

LAUDEMUS VIROS GLORIOSOS

1

# IN PRAISE OF OUR SEVEN FIRST FATHERS

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### PREFACE

*The celebration of the Jubilee Year of the Order is meant to be a memorial of our origins and the message of the first Servants. With this in mind the International Liturgy Commission (CLIOS) accepted the requests of many friars and sisters and prepared this celebrational aid In Praise of our Seven First Fathers. The General Council studied and approved the text on 1 October 1982.*

*In both its style and its structure this text is “celebrational.” It renders praise and thanksgiving to God the Father for his loving plan in which he chose seven lay Florentine merchants, mutual friends united in a common devotion to St. Mary, to begin the “Order of the blessed Virgin” (Legenda de origine Ordinis, 25). The text is a meditation on the spiritual journey of the Seven as they searched for God in a community of friendship and fraternity under the protection and guidance of the glorious Mother of Christ. Finally, the text seeks the intercession of the Seven Saints in a joyful and confident dialogue with these men, our fathers and brothers, our intercessors and friends.*

*But a true celebration is not limited to the time spent in prayer and commemoration. Since it touches the whole of a person’s being —intelligence, feelings, will— a celebration creates a certain tension within the “soul of the celebrant”: the “event celebrated” must in some way become part of the individual’s life. in this case, the “event” is the charism, the ideal, and the extraordinary call and response of the Seven in their life as Servants.*

*These three celebrations recall three particular aspects of the spiritual life of the Seven: their Constant orientation toward God and the radical following of Christ (I) which prompts us to ask them to teach us “how we can live... seeking only the Kingdom of God and its justice”; their witness of fraternal charity (II) which we hope to learn so “we can build a life together, united in heart and mind, in the home of our Father”; their service to the Virgin (III) which characterizes our vocation and leads us to imitate the actions and attitudes of the Lord’s humble Handmaid “making our lives a service of love to the Son of God and our brothers and sisters.”*

*In publishing this booklet In Praise of our Seven First Fathers the CLIOS hopes that its work might serve some friars and sisters as an occasion for a renewed response in love to our vocation as*

*Servants and a renewed commitment to the service of God, the Virgin, and our brothers and sisters.  
In this way, our life itself will become the true fraise of our Fathers.*

Fra Ignazio M. Calabuig, OSM  
President of the CLIOS

Roma, 28 November 1982  
First Sunday of Advent

## INTRODUCTION

### I. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CELEBRATIONS

1. The celebrations *In praise of our Seven First Fathers* are meant as an aid to the brothers, sisters, and friends of the Order of Servants of Mary who wish to better prepare themselves for the liturgical celebration of the Holy Founders (17 February) or who wish to remember them at other times during the year. They represent a type of “popular devotion” which takes its inspiration from the liturgy and is meant to lead the people to it (cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 13).

2. The three forms of celebration, while not part of the liturgy, have been prepared in accord with the structures and style of “liturgical celebrations.” As such, their correct interpretation will require a “spirit of celebration” and a respect for ritual action on the part of those responsible for the celebrations and those who participate.

3. The celebrations focus on God’s intervention in the life of the Seven Holy Fathers and their response to that call. The effects of that divine intervention are always present and touch us directly as Christians and as Servants of Mary. The Church honors them as “saints”: intercessors and models of evangelical life for the entire People of God. Within the Church, their charism of spiritual fatherhood continues in the creation of new “sons and daughters” in the Order which they founded.

4. Each of the three celebrations emphasizes a particular aspect of the charism of the Fathers: their pursuit of the Kingdom as disciples of Christ (I), their life of fraternal communion (II), their spirit of service (III).

5. Because of their very nature, these celebrations should not be included in liturgical actions (Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, etc. ); nor should they be used to substitute for the liturgy.

### II. PROPER CELEBRATION

6. Adequate preparation of the physical environment will contribute greatly to fruitful celebration. Particular attention should be given to the selection and placement of the image of the Seven Fathers, as well as any posters, banners, or other aids which may eventually be used to illustrate the theme of each particular celebration.

7. It is important that the plurality and distribution of roles be observed. The three celebrations involve the following persons:

*L.* Leader or person presiding. This can be a friar, a sister, or a lay person. If a presbyter or deacon presides, he may use ritual formulas proper to his ministry in the greeting, dismissal and other appropriate moments.

*R.* Reader for the proclamation of the readings. If the biblical readings suggested for the celebrations are used (n. 10), it will be necessary to have two (*R 1, R 2*) or three (*R 1, R 2, R 3*) readers.

*C.* Cantor for the singing of the responsorial psalms and the litany.

## A. Assembly.

The celebrations, as presented, do not foresee other ministries; individual assemblies may need more, and they should be entrusted to competent individuals.

**8.** The celebrational character of these devotions will require that a harmonious balance be maintained among the periods of song, proclamation of the word, prayer and silence. In the same way, the physical posture of the persons assembled (standing, sitting, etc.) should respect the nature of the various ritual moments.

**9.** The beginning and end of the celebrations might be emphasized with a procession.

### *Use of symbols*

**10.** The celebrations provide for the use of symbols such as light (n. 6) and incense (n. 18). These, or any other symbols which may be chosen, should be used with care and understanding.

### *Other celebrational aids*

**11.** The eventual use of slides will require a certain discretion in deciding on their number and subject matter. They might very well be used during the hymn (n. 6), as an introduction to the readings (nn. 8-10), or as an aid to reflection during the silent pause after the scripture reading (n. 12).

What should be avoided in all cases is that the slides become a distraction rather than a help to the assembly's attention to the content of the celebration.

## III. ADAPTATIONS OF THE CELEBRATION

**12.** Many parts of the celebrations can be adapted as needed (introductions, readings, prayers, etc.). In preparing the celebrations care should be taken that all elements respect the actual situation and needs of the particular assembly: education, lived historical situation, number of participants and similar factors. Any adaptations, however, should respect the essential content of the celebration as well as its ritual nature.

**13.** In small communities or groups, the structure of the celebrations could be simplified in the following way:

- greeting and introduction
- one reading only
- litany or prayer of thanksgiving
- dismissal.

### *Triduum of the Seven Holy Founders*

**14.** If the celebrations are used as a triduum in preparation for the solemnity of the Seven Fathers, they should take place on 13, 14, and 15 February, reserving 16 February for the solemn celebration of First Vespers.

The numbers which appear in the margin of the text refer to the suggested musical settings found in the appendix.

# I

## SEEKERS OF GOD AND DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

In monastic tradition penance and conversion consist in the radical and Constant orientation of the community and of the individual toward the newness of Christ and the choice of means to achieve that newness.

*Constitutions OSM, 70*

1. To facilitate full participation care should be taken to create a prayerful environment and to prepare the community for the celebration.

### I. INTRODUCTORY RITES

#### GREETING AND INTRODUCTION

2. The celebration begins with the singing of the angelic salutation.

Hail, Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Or:

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

3. The Leader greets all present with these or similar words:

*L.* The mercy of God our Father,  
the grace and peace of Jesus Christ,  
and the love of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all.

*A.* Blessed be God forever.

4. A Reader announces the theme of the celebration in these or similar words:

*R.* We have gathered together  
to prepare ourselves  
with prayer and reflection  
for the celebration of the feast

of the Seven Holy Founders.  
The Order of Servants of Mary  
honors them as Fathers  
but the entire People of God,  
meditating on the lives of these men,  
can find inspiration for a renewed  
commitment to Christian living.  
Having received a special call from God,  
the Seven Founders followed Christ  
in radical poverty:  
they left all for love of him  
and sought always to conform themselves  
to his example.  
In the solitude of Monte Senario  
they searched for God in prayer,  
but they were willing to leave their retreat  
to preach compassion and peace  
to their brothers and sisters.  
Today's celebration recalls  
the Seven Founders as disciples  
of the poor Christ  
searching for God in prayer  
while serving others.  
Their life represents, today as always,  
an abiding example of true Christian life.

#### PENITENTIAL RITE

5. If desired, the Leader invites those assembled to prepare themselves for the celebration with these or similar words:

*L.* My brothers and sisters,  
the Lord is present among us  
inviting us to conversion.  
He calls us to accept his promise of salvation,  
trust in his providence,  
and follow Christ on the way of the cross.  
Let us humbly confess  
those times when we were slow  
to accept the demands of the Gospel.

There follows a short period of private reflection.

*L.* Jesus said:  
You cannot be my disciples  
if you do not renounce all your possessions.

*R.* Forgive us, Lord,  
for our yearning for the goods of the world.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

*L.* Whoever loves father or mother,  
son or daughter, more than me  
is not worthy of me.

*R.* Forgive us, Lord,  
for our excessive attachment  
to family and friends.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

*L.* Whoever is not with me is against me,  
and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

*R.* Forgive us, Lord,  
for our indifference  
to the demands of the Gospel.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

*L.* One who does not take up the cross  
and come after me  
is not worthy of me.

*R.* Forgive us, Lord,  
for our unwillingness  
to follow your way of the cross.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

All bow their heads and make the sign of the cross as the Leader says:

*L.* May the Spirit of the Father and Son  
enlighten our minds and hearts  
and strengthen our commitment  
to live according to the Gospel.

*A.* Amen.

#### HYMN

6. The Leader lights a candle before the image of the Seven Founders or seven candles placed on or near the altar while a hymn is sung.

#### PRAYER

7. The Leader invites those present to prayer.

*L.* Let us pray.

There follows a brief period of private prayer.



L. God of mercy,  
you inspired the Seven Holy Founders  
with the will to follow Christ  
in radical poverty and humility.  
Through their intercession  
grant that we, too, walk always in your presence  
and remain faithful to the spirit of the Gospel  
and our Christian calling.  
Through Christ our Lord.

A. Amen.

## II. LISTENING TO THE WORD

### FIRST READING

8. The Reader goes to the lectern for the first reading, the following passage from the Chronicle of the Origin of the Order may be read, or another reading from the Fathers of the Church or other approved authors which treats of the search for God or the following of Christ.

R. From the Chronicle of the Origin of the Order of Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
(*Legenda de origine Ordinis*, nn. 30, 40, 41, 42, 43 passim: Monumenta OSM, I, pp. 84 ff.)

*They learned to serve God alone*

R. the first thing the seven men who began our Order had to do before they could be free to form a community of their own was to dispose of their properties and make arrangements for the members of their families. They knew that their first obligation was to justice. For themselves and their new venture they wanted absolutely nothing, so they gave their families what was needed and the rest went to the poor and to various churches.

They disposed of their expensive clothes, and for the first time they all dressed alike, in simple cloaks and tunics of grey cloth. They ate and drank little, in fact they limited themselves to what they absolutely needed. Chastity they observed perfectly, abhorring the demands of the flesh that could lead them to sin.

Their thoughts, words, feelings, deeds, all were controlled as they strove to find the mean between doing too much and not doing enough. They learned to please God and him alone during the long nights and days they spent in prayer.

The people had great respect for them. Seeing their well-balanced love for God, themselves and neighbor, both men and women visited them daily, seeking their help or looking for instruction in their words and example, asking of them prayers or spiritual direction. The seven gradually came to be disturbed over all this. Were they displeasing God? They felt that the time given to these visits and requests was keeping them from the contemplative type of life they had been looking for.

But the same God who had led them to form their community, to leave lands and family, and to be such an inspiration to the people, now inspired them with a single will to leave even their father's

house, that is, to withdraw from the secular environment. God looks after those who love him by instilling into them a desire for the very thing that is for their good. And so, now he heard the prayer of our founders. He not only moved them to want to go out to some quiet and secluded place but, like the provident Father he is, made evident the place itself and the means to take up residence there.

About eight miles out of Florence there is a mountain called Sonario — the name comes from the sonorous effect of the wind through its caves. It was this mountain that the Lord placed at the disposal of our fathers. They were to go up there, to live there, to fulfill there that wish of theirs for a life of solitude.

It was very appropriate, this Monte Sonario, as God's choice of dwelling place for our friars. the "sonorous" was significant too, because other friars of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary who came later, taking their lead from these seven men, were to arouse the whole world with their sound (by which we mean their words and example) and draw it to Christ. They were to be seen in the world as people who live the praise of God, singing out in their own day these timely words: "Come, O House of Israel, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

#### RESPONSORIAL PSALM

9. The Cantor may lead the assembly in the singing of a psalm or responsory, or there may be a period of silent reflection.

*Psalm 84 (83)*  
*Longing for God's Temple*

*Ant.* Behold, among men the dwelling place of God; they shall be his people and he shall be their Lord and God.

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
Lórd, Gód of hósts. *Ant.*

My sóul is lónging and yéarning,  
is yéarning for the cóurts of the Lórd.  
My héart and my sóul ring out their jóy  
to Gód, the líving Gód. *Ant.*

They are háppy, who dwéll in your hóuse,  
for éver sínging your práise.  
They are háppy, whose stréngth is in yóu,  
in whose héarts are the róads to Zíon. *Ant.*

For the Lord Gód is a rámpart, a shíeld;  
he will gíve us his fávour and glóry.  
The Lórd will not refúse any góod  
to thóse who wálk without blame. *Ant.*

#### SECOND READING

10. the second reading can be a biblical text describing the trust in God which is characteristic of Christ's disciples or the dispositions necessary if one is to follow Jesus. the example which follows is made up of a selection of related texts which can be proclaimed by two different Readers.

*R 1.* A reading from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the writings of the apostle Paul.  
(*Lk* 6: 20-22; 12: 22b-24, 29-30a, 31, 33-34; *1 Cor* 1: 26-29; *Phil* 4: 4-7; *Eph* 6: 10, 14-17; *Matt* 11: 25-26)

*Seek first the Kingdom of God*

*R 1.* Raising his eyes to his disciples,  
Jesus said:  
Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours.  
Blest are you who hunger; you shall be filled.  
Blest are you who are weeping; you shall laugh.  
Blest shall you be when men hate you,  
when they ostracize you and insult you  
and proscribe your name as evil  
because of the Son of Man.

*R 2.* Brothers and sisters, you are among those called.  
Consider your situation.  
Not many of you are wise, as men account wisdom;  
not many are influential;  
and surely not many are well-born.  
God chose those whom the world considers absurd  
to shame the wise;  
he singled out the weak of this world  
to shame the strong.  
He chose the world's lowborn and despised,  
those who count for nothing,  
to reduce to nothing those who were something;  
so that mankind can do no boasting before God.

*R 1.* Do not be concerned for your life,  
what you are to eat,  
or for your body, what you are to wear.  
Life is more important than food  
and the body more than clothing.  
Consider the ravens:  
they do not sow, they do not reap,  
they have neither cellar nor barn—  
yet God feeds them.  
How much more important you are than the birds!

*R 2.* Rejoice in the Lord always!  
I say it again. Rejoice!  
Everyone should see how unselfish you are.  
The Lord is near.  
Dismiss all anxiety from your minds.  
Present your needs to God in every form of prayer  
and in petitions full of gratitude.  
Then God's own peace,  
which is beyond all understanding,  
will stand guard over your hearts and minds,  
in Christ Jesus.

*R 1.* It is not for you to be in search  
of what you are to eat or drink.  
Stop worrying.  
The unbelievers of this world  
are always running after these things.  
Your Father knows that you need such things.  
Seek out instead his kingship over you  
and the rest will follow in turn.  
Sell what you have and give alms.  
Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out,  
a never-failing treasure with the Lord  
which no thief comes  
nor any moth destroys.  
Wherever your treasure lies,  
there your heart will be.

*R 2.* Draw your strength from the Lord  
and his mighty power.  
Stand fast,  
with the truth as the belt around your waist,  
justice as your breastplate,  
and zeal to propagate the gospel of peace  
as your footgear.  
In all circumstances  
hold faith up before you as your shield;  
it will help you extinguish  
the fiery darts of the evil one.  
Take the helmet of salvation  
and the sword of the spirit,  
the word of God.

*R 1.* Father, Lord of heaven and earth,  
to you I offer praise;  
for what you have hidden  
from the learned and the clever  
you have revealed to the merest children.  
Father, it is true.  
You have graciously willed it so.

**11.** After the reading, the following acclamation, or one similar may be sung.

To Christ, glory and power,  
Living Word of the Father. Amen.

#### MEDITATION ON THE WORD

**12.** After the acclamation there may be a period of silent reflection or the Leader may comment on the texts which have been read and the charism of the Seven Founders. If circumstances permit, this reflection could take the form of a fraternal dialogue.

### III. PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THANKSGIVING

13. The intercession of the Seven Holy Founders is invoked in either a litany (a) or a prayer addressed to them (b).

(a) LITANY

14. The Leader introduces the litany with these or similar words ;

*L.* Brothers and sisters,  
let us ask God's mercy  
through the intercession of the glorious Virgin,  
the saints,  
and the first Fathers of the Order of Servants.

15. The Cantor leads the assembly in singing the litany.

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

Christ, hear us.  
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father in heaven, have mercy on us.  
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,  
God the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,  
Holy Trinity one God,

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.  
Virgin Handmaid of the Lord,  
Virgin of sorrows,  
Queen of your servants,

St. Joseph,  
St. John the Baptist,  
Sts. Peter and Paul,  
St. Augustine,

Seven Holy Fathers,  
Founders of our Order,

Servants of the Word,  
Servants of holy Mary,  
Servants of your brothers,  
Servants of the poor,

Good servants,  
Faithful servants,  
Vigilant servants,  
Compassionate servants,

Seekers of God,  
Adorers of the Father,  
Disciples of the Son,  
Temples of the Spirit,

Men of solitude,  
Men of penance,  
Men of silence,  
Men of contemplation,

Messengers of the Gospel,  
Builders of the Kingdom,  
Models of friendship,  
Makers of peace.

16. The Leader concludes the litany with the following prayer, or one similar to it.

*L.* Lord,  
graciously bear the prayer of your Servants  
who trust in the richness of your mercy  
and the fatherly intercession  
of the Seven Founders.  
Through Christ our Lord.

*A.* Amen.

(b) PRAYER TO THE SEVEN FOUNDERS

17. Instead of the litany, the following prayer to the Seven Founders may be said. The Leader may introduce the prayer with these or similar words:

*L.* Brothers and sisters,  
let us pray for the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers  
whom God has given us  
as examples of Gospel living.

After a silent pause, the prayer is recited.

*L.* We turn to you,  
our first Fathers,  
as children, disciples and friends  
to learn from you  
how to be followers of Christ.

How, together, we can sing the praises of God  
and share the bread of life  
as children gathered at their father's table.  
How, in silence,  
we can hear the voice of the Spirit  
and in listening give words to our faith.

How we can live without attachment  
to clothing, food or home,  
seeking only the Kingdom of God  
and its justice.  
How living, suffering and dying for the Church,  
we can announce the Gospel of peace.

May your example remain with us  
and your prayer support us  
in the search for God  
and the service of Mary,  
today and all the days of our life.

A. Amen.

#### OFFERING OF INCENSE

18. After the litany or prayer, the Leader incenses the image of the Seven Founders or simply burns incense in a brazier placed on or near the altar. An antiphon such as the following may be sung.

One in Christ's name  
they were one in the service of others  
and the praise of God.

In place of this offering of incense any fitting ritual gesture may be substituted. For example, previously collected offerings for some charitable cause could be presented.

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

19. the Leader addresses God with the following prayer of thanksgiving.

*L.* Come, let us praise the Lord.

*A.* His mercy endures forever.

*L.* Let us bless his holy name.

*A.* He alone is our salvation.

*L.* We praise you, Father, and we bless you  
because in your mercy  
you raised up within the Church  
seven men of peace and friendship  
to be our fathers and brothers.

*A.* Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

You filled them with your gifts  
and called them to follow Christ.  
Seeking the pearl of great price,

they abandoned their trade and profits,  
their fields, their homes, and their families  
to become the fathers of a new line  
begotten not by blood but by the Holy Spirit.

A. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Joyfully they served your humble Handmaid:  
like her, they meditated on your Word,  
through her they received your mercy,  
with her they stood near the cross of Christ.

A. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers,  
grant us, Lord,  
a spirit of unity and service,  
a thirst for wisdom,  
and a desire for beauty.

A. Lord, listen to us.

Lord, open our eyes to your ways,  
fill our prayerful silence with your wisdom,  
in flame our hearts with your love,  
and guide us in serving others.

A. Lord, listen to us.

Lord,  
the vine you planted on your holy mountain  
has become the Order of Servants;  
grant it new vitality and strength  
in men and women of holiness and justice  
serving within your Church.

A. Lord, listen to us.

To you, Father and source of all life,  
through your Son, firstborn among the saints,  
and in the Holy Spirit who renews all things,  
all glory and honor  
forever and ever.

A. Amen.

#### IV. DISMISSAL

20. If possible, a Reader addresses all those assembled with these or similar words:



*R.* Our celebration does not end here  
but continues in our daily life  
where living the Gospel will mean  
renouncing all that is unnecessary,  
following Christ's rough and narrow way,  
and embracing the message of the Beatitudes.

If a presbyter or deacon has presided at the celebration, he says:

*L.* the Lord be with you.

*A.* And also with you.

*L.* May the God of love and fidelity  
guide us on our way  
until we achieve the perfect stature of Christ.

*A.* Amen.

A presbyter or deacon adds:

*L.* May the blessing of almighty God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
come upon you  
and remain with you always.

*A.* Amen.

**21.** The Leader dismisses the assembly.

*L.* Go in the peace of the Lord  
to live in the light of Christ's Gospel.

*A.* Thanks be to God.

**22.** Following the Order's tradition, the blessed Virgin is honored with the singing of the Salve Regina or another Marian hymn.

## II

### MODELS OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Our commitment of service,  
rooted in baptismal consecration  
and expressed in religious profession,  
is voluntarily undertaken  
in order to fulfill the commandment of love.

*Constitutions OSM, 2*

1. To facilitate full participation care should be taken to create a prayerful environment and to prepare the community for the celebration.

#### I. INTRODUCTORY RITES

##### GREETING AND INTRODUCTION

2. The celebration begins with the singing of the angelic salutation.

Hail, Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Or:

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

3. The Leader greets all present with these or similar words:

*L.* The mercy of God the Father,  
the grace and peace of Jesus Christ,  
and the love of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all.

*A.* Blessed be God forever.

4. A reader announces the theme of the celebration in these or similar words:

*R.* The life of the disciples of Christ

is one of love;  
its source is God who is love;  
its ultimate law is reciprocal charity;  
its only goal is perfect unity.  
The tradition of the Order tells us  
the Seven Founders took as their own  
the ideal of the early Church  
and were “of one heart and one mind”;  
in this they are an example  
of fraternal charity for the entire Church.  
This aspect of the life of the Founders,  
which reflects Christ’s  
timeless commandment of love,  
is the guiding theme of today’s celebration.

#### PENITENTIAL RITE

5. If desired, the Leader invites those assembled to prepare themselves for the celebration with these or similar words:

*L.* My brothers and sisters,  
calling to mind the words of the apostle John—  
“whoever does not love  
is among the living dead”—  
let us pass from death to life  
and confess before God  
our sins against the commandment of love.

There follows a short period of private reflection.

*L.* God, Father of mercy and pardon,  
source and fulfillment of love,  
have mercy on us.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

*L.* Christ, Son of God,  
our peace and reconciliation,  
our savior and our brother,  
have mercy on us.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

*L.* Holy Spirit of God,  
living flame of eternal love,  
cause of our unity and peace,  
have mercy on us.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

All bow their heads and make the sign of the cross as the Leader says:

*L.* May the Lord look kindly upon us,  
forgive us our offenses  
and renew within us our fraternal love.

*A.* Amen.

#### HYMN

6. The Leader lights a candle before the image of the Seven Founders or seven candles placed on or near the altar while a hymn is sung

#### PRAYER

7. The Leader invites those present to prayer.

*L.* Let us pray.

There follows a brief period of private prayer.

*L.* God, our Father,  
you fill our hearts  
with the spirit of your love.  
Through the intercession of our Seven Fathers,  
grant that we be of one heart and one mind  
within your Church  
so the world may believe  
we are disciples of your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
forever and ever.

*A.* Amen.

## II. LISTENING TO THE WORD

#### FIRST READING

8. The Reader goes to the lectern for the first reading. The following passage from the Chronicle of the Origin of the Order may be read, or another reading from the Fathers of the Church or other approved authors which treats of fraternal charity.

*R.* From the Chronicle of the Origin of the Order of Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
(*Legenda de origine Ordinis*, n. 29: Monumenta OSM, I, pp. 83-84)

*They were united through perfect friendship  
and the bonds of charity*

R. Each of these seven men was living separately in his own home in Florence, living so perfectly and religiously that our Lady thought it fitting to begin her Order with them. They did not even know each other, living as they did in different parts of the city. However, our Lady's providence was directing them, and the intentions that they gradually formed made it obvious that they should form some sort of group. It was their perfect friendship and love, this one first with that and then with others, and finally with the entire group, that brought them together.

Given that they were all already living the same high level of spiritual life, it was natural that they should become a group in friendship and love; even more so because they were soon to literally become a community to begin our Lady's Order. There is clear evidence that they were already one in perfect love: they agreed with each other willingly and lovingly on every issue both human and divine, which is the way God wants Christians to live.

But an even stronger proof is that they couldn't bear being away from each other, separated for even an hour, without feeling quite uneasy. They were first united interiorly in friendship, wanting to please one another in everything.

And then this same friendship gave them the strength to leave the world behind and forget all about it. It was friendship that made what had been a wish into a firm decision. It was friendship that made it possible for them to live together and rejoice now, not just in being one in spirit, but actually being together in a common life so that they could support each other by example and deed, and by what they said to one another. And one day they would be renewed, body and soul, in the glory of heaven with Christ; it was for love of him that they had been united in such an outstanding friendship.

#### RESPONSORIAL PSALM

9. The Cantor may lead the assembly in the singing of a psalm or responsory, or there may be a period of silent reflection.

*Psalm 132 (133)*  
The joy of fraternal love

*Ant.* "Where two or three are gathered in my name,"  
says the Lord, "there am I in the midst of them."

How good and how pleasant it is,  
when brothers live in unity! *Ant.*

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.*

It is like the dew of Hermon which falls  
on the heights of Zion.  
For there the Lord gives his blessing,  
life for ever. *Ant.*

#### SECOND READING

10. The second reading can be a biblical text on charity. The example which follows is made up of a selection of related texts which can be proclaimed by three different readers. If limits of time require it, the passages assigned to the third reader may be omitted.

*R 1.* A reading from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the writings of the apostle(s) John (and Paul).  
(*Jn* 15: 9-10, 12-13; 17: 11, 20-21; *1 Jn* 4: 7-8, 9-10, 11-12; *1 Cor* 13: 1-3, 4-7, 8, 13)

*Love one another*

*R 1.* As the Father has loved me,  
so I have loved you.  
Live on in my love.  
You will live in my love  
if you keep my commandments,  
even as I have kept my Father's commandments,  
and live in his love.

*R 2.* Beloved,  
let us love one another  
because love is of God;  
everyone who loves is begotten of God  
and has knowledge of God.  
The person without love has known nothing of God,  
for God is love.

*R 3.* If I speak with human tongues  
and angelic as well,  
but do not have love,  
I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal.  
If I have the gift of prophecy and,  
with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries,  
if I have faith great enough to move mountains,  
but have not love, I am nothing.  
If I give everything I have to feed the poor  
and hand over my body to be burned,  
but have not love,  
I gain nothing.

*R 1.* This is my commandment:  
love one another  
as I have loved you.  
There is no greater love than this :  
to lay down one's life for one's friends.

*R 2.* God's love was revealed in our midst in this way:  
he sent his only Son to the world  
that we might have life through him.  
Love, then, consists in this:  
not that we have loved God,  
but that he has loved us  
and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins.

*R 3.* Love is patient;  
love is kind.  
Love is not jealous,

it does not put on airs,  
it is not snobbish.  
Love is never rude,  
it is not self-seeking,  
it is not prone to anger;  
neither does it brood over injuries.  
Love does not rejoice in what is wrong  
but rejoices with the truth.  
There is no limit to love's forbearance,  
to its trust, its hope,  
its power to endure.

*R 1.* O Father most holy,  
protect them with your name  
which you have given me  
that they may be one, even as we are one.  
I do not pray for them alone.  
I pray also for those who will believe in me  
through their word,  
that all may be one  
as you, Father, are in me, and I in you;  
I pray that they may be one in us,  
that the world may believe that you sent me.

*R 2.* Beloved,  
if God has loved us so,  
we must have the same love for one another.  
No one has ever seen God.  
Yet if we love one another  
God dwells in us,  
and his love is brought to perfection in us.

*R 3.* Love never fails.  
Prophecies will cease,  
tongues will be silent,  
knowledge will pass away.  
There are in the end three things that last:  
faith, hope, and love,  
and the greatest of these is love.

**11.** After the reading the following acclamation, or one similar, may be sung.

To Christ, glory and power,  
Living Word of the Father. Amen.

#### MEDITATION ON THE WORD

**12.** After the acclamation there may be a period of silent reflection or the Leader may comment on the texts which have been read and the charism of the Seven Founders. If circumstances permit, this reflection could take the form of a fraternal dialogue.

### III. PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THANKSGIVING

13. The intercession of the Seven Holy Founders is invoked in either a litany (a) or a prayer addressed to them (b).

(a) LITANY

14. The Leader introduces the litany with these or similar words :

*L.* Brothers and sisters,  
let us ask God's mercy  
through the intercession of the glorious Virgin,  
the saints,  
and the first Fathers of the Order of Servants.

15. The Cantor leads the assembly in singing the litany.

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

Christ, hear us.  
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father in heaven, have mercy on us.  
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,  
God the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,  
Holy Trinity one God,  
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.  
Virgin Handmaid of the Lord,  
Virgin of sorrows,  
Queen of your servants,

St. Joseph,  
St. John the Baptist,  
Sts. Peter and Paul,  
St. Augustine,

Seven Holy Fathers,  
Founders of our Order,

Servants of the Word,  
Servants of holy Mary,  
Servants of your brothers,  
Servants of the poor,

Good servants,  
Faithful servants,  
Vigilant servants,  
Compassionate servants,

Seekers of God,



Adorers of the Father,  
Disciples of the Son,  
Temples of the Spirit,

Men of solitude,  
Men of penance,  
Men of silence,  
Men of contemplation,

Messengers of the Gospel,  
Builders of the Kingdom,  
Models of friendship,  
Makers of peace.

16. The Leader concludes the litany with the following prayer, or one similar to it.

*L.* Lord, you satisfy our every need  
with your abundant gifts.  
We your servants trust in your mercy  
and ask that you receive the prayers  
we offer through the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers.  
Through Christ our Lord.

*A.* Amen.

(b) PRAYER TO THE SEVEN FOUNDERS

17. Instead of the litany, the following prayer to the Seven Founders may be said. The Leader may introduce the prayer with these or similar words:

*L.* Brothers and sisters,  
let us pray for the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers  
whom God has given us  
as examples of Gospel living.

After a silent pause, the prayer is recited.

*L.* We turn to you,  
our first Fathers,  
as children, disciples and friends  
to learn from you  
how to be followers of Christ.

How we can love God above all things  
and spend our lives in the service of others.  
How we can respond to every offence with pardon  
and return good for the evil done to us.  
How we can help the needy,  
ease the pain of the afflicted,

and open our hearts in friendship.  
How we can build a life together,  
united in heart and mind,  
in the home of our Father.

May your example remain with us  
and your prayer support us  
in our life together  
and in our service of Mary,  
today and all the days of our life.

A. Amen.

#### OFFERING OF INCENSE

18. After the litany or prayer, the Leader may incense the image of the Seven Founders or simply burn incense in a brazier placed on or near the altar. An antiphon such as the following may be sung.

One in Christ's name  
they were one in the service of others  
and the praise of God.

In place of this offering of incense any fitting ritual gesture may be substituted. For example, previously collected offerings for some charitable cause could be presented.

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

19. The Leader addresses God with the following prayer of thanksgiving.

*L.* Come, let us praise the Lord.

A. His mercy endures forever.

*L.* Let us bless his holy name.

A. He alone is our salvation.

*L.* We praise you, Father, and we bless you  
because in your mercy  
you raised up within the Church  
seven men of peace and friendship  
to be our fathers and brothers.

A. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

You filled them with your gifts  
and called them to follow Christ.  
Seeking the pearl of great price,  
they abandoned their trade and profits,  
their fields, their homes, and their families

to become the fathers of a new line  
begotten not by blood but by the Holy Spirit.

A. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Joyfully they served your humble Handmaid:  
like her, they meditated on your Word,  
through her they received your mercy,  
with her they stood near the cross of Christ.

A. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers,  
grant us, Lord,  
a spirit of unity and service,  
a thirst for wisdom,  
and a desire for beauty.

A. Lord, listen to us.

Lord, open our eyes to your ways,  
fill our prayerful silence with your wisdom,  
in flame our hearts with your love,  
and guide us in serving others.

A. Lord, listen to us.

Lord,  
the vine you planted on your holy mountain  
has become the Order of Servants;  
grant it new vitality and strength  
in men and women of holiness and justice  
serving within your Church.

A. Lord, listen to us.

To you, Father and source of all life,  
through your Son, firstborn among the saints,  
and in the Holy Spirit who renews all things,  
all glory and honor  
forever and ever.

A. Amen.

#### IV. DISMISSAL

**20.** If possible, a reader addresses all those assembled with these or similar words:

*R.* Our celebration does not end here  
but continues in our daily life  
where our fraternal love must become  
aid to the poor,  
consolation to the afflicted  
and reconciliation with others.

If a presbyter or deacon has presided at the celebration, he says:

*L.* The Lord be with you.

*A.* And also with you.

*L.* May the God of love and mercy  
unite us in his love  
and grant us his peace.

*A.* Amen.

A presbyter or deacon adds:

*L.* May the blessing of almighty God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
come upon you  
and remain with you always.

*A.* Amen.

**21.** The Leader dismisses the assembly.

*L.* Go in the peace of the Lord  
to live in truth and love.

*A.* Thanks be to God.

**22.** Following the Order's tradition, the blessed Virgin is honored with the singing of the Salve Regina or another Marian hymn.

### III

## SERVANTS OF GOD, OF THE VIRGIN, OF OTHERS

In order to serve the Lord  
and their brothers and sisters,  
the Servants from their origins  
have dedicated themselves to the Mother of God,  
the Blessed One of the Most High.

*Constitutions OSM, 6*

1. To facilitate full participation care should be taken to create a prayerful environment and to prepare the community for the celebration.

### I. INTRODUCTORY RITES

#### GREETING AND INTRODUCTION

2. The celebration begins with the singing of the angelic salutation.

Hail, Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Or:

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

3. The Leader greets all present with these or similar words:

*L.* The mercy of God the Father,  
the grace and peace of Jesus Christ,  
and the love of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all.

A. Blessed be God forever.

4. A Reader announces the theme of the celebration in these or similar words:

*R.* In the lives of the Seven Founders

of the Servite Order  
the witness of fraternal love  
was joined to that of service:  
service to God,  
to the glorious Virgin,  
and to others.

Today's celebration recalls this aspect  
of the life of the first Fathers,  
which exemplifies the teaching of Christ  
who came among his disciples as one who serves.

#### PENITENTIAL RITE

5. If desired, the Leader invites those assembled to prepare themselves for the celebration with these or similar words:

*L.* My brothers and sisters,  
the example of Christ  
washing the feet of his disciples  
and Paul's exhortation  
to place ourselves at one another's service  
require us to examine sincerely  
our commitment to serve others.

There follows a short period of private reflection.

*R.* The needy asked our aid  
and we were slow to share with them  
our goods, our time, our education.

*L.* Lord, have mercy.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

*R.* We passed our brothers and sisters  
when they had fallen  
and did not stop to help.

*L.* Lord, have mercy.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

*R.* We have been asked for forgiveness  
but reluctant to respond.

*L.* Lord, have mercy.

*A.* Lord, have mercy.

All bow their heads and make the sign of the cross as the Leader says:

*L.* Lord, do not look upon our sins,

but let the kindness of your mercy  
overcome our infidelity  
and renew in us a spirit of service.

A. Amen.

#### HYMN

6. The Leader lights a candle before the image of the Seven Founders or seven candles placed on or near the altar while a hymn is sung.

#### PRAYER

7. The Leader invites those present to prayer.

*L.* Let us pray.

There follows a brief period of private prayer.

*L.* Lord,  
you are the glory of your Servants.  
As did our first Fathers,  
we pray that our service of prayer  
to the Virgin Mary  
find its fullest expression  
in our loving service to those in need.  
Through Christ our Lord.

A. Amen.

## II. LISTENING TO THE WORD

#### FIRST READING

8. The reader goes to the lectern for the first reading. the following passage from the Chronicle of the Origin of the Order may be read, or another reading from the Fathers of the Church or other approved authors which treats of service to the Virgin or other aspects of Christian service.

*R.* From the Chronicle of the Origin of the Order of  
Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
(*Legenda de origine Ordinis*, nn. 35, 17, 18, 38, 37 passim: Monumenta OSM, I, pp. 72 ff.)

*Serving God, the Virgin and others*

*R.* Our seven fathers loved God with their whole heart. In other words, he was the object of all their love. They were one in their total attachment to him and desired nothing outside of him. But they loved him too with their whole soul. This means that even their bodies and their awareness of the world of the senses around them were God-oriented.

His praise and his glory were behind their every feeling. To him alone they gave the credit for all their good works.

And finally they loved the Lord with their whole mind. All the powers of their intellect to research and discover were put at his service. He was the only teacher and master of whom they wanted to be disciples.

It was with joy and firmness that they dedicated themselves to the faithful service of God and our Lady. These men who had trafficked in worldly goods now turned their talents to the business of gaining soul; and to those already in union with God they taught the meaning of faithful service to the Lord and his mother. They became merchants of heavenly goods.

These seven men were not unaware of their own imperfections, which is precisely why they did the wise thing: in total devotion they humbly placed themselves and their hearts at the feet of the Queen of Heaven, the glorious Virgin Mary. It was she who would have to mediate for them and, in her abundant love, supply for their own deficiencies. It was for her to reconcile and commend them to her Son and, taking pity on them, win for them a wealth of merit. That is why from the moment they bound themselves to honor God through service of the Virgin Mary they wanted to be known as the Servants of St. Mary, and adopted a specific rule of life on the advice of prudent men.

Their love was for God, their own souls, their neighbor and themselves, in a perfect balance. They actively searched out the needs of their neighbor; being men of compassion, they provided whatever they could for the spiritually or physically underprivileged. A neighbor was like a brother or sister to them, so they abided by the rule to do to others as they would want done to them and forgave any offenses committed against them. They were sensitive to the spiritual condition of others, rejoicing with the just and commiserating with sinners; they affirmed the just in their goodness and brought the sinners back from the precipice of their misery.

#### RESPONSORIAL PSALM

9. The Cantor may lead the assembly in the singing of a psalm or responsory, or there may be a period of silent reflection.

#### *Psalm 123 (122)*

The Lord, unfailing hope of his people

*Ant.* To you, we your Servants, raise our eyes, O Lord.

To you have I lifted up my eyes,  
you who dwell in the heavens:  
my eyes, like the eyes of slaves  
on the hand of their lords. *Ant.*

Like the eyes of a servant  
on the hand of her mistress,  
so our eyes are on the Lord our God  
till he show us his mercy. *Ant.*

Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.  
We are filled with contempt.  
Indeed all too full is our soul  
with the scorn of the rich,  
with the proud man's disdain. *Ant.*



## SECOND READING

10. The second reading can be a biblical text describing Christian service. The example which follows is made up of a selection of related texts which can be proclaimed by three different readers. If limits of time require it, the passages assigned to the third reader may be omitted.

*R 1.* A reading from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the writings of the apostle(s) Paul (and Peter).  
(*Mt* 20: 25-28, 23: 8-12; *Jn* 13: 13-15; *Rm* 12: 11-13, 15-16; *Gal* 5: 13-14; *1 Pt* 1: 15-16, 3: 8-9, 4: 10-11)

*Place yourselves at one another's service*

*R 1.* Jesus said to his disciples:  
You know how those who exercise authority  
among the Gentiles lord it over them;  
their great ones making their importance felt.  
It cannot be like that with you.  
Anyone among you who aspires to greatness  
must serve the rest  
and whoever wants to rank first among you  
must serve the needs of all.  
Such is the case with the Son of Man  
who has come, not to be served by others,  
but to serve, to give his own life  
as a ransom for the many.

*R 2.* Brothers and sisters,  
do not grow slack but be fervent in spirit;  
he whom you serve is the Lord.  
Rejoice in hope,  
be patient under trial,  
persevere in prayer.  
Look on the needs of the saints as your own;  
be generous in offering hospitality.

*R 3.* You must silence the ignorant talk of foolish men by your good behavior.  
Live as free men and women,  
but do not use your freedom as a cloak for vice.  
In a word, live as servants of God.

*R 1.* Avoid the title 'Rabbi.'  
One among you is your teacher,  
the rest are learners.  
Do not call anyone on earth your father.  
Only one is your father,  
the One in heaven.  
Avoid being called teachers.  
Only one is your teacher, the Messiah.  
The greatest among you  
will be the one who serves the rest.  
Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled,  
but whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

*R 2.* Rejoice with those who rejoice,

weep with those who weep.  
Have the same attitude toward all.  
Put away ambitious thoughts  
and associate with those who are lowly.  
Do not be wise in your own estimation.

*R 3.* All of you should be like-minded, sympathetic,  
loving toward one another,  
kindly disposed, and humble.  
Do not return evil for evil  
or insult for insult.  
Return a blessing instead.  
This you have been called to do, that you may receive  
a blessing as your inheritance.

*R 1.* You address me as ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’  
and fittingly enough,  
for that is what I am.  
But if I washed your feet—  
I who am Teacher and Lord—  
then you must wash each other’s feet.  
What I did was to give you an example:  
as I have done, so you must do.

*R 2.* Out of love, place yourselves  
at one another’s service.  
The whole law has found its fulfillment  
in this one saying:  
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

*R 3.* As generous distributors  
of God’s manifold grace,  
put your gifts at the service of one another,  
each in the measure received.  
The one who speaks is to deliver God’s message.  
The one who serves  
is to do it with the strength provided by God.  
Thus, in all of you  
God is to be glorified  
through Jesus Christ.

11. After the reading the following acclamation, or one similar, may be sung.

To Christ, glory and power,  
Living Word of the Father. Amen.

#### MEDITATION ON THE WORD

12. After the acclamation there may be a period of silent reflection or the Leader may comment on the texts which have been read and the charism of the Seven Founders. If circumstances permit, this reflection could take the form of a fraternal dialogue.

## II. PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THANKSGIVING

13. The intercession of the Seven Holy Founders is invoked in either a litany (a) or a prayer addressed to them (b).

(a) LITANY

14. The Leader introduces the litany with these or similar words:

*L.* Brothers and sisters,  
let us ask God's mercy  
through the intercession of the glorious Virgin,  
the saints,  
and the first Fathers of the Order of Servants.

15. The Cantor leads the assembly in singing the litany.

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

Christ, hear us.  
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father in heaven, have mercy on us.  
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,  
God the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,  
Holy Trinity one God,

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.  
Virgin Handmaid of the Lord,  
Virgin of sorrows,  
Queen of your servants,

St. Joseph,  
St. John the Baptist,  
Sts. Peter and Paul,  
St. Augustine,

Seven Holy Fathers,  
Founders of our Order,  
Servants of the Word,  
Servants of holy Mary,  
Servants of your brothers,  
Servants of the poor,

Good servants,  
Faithful servants,  
Vigilant servants,  
Compassionate servants,

Seekers of God,  
Adorers of the Father,  
Disciples of the Son,  
Temples of the Spirit,

Men of solitude,  
Men of penance,  
Men of silence,  
Men of contemplation,

Messengers of the Gospel,  
Builders of the Kingdom,  
Models of friendship,  
Makers of peace.

16. The Leader concludes the litany with the following prayer, or one similar to it.

*L.* Father in heaven,  
you provide for the needs of all your children.  
Hear the prayers we offer today  
trusting in the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers.  
May we come to know the greatness of your mercy  
and the comfort of your consolation.  
Through Christ our Lord.

*A.* Amen.

#### (b) PRAYER TO THE SEVEN FOUNDERS

17. Instead of the litany, the following prayer to the Seven Founders may be said. the Leader may introduce the prayer with these or similar words :

*L.* Brothers and sisters,  
let us pray for the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers  
whom God has given us  
as examples of love and service.

After a silent pause, the prayer is recited.

*L.* We turn to you,  
our first Fathers,  
as children, disciples and friends  
to learn from you  
how to be followers of Christ.

How we can serve God in joy,  
with innocent hands and pure heart,  
ever vigilant night and day.

How we can serve Christ  
in following him to the cross  
to reign with him in glory.  
How we can be faithful to the command  
to bear one another's burdens  
and freely serve one another.  
How we can live like the Lord's humble Handmaid,  
making our lives  
a service of love to the Son of God  
and our brothers and sisters.

May your example  
of service to God and holy Mary  
remain with us  
and may your prayer support us,  
today and all the days of our life.

A. Amen.

#### OFFERING OF INCENSE

18. After the litany or prayer, the Leader may incense the image of the Seven Founders or simply burn incense in a brazier placed on or near the altar. An antiphon such as the following may be sung.

One in Christ's name  
they were one in the service of others  
and the praise of God.

In place of this offering of incense any fitting ritual gesture may be substituted. For example, previously collected offerings for some charitable cause could be presented.

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

19. The Leader addresses God with the following prayer of thanksgiving.

*L.* Come, let us praise the Lord.

*A.* His mercy endures forever.

*L.* Let us bless his holy name.

*A.* He alone is our salvation.

*L.* We praise you, Father, and we bless you  
because in your mercy  
you raised up within the Church  
seven men of peace and friendship  
to be our fathers and brothers.

*A.* Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

You filled them with your gifts  
and called them to follow Christ.  
Seeking the pearl of great price,  
they abandoned their trade and profits,  
their fields, their homes, and their families  
to become the fathers of a new line  
begotten not by blood but by the Holy Spirit.

A. Glory and fraise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Joyfully they served your humble Handmaid:  
like her, they meditated on your Word,  
through her they received your mercy,  
with her they stood near the cross of Christ.

A. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers,  
grant us, Lord,  
a spirit of unity and service,  
a thirst for wisdom,  
and a desire for beauty.

A. Lord, listen to us.

Lord, open our eyes to your ways,  
fill our prayerful silence with your wisdom,  
in flame our hearts with your love,  
and guide us in serving others.

A. Lord, listen to us.

Lord,  
the vine you planted on your holy mountain  
has become the Order of Servants;  
grant it new vitality and strength  
in men and women of holiness and justice  
serving within your Church.

A. Lord, listen to us.

To you, Father and source of all life,  
through your Son, firstborn among the saints,  
and in the Holy Spirit who renews all things,  
all glory and honor  
forever and ever.

A. Amen.

#### IV. DISMISSAL

20. If possible, Reader addresses all those assembled with these or similar words:

*R.* Our celebration does not end here  
but continues in our daily life  
where our service must be marked  
by humility of heart,  
solidarity with the poor and afflicted,  
active concern for our brothers and sisters.

If a presbyter or deacon has presided at the celebration, he says:

*L.* the Lord be with you.

*A.* And also with you.

*L.* May the God of all consolation  
who is the reward and crown of his servants,  
keep us always faithful in his service.

*A.* Amen.

A presbyter or deacon adds:

*L.* May the blessing of almighty God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
come upon you  
and remain with you always.

*A.* Amen.

21. The Leader dismisses the assembly.

*L.* Go in the peace of the Lord  
to serve one another in love.

*A.* Thanks be to God.

22. Following the Order's tradition, the blessed Virgin is honored with the singing of the Salve Regina or another Marian hymn.

## **SAINT ALEXIS, PATRON OF SERVITE STUDENTS**

For us Servants, following the example of our First Fathers and the tradition of the Order, penance consists above all in charity understood as service to one another and in the experience of community life lived with sincere and generous commitment.

*Constitutions OSM, 71*

Saint Alexis of Florence (+1310), one of the Seven Holy Founders of the Order of the Servants of Mary, was proclaimed patron of students in 1724 by the Prior General, Fra Sostegno Cavalli (+1747). This title was given him because his life was an example of faithful service, especially to the young friars, as can be seen from the *Ricordanze di S. Maria di Cafaggio*, and he contributed to the upkeep of the young friars sent to study at the Sorbonne University in Paris with the money given him as recompense for his service of begging and which he did not spend on himself.

1. Careful preparation of the physical environment will contribute greatly to fruitful celebration. An image of St. Alexis of Florence or the Seven Holy Founders in a suitable place and the use of other symbols such as incense and flowers can enhance the devotions of the people.

2. This celebration emphasizes the wisdom and mercy of God, who endowed St. Alexis with a desire for tireless service and great fidelity in following in the footsteps of his Son Jesus, Master and Lord.

3. Other aids for this celebration may include:

- flowers, to decorate the image of St. Alexis or the Seven Founders;
- a lamp;
- incense and a thurible or brazier;
- the people's offerings, collected beforehand, for a charitable purpose;
- the Bible or *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* or its *Compendium* or the *Ratio Studiorum* as symbols of Christian education.

### I. INTRODUCTORY RITES

4. Following the custom of the Servants of Mary, the celebration begins with the singing of the angelic salutation:

Hail, Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Or:

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

5. All make the sign of the cross while the Leader prays:

*L.* In the name of the Father



and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
A. Amen.

#### INTRODUCTION

6. A Reader or the Leader invites those assembled to prepare themselves for the celebration with these or similar words:

R. Today we remember with joy the figure of one of our Seven First Fathers,  
Saint Alexis (Falconieri) of Florence.  
He outlived his other six companion Founders of the Order  
and died in 1310,  
having lived to see the definitive approval of the Order (1304).  
Saint Alexis humbly recalled  
that neither he nor any of his companions had entertained  
the idea of founding a new Order  
but came together under divine inspiration  
so as to fulfil the Lord's will better and more easily (cf. *LO* 24).  
We learn from the *Legenda de origine Ordinis*  
that he, following the example of Christ,  
who was among his disciples *as one who serves* (*Lk* 22, 27),  
zealously served his brothers, even in his old age,  
and was a model for the young friars in formation.

#### HYMN

7. The Leader lights a lamp before the image of St. Alexis or the Seven Holy Founders while this or another suitable hymn is sung:

Under our blessed Lady's care  
A sev'nfold family comes to birth,  
Who leave the comforts of this earth  
And choose the things of God their share.

At Mary's call the desert height  
Senario is their place of prayer.  
Again she leads, and so they bear  
To those in shade Christ's healing light.

Christ's kingdom by their work expands  
As brotherhood and peace return;  
The Servants soon increase; all hearts  
The Virgin's praises to resound.

Their upright lives are set aside  
For life's reward in holy death;  
The Virgin's faithful Servants blest  
Are welcomed as God's heav'nly bride.

O blessed brothers, in God's presence

One, look kindly on our prayers,  
For still we strive against the snares  
Of sin encircling: guide us on!

All praise and glory be to God  
Our Father, and his only Son,  
With you, best strength, O Spirit one  
While endless ages run. Amen.

Melody: Old 100<sup>th</sup> L.M.

Text: Paul Addison O.S.M.

## PRAYER

8. The Leader invites those present to prayer:

*L.* Let us pray

There follows a brief period of silent prayer.

*L.* O God, Father of mercy,  
You graced the newborn Order of the Servants of Mary  
with St. Alexis, a humble and wise man,  
faithful in his service of the glorious Virgin.  
Grant that we may work diligently for the kingdom  
and dedicate our lives to loving you and our neighbour,  
following the example of Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
*A.* Amen.

## II. LISTENING TO THE WORD

9. There follows a hagiographical reading and a short responsory followed by a passage from Scripture.

### HAGIOGRAPHICAL READING

10. A Reader proclaims the following excerpt from the *Legenda de origine Ordinis* or another reading illustrating the figure of St. Alexis.

*R.* From the *Legenda* on the origin of the Order of Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Fra Peter of Todi

(*LO*, nn. 26, 27, 28: Monumenta OSM, I, pp. ???)

*He was humble and loving in everything he said and did*

Of the seven men through whom Our Lady saw fit to begin her Order, all perfect men and worthy, Fra Alexis was the only one she was pleased to preserve from death until our own day. I learned about the kind of life Fra Alexis lived from my own experience, from seeing it with my own eyes. He was a man who moved those who knew him by the example he set. He was the living

proof of the perfection and piety I ascribed to him and his companions. In view of his advanced age, his poor health and the long time he had borne the heat of the day in the Order, he could have been forgiven if he had quite naturally wanted quiet, food in keeping with his infirmity, warm clothing and a soft bed whereon to rest his feeble body. But in fact he sought just the opposite, a sign of his perfection and piety.

Although he was a man of such great perfection and revered by all the friars as one of the first seven whom Our Lady used to begin her Order, yet he remained humble and loving in everything he said and did and never let this esteem rob him of his humility. As long as he could, Fra Alexis insisted on taking his turn when it was his day to go out into the streets to beg for bread or do any other work expected of a stronger and younger man, even though the other friars attempted to stop him. He tried to keep pace with the others in performing in the community all those duties which the world considers base. Thus he showed his love for the brethren and the humility he had in his heart; thus he left an example to do likewise to all the friars who want to serve Our Lady faithfully.

Fra Alexis lived to an extreme old age. At the end, he went to his Lady, the Virgin Mary, joyfully, assured that there awaited him the reward of his faithful service. He lived almost 110 years, surviving until the year of Our Lord 1310.

#### RESPONSORY

11. There follows the singing of a responsory (cf. *Ps* 119 [118], 1; *Lk* 12, 43. 48.) or a pause for silent reflection.

*V.* Happy is the one who walks in the law of the Lord. Happy is that servant whom the master finds at work.

*R.* Happy is the one who walks in the law of the Lord. Happy is that servant whom the master finds at work.

*V.* From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required.

*R.* Happy is that servant whom the master finds at work.

*V.* Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

*R.* Happy is the one who walks in the law of the Lord. Happy is that servant whom the master finds at work.

#### SCRIPTURE READING

12. There follows one of these two Scripture readings illustrating the virtues evident in the life of St. Alexis. Each reading consists of passages taken from different books put together as one continuous reading. These passages may be proclaimed by different readers. In the first reading, the passages marked R3 may – for reasons of brevity – be omitted without altering the sense of the message. Another Scripture reading altogether may replace it (for example, *Prov* 3, 13-24; *Wis* 7, 15-21; *Sir* 6, 18-19; *Sir* 39, 1-11; *2 Thess* 2, 13-17; *1 Tim* 2, 18-19: 4, 7b-14a; *2 Tim* 4, 7-8)

*RI.* From the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Book of Sirach and the writings of Paul the apostle.

(*Jn* 13, 34-35; *Sir* 6, 37; *Rom* 12, 9-10; *Mt* 6, 1-2a, 3-4; *Sir* 4, 1-4, 7-8; *2 Cor* 9, 6-7;

*Jn* 13, 14-15; *Sir* 3, 17-18; 11, 15, 20; *Eph* 5, 1-2)

*Walk in love*

*RI.* “I give you a new commandment,  
that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you,  
you also should love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,  
if you have love for one another.”

*R2.* Reflect on the statutes of the Lord,  
and meditate at all times on his commandments;  
it is he who will grant insight to your mind,  
and your desire for wisdom will be granted.

*R3.* Let love be genuine;  
hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;  
love one another with mutual affection;  
outdo one another in showing honor.

*R1.* Beware of practising your piety before others  
in order to be seen by them;  
for then you have no reward  
from your Father in heaven.  
So whenever you give alms,  
do not sound a trumpet before you,  
and do not let your left hand know  
what your right hand is doing,  
so that your alms may be done in secret;  
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

*R3.* My child, do not cheat the poor of their living,  
and do not keep needy eyes waiting.  
Do not grieve the hungry or anger one in need.  
Do not add to the troubles of the desperate,  
or delay in giving to the needy.  
Do not reject a suppliant in distress,  
or turn your face away from the poor.  
Endear yourself to the congregation; bow your head low to the great.  
Give a hearing to the poor,  
and return their greeting politely.

*R3.* The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,  
and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.  
Each of you must give as he has made up his mind,  
not reluctantly or under compulsion,  
for God loves a cheerful giver.

*R1.* So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,  
you also ought to wash one another’s feet.  
For I have set you an example,  
that you also should do as I have done to you.

*R2.* My child, perform your tasks with humility,  
then you will be loved by those whom God accepts.  
The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself;  
so you will find favor in the sight of the Lord.  
Wisdom, understanding and knowledge of the law come from the Lord;

affection and the ways of good works come from him.  
Stand by your agreement and attend to it,  
and grow old in your work.

*R3.* Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children,  
and live in love,  
as Christ loved us  
and gave himself up for us,  
a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

13. Alternatively, the following “scriptural” dialogue:

*R.* From the Gospel of Jesus Christ

*(Jn 1, 38. 39; Lk 9, 57. 58; Jn. 14, 5. 6. 8. 9-10. 11; Mk 1, 40. 41; Mt. 19, 16. 18. 20;  
Mk 10, 37. 38. 39-40. 42-44; Jn 3, 4. 5-8)*

*If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments*

*Jesus:* What are you looking for?

*Disciple:* Rabbi, where are you staying?

*Jesus:* Come and see.

*Disciple:* I will follow you wherever you go.

*Jesus:* Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests;  
but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

*Disciple:* Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?

*Jesus:* I am the way, and the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me.

*Disciple:* Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied.

*Jesus:* Have I been with you all this time, and you still do not know me?  
Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?  
Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?  
Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me;  
but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

*Disciple:* If you choose, you can make me clean.

*Jesus:* I do choose. Be made clean.

*Disciple:* Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?

*Jesus:* If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments:  
“You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal;  
You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and your mother;”

Also, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

*Disciple:* I have kept all these; what do I still lack?

*Jesus:* If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.

*Disciple:* Teacher, grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.

*Jesus:* You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

*Disciple:* We are able.

*Jesus:* The cup I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared. You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be the slave of all.

*Disciple:* How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?

*Jesus:* Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I say to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

14. After the reading the following acclamation, or one similar, may be sung:

A. To Christ, glory and power,  
Living Word of the Father.

Or, according to local custom, a “hymn after the Gospel” may be sung.

MEDITATION

15. After the acclamation there may be a period of silent reflection or the Leader may comment on the texts which have been read and the figure of St. Alexis. For an example of one such reflection: see Appendix 1. If circumstances permit, this reflection could take the form of a fraternal dialogue.

### III. ANSWERING TO THE WORD

16. There follows the symbolic gesture of the offering of incense and the supplication to St. Alexis, the offering of incense, an eventual symbolic gesture and the prayer of thanksgiving.

#### SUPPLICATION TO ST. ALEXIS

17. The Leader introduces the supplication to St. Alexis with these or similar words:

*L.* Brothers and sisters,  
let us turn with confidence to St. Alexis  
whom God has given to us  
as a shining example of evangelical life and service  
and as mediator to intercede on our behalf.

After a pause for silent prayer, those present recite the following supplication to St. Alexis:

Alexis, servant of holy Mary,  
elder brother to us,  
saint of God's Church,  
may your prayer sustain our commitment to service.

Simple and unassuming friar,  
whose food was frugal  
and clothing humble,  
you refused all comfort and ease.  
Look upon the young people  
who, seeking what is essential and enduring,  
want to follow the Son of Man  
who has nowhere to lay his head.

Charitable friar,  
active and joyful servant,  
forgetful of self and prompt to respond  
to the needs of the brothers "without creating a fuss",  
help us to be faithful to our commitment,  
to bear each other's burdens,  
and to love each other in deed and in truth.

Friar of prophetic vision,  
witness of the Kingdom,  
intercede with the Lord Most High  
for your brothers burdened with age  
so that, like you, venerable old man,  
they may keep intact their ideal of service

to God, to Our Lady and to their brothers and sisters,  
in the sure hope of receiving the reward of faithful servants.

Pray for us, Alexis, brother worthy of praise,  
you who now live in the “Promised Land”,  
the inheritance of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
to whom be honor and glory for ever and ever.  
Amen.

#### OFFERING OF INCENSE

18. The Leader incenses the image of St. Alexis or the Seven Holy Founders while this antiphon, or one similar, is sung:

One in Christ’s name  
they were one in the service of others  
and the praise of God.

At this point, the offerings collected beforehand for the charitable purposes of the community may be presented to the Leader.

#### SYMBOLIC GESTURE

19. If deemed suitable, the Leader may now distribute to each participant (students, teachers, ...) a Bible or a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or the *Ratio Studiorum*, as signs of Christian education.

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

20. The Leader addresses God with the following prayer of thanksgiving.

*L.* Come, let us praise the Lord.

*A.* His mercy endures forever.

*L.* Let us bless his holy name.

*A.* He alone is our salvation.

*L.* We praise you, Father, and we bless you  
because in your mercy  
you raised up within the Church  
seven men of peace and friendship  
to be our fathers and brothers.

*A.* Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

You filled them with your gifts  
and called them to follow Christ.  
Seeking the pearl of great price,  
they abandoned their trade and profits,  
their fields, their homes, and their families  
to become the fathers of a new line  
begotten not by blood but by the Holy Spirit.



*A.* Glory and fraise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Joyfully they served your humble Handmaid:  
like her, they meditated on your Word,  
through her they received your mercy,  
with her they stood near the cross of Christ.

*A.* Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the intercession  
of our Seven Fathers,  
grant us, Lord,  
a spirit of unity and service,  
a thirst for wisdom,  
and a desire for beauty.

*A.* Lord, listen to us.

Lord, open our eyes to your ways,  
fill our prayerful silence with your wisdom,  
in flame our hearts with your love,  
and guide us in serving others.

*A.* Lord, listen to us.

Lord,  
the vine you planted on your holy mountain  
has become the Order of Servants;  
grant it new vitality and strength  
in men and women of holiness and justice  
serving within your Church.

*A.* Lord, listen to us.

To you, Father and source of all life,  
through your Son, firstborn among the saints,  
and in the Holy Spirit who renews all things,  
all glory and honor  
forever and ever.

*A.* Amen.

#### IV. DISMISSAL

**21.** If possible, a Reader addresses those assembled with these or similar words:

*R.* Our celebration does not end here,  
but must continue in our daily lives.  
Let us keep alive our commitment  
to seek, not passing joys,  
but the things that will last;  
to aspire, not to success in all our undertakings,

but rather to perfection in humble service to our sisters and brothers.

If a priest or deacon is presiding, he says:

*L.* The Lord be with you.

*A.* And also with you.

**22.** In this formula of blessing and dismissal the Leader, according to the custom of the place, may use the first instead of the second person plural.

The Leader says:

*L.* May the Lord of love and mercy  
grant us to act with charity and justice.

*A.* Amen.

A priest or deacon adds:

*L.* May the blessing of Almighty God,  
Father, Son + and Holy Spirit  
come down upon you  
and remain with you always.

*A.* Amen.

**23.** The Leader dismisses the assembly:

*L.* Let us go in the peace of the Lord  
and journey in joyful freedom towards the Kingdom.

**24.** Following the Order's tradition, the Blessed Virgin is honoured with the singing of the *Salve, Regina*:

Salve, Regína, mater misericórdiae:  
vita, dulcédo et spes nostra, salve.  
Ad te clamámus, éxsules filii Evae.  
Ad te suspirámus, geméntes et flentes  
in hac lacrimárum valle.  
Eia ergo, advocáta nostra,  
illos tuos misericórdes óculos  
ad nos convérte.  
Et Iesum, benedíctum fructum ventris tui,  
nobis post hoc exsílum osténde.  
O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria

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

## APPENDIX

### I

#### ALEXIS STILL SPEAKS TO HIS BROTHERS<sup>\*</sup>

I, Alexis,<sup>[1]</sup> am the last of the seven first friars of the Order which God and Our Lady desired. I never stopped repeating this: “*Neither I nor my companions ever intended to found a new religious Order or for that matter to attract a lot of others to us when we came together originally. We were under the impression that our divinely inspired purpose in going to live together was simply to flee the world and fulfil the Lord’s will better and more easily*” (LO 24). I well remember the luminous faces of my companions, the toils and the joys that we shared together. The example of their lives dedicated to the Lord and their neighbour made a great impression on me. Their deaths too, which caused me much suffering, gave me pause for reflection on the meaning of life and the words of the Lord: “*I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die*” (Jn 11, 25-26).

I was happy to live with such admirable brothers, so devoted to Our Lady, the humble servant of the Lord, and I freely gave myself over to manual work and household chores and to begging for alms, all the while leading a frugal life.

#### *A hard-working friar*<sup>[2]</sup>

I must admit that sometimes I was too keen and tried to do things beyond my strength. I was full of enthusiasm and convinced that, along with my companions, I was the instrument of God the Redeemer in the work of restoring creation to its original beauty. I put my heart and soul into my work, without seeking any reward. I was guided by the words of the Master: “*When you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done’*” (Lk 17, 10). At times, one or another of the brothers tried to stop me doing some humble service because they all held me in great esteem as one of the seven original founders of the Order and were respectful of my advancing years and declining health. These concerns of theirs used to annoy me because I wanted to work alongside my brothers, remembering the words of Jesus: “*I am among you as one who serves*” (Lk 22, 27).

Of course, there were times when I found that working for “the good of the community”<sup>[3]</sup> could be a burden but I summoned up my courage out of the conviction that we show our love for our brothers or our neighbours, not in the big things of life but in the little, in faithfully carrying out humble acts of service to the community. That which really builds up love and compassion in community more than mere words is the good done by each individual friar “without making a loud fuss”. This was what Jesus taught: “*Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven*” (Mt 6, 1).

#### *A mendicant friar*

As long as I was able and in spite of the opposition of my brothers, I always went out to beg. The day assigned to me for this duty was Saturday,<sup>[4]</sup> Our Lady’s day.<sup>[5]</sup> Thus every Saturday, except when I was not well enough,<sup>[6]</sup> I used to go out with a companion,<sup>[7]</sup> as did Fra Ruggeri di Dono<sup>[8]</sup> with his companion, to collect the “*Saturday offerings*” from the people we knew in order to help the community. A small coin was given me as recompense for this service, but I did not spend the money and over the years was able to build up a little fund, and the Prior General could make use of this to pay for the upkeep of those of our students who had the intellectual qualities required to be sent to Paris for higher studies.<sup>[9]</sup> This was my way of contributing to the formation of the young

friars, who are our future. The advice of Christ is clear: “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal...*” (Mt. 6, 19).

#### *A simple, unassuming friar*<sup>[10]</sup>

For me, to follow the example of Jesus and assume the condition of a servant (cf. *Phil* 2. 6-8) means stripping oneself of all that is not essential and adopting a simple way of life. The servant must rid himself of everything that marks him out as different from the least of those he is called to serve. This has always been a guiding principle of my life in my choice of food, clothing and ease.

At table, I have never asked for fine food. I have always preferred to eat in the refectory, content to share the same food as the community.<sup>[11]</sup> If sometimes, when I was seriously ill, I could not take part in community meals, I did not request particular dishes. Quite the opposite: I used to collect a handful of greens from the kitchen garden which I cooked before eating in order to warm up my aged and infirm body.

I hated wearing fine clothes (cf. Mt. 11, 8; 6, 28-30), or rather, I tried to maintain the right balance in matters of clothing, avoiding both dishevelment and refinement.<sup>[12]</sup>

For my rest, I refused to have a soft and more comfortable bed; rather, as those who lived with me in the priory well know, I used to have planks of wood instead of a mattress and a rough blanket in place of a sheet.<sup>[13]</sup> I remembered the words of Jesus: “*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head*” (Lk 9, 58).

#### *A friar, witness to the Kingdom*

Many times have I had occasion to speak with friends and acquaintances and share reflections with them about the meaning of life. These conversations have always been for me sources of mutual enrichment. I remember one time speaking with my niece Juliana about the last judgement (cf. *Mt* 25, 31-46).<sup>[14]</sup> She was very worried about the little faults she had committed (*Mt* 25, 45). I told her that the Lord’s final question would not be “How many times did you commit that sin or omit this good deed ...? but rather: “How much have you loved?” (cf. *Lk* 7, 47), because, at the end of life, we will be judged on love. These words of mine were a great revelation to her. From that moment on she wanted, at all costs, to dedicate her life, like me, to God and the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and she could not wait to put on our habit.

#### *The joy of service*

Reader, young or old, allow me to share with you a personal conviction of mine. There are many people, in the Church and in the Order, who, when speaking of my companions and myself, give us the title of *saints* or *blessed*. But my companions and I have experienced the truth of these words of Jesus: *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (*Acts* 20, 35). My greatest happiness has been to be a “servant” of God, Our Lady and my neighbour, to lovingly serve my brothers and to help my fellow women and men, at whatever cost. Yes indeed, *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. Also, allow me to give you an invitation: Offer what you have received from God: your very life itself, your vocation, the joy and glory of serving Mary. Dedicate yourself to the Church, a community of beloved sons, disciples of Christ. Love the Order, the home of Our Lady, and wholeheartedly give your life for it.

Alexis

\* This is a translation of an extract from the article *Siamo servi inutili* published in the *Monte Senario* Review, no. 8 (maggio-agosto 1999) pp. 5-8.

[1] St. Alexis is said to have belonged to the wealthy Falconieri family that had property near the Porta di Balla (not far from Cafaggio). “It is said that he was the brother of that Chiarissimo Falconieri (the father of St. Juliana Falconieri) who had contributed the ill-gotten money gained from commercial dealings towards the extension of S. Maria di Cafaggio in 1262. Alexis undoubtedly had some experience of commerce that enabled him to deal competently with various business affairs; in 1255 we find him ‘procurator and syndicus’ of the priory, an office that was not in contrast with the tradition that sees him as a non-ordained brother.” According to tradition, Alexis died on 17 February 1310 at the age of almost 110 years (cf. *Legenda de origine Ordinis* [= LO], no. 28. According to the *Annals*, the iconography of St. Alexis shows him as kneeling with hands joined before the infant Jesus who is presenting him with a cross and a crown of flowers. Cf. CASALINI E., *Le pleiadii del Senario. I Sette Fondatori dei Servi di Maria* = *Colligite* 5 (Convento SS. Annunziata, Firenze 1989) p. 84.

[2] Cf. LO 27.

[3] Cf. *Rule of St. Augustine*, no. 31: “... no one will seek his own advantage in his work. Everything you do must be for the service of the community, and you are to work with more zeal and more enthusiasm than if each person were merely working for himself ...”

[4] Cf. CASALINI Eugenio M. ed., *Registro di Entrata e Uscita di Santa Maria di Cafaggio* (REU) 1286-1290 = Biblioteca della Provincia Toscana dei Servi di Maria 7 (Convento della SS. Annunziata, Firenze 1998), pp. 119-306. It can be seen from this Register that, in the years 1286-1289, Fra Alexis, along with another friar, regularly went out begging every Saturday. Even on that fateful 11 June 1289, a Saturday, when the Florentines were engaged in the battle of Campaldino and the whole city was gripped by terror and anxiety about their inevitable overwhelming defeat, Fra Alexis and his companion were wandering the streets carrying out their regular duty of begging as if nothing were happening. Perhaps he was the only soul within the walls of Florence not to be mortally afraid on that day!

[5] Cf. SOULIER P.M., ed., *Constitutiones antiquae fratrum Servorum sanctae Mariae a s. Philippo Benitio anno circiter 1280 editae* [= *Const. Ant.*], chaps. 1-2, in *Monumenta OSM* 1 (1897), pp. 28-31.

[6] Cf. Casalini, E.M., *Registro di Entrata e Uscita* ... p. 237. It can be noted that in the years 1286-1289, only once Alexis did not go out begging on a Saturday, on 18 February 1289. He was sick. In fact, that day, 10 pence were paid out for “his pills”.

[7] Cf. *Mk.* 3, 14-15; m6, 7; *Rule of St. Augustine*, no. 20: “When you go out, go with someone else, and stay together when you have reached your destination.”

[8] Cf. CASALINI E.M. ed., *Registro di Entrata e uscita* ... pp. 55 [no.22], 108. It is evident that Fra Ruggeri di Dono himself used to go begging every Saturday.

[9] Cf. *Ricordanze di S. Maria di Cafaggio, Firenze* (1295-132), f. 20v, f. VIIIv, in CASALINI E.M., ed. *Testi dei “Servi della Donna di Cafaggio”* = Biblioteca della Provincia Toscana dei Servi di Maria 5 (Convento SS. Annunziata, Firenze 1995) pp. 95-96, 112. See: the comment of E.M. CASALINI: pp.32-33. On 1 August 1307, Fra Alexis of Florence loans to the prior general the sum of 9 gold florins for the students at the Sorbonne University in Paris (“pro scolaribus parisiensibus”). Up to 14 November 1309, the prior general had only paid back 1 florin 3 lire and one penny. This is one of the reasons why the title: “Patron of Servite Students” was bestowed on St. Alexis.

[10] Cf. LO 27.

[11] Cf. *Const. Ant. OSM*, chaps. 7-8. Food had to be the same for all, with the exception of the sick. See, for example, later, the resolution of the General Chapter of Siena (1 May 1328) concerning the “superior” friars who ate in their cells: “Thus, since the Constitutions expressly mention the places where meals are to be consumed, by the healthy and by the sick, by superior or simple friars, it is not lawful for anyone to eat outside of these named places, that is, the refectory, the guest wing and the infirmary. Since the prior general and definitors have found that some friars, above all those of more notable dignity, eat in their cells, something which is shameful and greatly disturbs the others, they order, in virtue of holy obedience, that no-one on any account is to dare to eat or drink in their cell so that all abuses can be abolished and the norms of the Order observed.”

[12] Cf. *Rule of St. Augustine*, no. 19: “Do not attract attention by the way you dress. Endeavour to impress by your manner of life, not by the clothes you wear.”

[13] Cf. *Const. Ant.*, chap. 11. Sick friars were allowed woollen mattresses and linen sheets.

[14] Cf. ATTAVANTI P., *Paulina praedicabilis* [= Lenten sermons on the epistles of St. Paul] (Siena 1494) f. 52-52v, in *Moniales OSM* 2 (1964) pp.23-25.