord's presence in the midst of the friars -- and an image of Our Lady. The *Book of the Gospels* should be placed in a prominent place with a candle next to it. The candle will be lit during Chapter sessions.

## CELEBRATION FORMULARIES

**177.** This Ritual provides guidelines for three special moments in the Chapter:<sup>1</sup>

1. Opening liturgy (XV);
2. Confirmation and promise of Prior and Assistant Provincial and the Provincial Councillors (XVI);
3. Closing session liturgy (XVII).

## XIV

### OPENING LITURGY

**178.** The Provincial Chapter opens with the celebration of Mass; all Chapter members will attend. The Regulations that follow the Constitutions prescribe a votive Mass of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> The President of the Chapter presides at this Mass. When circumstances allow neighbourhood faithful, collaborators and friends of the Servites should be invited to the celebration.

## COMMEMORATION OF THE LIVING

**179.** At the *Memento* of the living during Mass members of the whole Servite Family (especially those who live in the province) should be mentioned along with friends and benefactors.

## COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD

**180.** If no other provision has been made for commemorating the dead during the Chapter (e.g. a special vigil) all those friars who have died since the last Chapter should be commemorated at the *Memento* of the dead during Mass.

---

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Const. OSM*, Regulation 15.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Const. OSM*, Regulations no. 1.

RITE OF CONFIRMATION AND THE PROMISE  
OF THE PRIOR PROVINCIAL, ASSISTANT PROVINCIAL  
AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILLORS

**181.** *Confirmation* is a legal act with which the Prior General or his delegate ratifies the elections of the Prior Provincial, the Assistant Provincial and the Provincial Councillors.<sup>3</sup>

**182.** The *Promise* is the act with which the Prior Provincial, the Assistant and the newly elected Provincial Councillors pledge to God and their confrères that they will carry out their mandate in the spirit of the Constitutions.<sup>4</sup>

**183.** The validity of Confirmation or the Promise does not depend on a specific formula or the ceremony in which they are performed but both these acts should be carried out in a religious or community context; they should be performed during a prayer service.<sup>5</sup>

**184.** The prayer service is a special moment in the Chapter proceedings; it should normally take place in the Chapter hall. It is a distinct rite.

**185.** If for valid reasons the Rite of Confirmation and the Promise takes place during Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours or the Vigil of Our Lady it should be after Proclamation of the Word of God (Mass) or after recitation of the psalms in the two other cases. If the Rite is celebrated during Mass, Office or the Vigil the appropriate modifications should be made so that prayers and acts are not repeated.

**186.** By its very nature this Rite is open to non-Chapter members: friars, sisters, friends.

**187.** In the event that the Confirmation or Promise of the Prior Provincial is separated from that of the Assistant or Provincial Councillors appropriate modifications should be made to the Rite.

**188.** The Prior General should preside at this service. He will be assisted by the Vicar of the Chapter or the Prior of the community where the Chapter is being held.

**189.** The Prior General, the assisting friar, the Prior Provincial, the Assistant and the newly elected Councillors should wear the Servite habit for this ceremony.

**190.** The *Book of the Gospels* and the *Constitutions* should be available in an appropriate place.

VICARIATE CHAPTER

**191.** The *Rite of Confirmation and the Promise* of the Prior Provincial, Assistant Provincial and Provincial Councillors can be used for the confirmation and promise of a Vicar Provincial and his Vicarial Councillors. The appropriate modifications should be made to the service. The Prior General or the Prior Provincial should preside at this service.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Const. OSM*, 211; Regulations, nos. 2, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, Regulations no. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, Regulations no. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Const. OSM*, 244a.

## OPENING THE CHAPTER

### ANTHEM TO OUR LADY

**193.** The friars gather in the Chapter hall and begin their celebration singing the *Ave Maria* or some other anthem to Our Lady:

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

### GREETING

**194.** After the anthem to Our Lady, the Prior General says:

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

**195.** He then addresses the following (or other similar) words to the members of the Chapter:

*P.* My brothers I wish you  
grace, mercy and peace from God, the Father,  
and from Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, Our Lady,  
and from the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life,  
to whom be honour and glory forever and ever.  
*All.* Amen.

### ANNOUNCING THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION

**196.** The Secretary of the Chapter reads a résumé of the acts of the election of the Prior Provincial, the Assistant Provincial and the Provincial Councillors.

### PRAYER

**197.** Once the results have been read the Prior General invites everyone to pray:

*P.* Let us pray.

After a moment of silent prayer and the Prior General recites the following (or other appropriate) words:

Look kindly, Lord,  
upon the family of Servants of Mary:  
grant that we may follow Christ with renewed commitment  
and with integrity give witness to your Holy Gospel.  
You who live and reign forever and ever.  
*All.* Amen.

## LISTENING TO THE WORD

**198.** One or two passages are read from Sacred Scripture (See Appendix 4), the *Rule* of St. Augustine (especially Chapter 5) or other Servite texts that describe governing as service to the brethren.

If there is more than one reading there should be a pause for silent reflection or an appropriate psalm or hymn between the passages.

**199.** After the readings the Prior General should deliver a homily.

**200.** The Confirmation-Promise of the Prior Provincial, the Assistant Provincial and the Provincial Councillors takes place in the context of *service – obedience – collaboration*. It is, therefore, fitting that a Province friar, a representative of the Vicariates and someone from the groups that work in the Province (Servite Sisters, the Secular Order, other lay movements) express their support and willingness to work with the newly elected officers of the Province.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE PRIOR PROVINCIAL AND HIS COUNCIL

### ACCEPTANCE, PROMISE, CONFIRMATION

**201.** The Prior General addresses the following (or similar) words to the newly elected Prior Provincial:

Brother ... Mary,  
the brethren have expressed their confidence  
and elected you the Prior of this Province.  
Do you accept this commitment of service and love?

The newly elected Prior Provincial accepts responsibility with these or similar words:

Trusting in the mercy of God  
And the protection of Mary, Our Lady.  
I accept.

All the friars present exclaim:

*All.* Thanks be to God!

They then make some appropriate sign of joy (applause).

**202.** The newly elected Prior Provincial then makes his profession of faith (see: Appendix ???) as the *Constitutions* prescribe;<sup>7</sup> he then places his hand on the *Book of the Gospels* and promises to carry out his new responsibility with religious commitment:

I, Brother ... Mary  
promise God and you, my brothers,  
to carry out the office of Prior Provincial  
in a spirit of brotherhood and service  
in obedience to the Word of God  
and our Constitutions.  
May the grace of God  
the intercession of Mary, our Saints  
and your charity, brothers, support this commitment.

He then kisses the *Book of the Gospels*.

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 173.

**203.** The Prior General gives the newly elected Prior Provincial a copy of the *Constitutions* and says:

*P.* I confirm you, Brother ... Mary,  
in this service,  
and I hope you will carry it out  
with the light of wisdom  
and the peace of the Spirit.  
*All.* Amen.

The Prior General then exchanges a sign of fraternal communion and peace with the newly elected Prior Provincial.

**204.** The General turns to the Assistant and newly elected Councillors and addresses them with these (or similar) words:

Brother ... Mary,  
the Chapter has elected you Assistant Provincial,  
and has elected you, Brothers ..., Councillors for the Province.  
Will you accept this responsibility  
to work together and advise?

The newly elected answer one by one:  
I accept.

Then the Assistant Provincial on behalf of and together with the Councillors recites these or other appropriate words:

We promise God and you, our brothers,  
to work together loyally  
with Brother ... Mary, the Prior Provincial,  
and pledge to carry out our service  
according to the letter and spirit of the *Constitutions*.  
*All.* Amen.

**205.** The Prior General then says the following or other appropriate words:

*P.* I confirm you, Brother ... Mary,  
in the office of Assistant Provincial  
and you, Brothers ... Mary  
in the office of Provincial Councillors.  
May the Lord grant you the grace of performing your offices  
with wisdom,  
a spirit of service to the brethren  
and cooperation with the Prior Provincial.  
*All.* Amen.

The Prior General exchanges a sign of fraternal communion and peace with the Assistant Provincial and newly elected Provincial Councillors.

#### PRAYER FOR THE NEWLY ELECTED

**206.** The Prior General invites everyone present to pray for the newly elected with these or other appropriate words:

*P.* Let us pause in silent prayer  
to ask the Lord's grace for our brothers ...  
who have been called to serve  
in governing our Province.

Everyone prays in silence for a few moments.

**207.** Then the Prior General says aloud:

*P.* O God, Merciful Father,  
who sent your Son to live among men  
and to bring them together in the Spirit with bonds of love  
and to lead them to obedience to your Law,  
grant that Brother ... Mary and Brothers ...  
who have been elected to lead our Province of ...  
will foster unity among the brethren.  
May their perseverance in prayer,  
common purpose and daily work  
enable them to live in observance of your commandments.

All the brothers of the Provincial Community continue together:

*All.* May their service  
be enlightened by your Spirit and Word,  
inspired by charity and the example of our Fathers  
and sustained by the maternal intercession of Our Lady.  
May their leadership help us  
live our consecration with greater intensity,  
follow in the footsteps of Christ more eagerly  
and strengthen our brotherhood day by day.  
We hope to support their commitment  
with responsive obedience  
and faithful collaboration  
and share their joys and concerns  
so that our Provincial Community  
united in love on earth  
may be re-created in glory in the kingdom.  
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

#### KISS OF PEACE

**208.** The Prior General then says:

*P.* Let us exchange a sign of brotherhood and peace.

In the meantime the following antiphon is sung:

How beautiful, O Lord, to live together  
and love each other as you love us;  
God is here, Alleluia!

Or:

Gathered in the name of Christ  
we live with one heart our fraternal service  
and proclaim with one voice our praise of God.

and then *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; [*Ant.*]

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

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. [*Ant.*]

## CONCLUSION

### PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

**209.** The meeting comes to an end with a prayer of intercession, e.g. *Pietate tua* or one of the alternative formulas found in the appendix (pp. ???).

*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.*

#### BLESSING

**210.** The Prior General then blesses the newly elected and everyone present with this or some other appropriate blessing:

*P.* Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin,  
our Seven Holy Fathers, St. Philip Benizi  
may the Blessing of Almighty God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit  
come down upon you and all your communities.  
*All. Amen.*

#### MARIAN ANTIPHON

**211.** Following Servite tradition the service concludes with the singing of the *Salve Regina*, the *Supplica dei Servi* or some other Marian antiphon appropriate to the liturgical season.

## XVI

### CLOSING SESSION

**212.** The President of the Chapter and the Presidential Board will consider prevailing circumstances and determine how the Closing Session will be celebrated. This session should take place in the context of a ritual (celebration of Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours or the Vigil of Our Lady). Experience teaches us that the service should be sober and brief.

**213.** Whatever form the Closing Session assumes there are certain structural elements that should always be present. These elements are described in greater detail in the section devoted to the General Chapter (cf. nos. 320-330):

- a *penitential rite* (if this has not already been performed); followed by *sprinkling with holy water*;
- a prayer of *renewed commitment* followed possibly by a *kiss of peace*;
- a prayer of *thanksgiving*;
- a *blessing*;
- a *Marian antiphon* followed by the *dismissal*.

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