

Saint Philip Benizi

Book of Blessings

Laudemus viros gloriosos 3

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Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, is the Father's supreme gift to mankind (Cf. *Jn* 3,16). In him and through him God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens" (*Eph* 1, 3). During the course of his earthly life Jesus went about blessing God for his saving love (Cf. *Mt* 11,25); blessing men, especially children and the lowly (Cf. *Mk* 10,16) and doing good for all (Cf. *Acts* 10, 38).

Jesus' faithful disciples did likewise: they too are a gift of God to the Church and mankind; they too went about blessing and doing good. Among these disciples is St. Philip Benizi. The Order has always recognized him as a great gift of the Lord and a source of blessing for the entire Servite family: he received the spiritual legacy of our Seven Holy Founders, enriched it with Gospel values, gave it legal definition and passed it on unchanged to future generations of friars.

The Order has not forgotten his acts of love and mercy towards the sick, the humble and the friars suffering hunger in time of famine. From the devout recollection of these "signs" over the centuries there have arisen blessing rites; some have fallen out of use but others are still current and being celebrated with faith. The Order's brothers and sisters have frequently requested renewed texts for these blessings – texts that reflected contemporary needs and feelings.

To mark the recent celebration of the Seventh Centenary of St. Philip's death (1285-1985) the Order's Liturgical Commission has made a careful revision of the blessing texts that reflects the spirit of post-conciliar liturgical reform principles and is based on the *editio typica* of the Blessings Ritual promulgated on May 31, 1984. The revision was submitted to the General Council and after a careful examination the General Council unanimously approved the revised texts on September 10, 1986.

Therefore, given the approval of the General Council and in view of the many requests within the Order, I am, with this present letter, promulgating the *St. Philip Book of Blessings* and while we await completion of the Order's Ritual, I order that it to be published in the *Laudemus viros gloriosos* series.

I am certain that the use of the *St. Philip Book of Blessings* by members of the Servite Family will give rise to celebrations that are an expression of faith, a time of mercy and an occasion to encounter our great Brother and Father, St. Philip.

Rome, from our Priory of San Marcello, February 19, 1987,
Commemoration of Blessed Elizabeth Picenardi.

L. + S.

Fra Michel M. Sincerny, O.S.M.
Prior General

Fra Gabriele M. Gravina, O.S.M.
Secretary of the Order

Illustration:

Paolo Sbrissa
St. Philip miraculously finds bread and water
for his traveling companion

The episode –according to the *Legenda “vulgata”* is said to have occurred on a trip from Lombardy to Germany

Study for a fresco, mixed technique (1985)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I. Origin of St. Philip Blessings

1. The veneration with which the Servite Order has always surrounded the memory of St. Philip Benizi especially after his canonization in 1671 gave rise to blessing rites in which God is invoked through the intercession of St. Philip.
2. Servites today still follow the customs of those who have gone before them in the service of the Mother of the Lord: in their communities they celebrate and offer to the faithful blessings that seek God's favor and mercy through the intercession of St. Philip.
3. The principal blessings in Servite worship are linked to episodes in St. Philip's life:
 - the *Blessing of Infants* is connected to several pious traditions: while still at his mother's breast St. Philip urged her to give alms to the "friar Servants of Mary"; he always showed a fatherly concern for children; at the time of his death there were miracles on behalf of children and young people;
 - the *Blessing of the Sick* recalls the Saint's miraculous cures especially the healing of the leper;
 - the *Blessing of Bread and Water* is linked to two miracles St. Philip performed: the first was for the friars of the priory in Arezzo (some sources say the priory in Florence) who were suffering because of a famine; the second was performed for a friar who accompanied him on a journey – the friar was suffering acutely from heat and thirst.

II. Nature

4. Blessing rites are liturgical actions or "sacred signs"¹ with which the Church praises God for the gifts he has bestowed on mankind, holds herself ready to hear the Lord's Word, performs certain rituals and pleads through Christ in union with the Holy Spirit that he grant to the faithful special benefits that derive from the Paschal Mystery.²
5. Since Blessing rites are liturgical actions it is appropriate that they be performed in a community setting³ unless pastoral reasons would indicate otherwise.
6. Even in its simplest forms the "St. Philip's Blessing" is a celebration of the Christian Faith: it is joyful praise to God who bestows his gifts on the faithful and reveals an image of his goodness in the saints; it involves listening to the Word which gives meaning to the rite and requires adherence of the heart and commitment of the will; it is a humble request for the Lord's bounty; it is an ecclesial celebration of the community, linked to the "Prayer of the Church" in communion with the saints and the faithful; it is done on behalf of people – the very rite of blessing is ordered to the corporal and spiritual benefit of human beings; it is a joyful commemoration of our brother, the saint, whose Gospel like life continues to enlighten the Church's service to God, Our Lady and all of mankind.

¹ CONCILIUM VATICANUM II, Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 60.

² Cf. *ibid*, no. 61.

³ Cf. *ibid*, no. 27; *Rituale Romanum* ex decreto sacrosancti oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum, auctoritate Ioannis Pauli II promulgatum. *De Benedictionibus*, Editio typica, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1984, no. 16.

7. Therefore when necessary the faithful should be informed of the nature of “St. Philip’s Blessing”; it is by no means magic or anything that works outside the Faith.

III. The Minister

8. The rites in this St. Philip Blessing Book belong to the Order but are by no means limited to members of the Servite Family.

9. The various “Rites of Blessing” can be performed by ordained ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) or by non-ordained ministers⁴ who have some particular relationship with the people who are being blessed (e.g. for the *Blessing of Infants*: parents, catechists, teachers; for the *Blessing of the Sick*: relatives, nurses; for the *Blessing of Bread and Water*: the prior or prioress of a Servite Secular Order fraternity).

10. When the Blessing is administered in a community setting it should take place in a church or chapel with an ordained minister presiding; the minister should wear liturgical vestments (alb and stole⁵ or a religious habit and use those formulas that correspond to his hierarchical position (e.g. in greeting the assembly or giving the dismissal blessing.)

⁴ In this *Book of Blessings* the term “non-ordained minister” refers to everyone baptized in the Catholic Church (lay or religious, male or female) who have not received the Sacrament of Holy Orders in any of its forms (episcopacy, priesthood, diaconate) and who because of their family, professional, ecclesiastical, religious position exercise responsibility for or service to those who are being blessed.

⁵ *De Benedictionibus*, nos. 35-38.

IV. Adaptation

11. The St. Philip Blessings can be adapted according to the principles and criteria for adaptation⁶ that prevail in the area where the Servites are carrying out their apostolate.

Sigla (acronyms)

A. = assembly.

L. = lector.

P. = preside.

R. = response.

V. = versicle.

⁶ Cf. Ibid. no. 39.

Illustration:

Paolo Sbrissa

A boy killed by a wolf
is brought back to life.
through his mother's prayers
at St. Philip's tomb in Todi

This is the third miracle recounted in the *Legenda "Vulgata"* that occurred after the Saint's death.

Study for a fresco, mixed technique (1985)

I THE BLESSING OF INFANTS

INTRODUCTION

1. The Blessing of Infants is linked to certain episodes in the St. Philip's life that link him to infants and children: there is the pious tradition that while still a baby he asked his mother to give alms to the "friar Servants of Mary;" the forgiving embrace and consoling prophecy directed at a boy who was caught stealing from the Cesena community garden – the friar gardener who caught the boy had beaten and reproved him; the miracles on behalf of young people and children that occurred at the time of the Saint's death – especially the only son of a widow who was brought back to life.

2. In the "pious tradition" of the infant who recognizes the "Servants of Mary" we find a commonplace of hagiography: divine approval for a project men oppose is revealed through the mouth of innocent babes. The hagiographer had in mind the definition of the Order the Saint later gave to two Dominicans: *Servi vocamur Virginis gloriosae* [we are called Servants of the Glorious Virgin] and the Saint's later vigorous defense of the Order when he was the Prior General. The hagiographer sees in "Philip the infant" the prophet of God's plan for the Servite family and in "Philip the Prior General of the Order" the forceful agent of that plan.

Medieval hagiographers found meaningful episodes in Sacred Scripture that validated the witness of infants. In the Old Testament, God, through the mouth of a youth, Daniel, saved an innocent "daughter of Israel" (Susanna) from stoning. She was falsely accused of gave sin (Cf. *Dan* 13, 45-64). In the New Testament, Jesus himself appeals to the witness of infants when the high priests and scribes protest his claim to be the Messiah sent by the Father (Cf. *Mt* 21, 14-16).

I. Occasion

3. There are various occasions when the faithful might seek God's blessing on children through the intercession of St. Philip: on his feast day (August 23); on pilgrimages to those places where he is especially venerated; at school meetings and celebrations where children are participants; at the beginning and end of the catechism year; in the family circle on children's birthdays or other family occasions.
4. Whenever possible parents should take part in the blessing of children.

II. The Minister

5. The blessing can be imparted by an ordained or non-ordained minister, especially by the person (man or woman) responsible for the child's education – a teacher or a catechist. If the blessing occurs in the family circle it is appropriate that the parents bless their own children.

III. Those being blessed

6. Ordinarily St. Philip's Blessing of Infants is intended for children up to six or seven years of age.

If the Blessing is given to older children (7 to 12) the rite should be appropriately adapted. There are profound differences between infancy and childhood. They are distinct stages of evolution.

IV. Adaptation

7. While retaining the most significant elements (reading the Word of God, prayer and blessing) other parts of the ritual can be adapted to the specific circumstances in which the rite is performed.

8. For the blessing of a single child the shorter form found in nos. 33-42 should be used.

V. Preparation

9. It would be a good thing for the children to be blessed to take part in preparation for the blessing – if they can.

10. An image of St. Philip Benizi should be placed in an appropriate position in the place where the blessing is performed.

11. In an appropriate place the following things should be provided:

- an alb and white stole (or religious habit) if the individual presiding is an ordained minister;

- Holy Water (Cf. no. 28).

- flowers for Our Lady (Cf. no. 29); if possible the children themselves should offer the flowers.

THE RITE OF BLESSING

Greeting and Admonition

12. The rite begins with an appropriate song after which the Presider says:

P. In the name of the Father

and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

13. He then greets the children and those accompanying them with these or other appropriate words:

P. Dear children and dear friends,

I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus,

God became a child for our salvation.

A. He showed his kindness to all of us.

14. Then the Presider or some other appropriate person prepares the children and everyone present to receive St. Philip's blessing with these or similar words:

P. Our Lord, Jesus Christ,
the Son of God who was born of the Virgin Mary,
became a child like you, dear children.
When Jesus preached to the crowds
he lovingly received the children,
he embraced them,
he blessed them,
and laid his hands upon them.
One time he pointed to children
as an example for those who seek
the Kingdom of God.
Another time he stated that his Father and our Father
often told children secrets
that he concealed from the wise.
Not only that, he threatened with severe punishment
anyone who would offend the innocence of children.
Like Jesus, the Church too loves children,
so many saints have cared for them
with tender affection
as has St. Philip Benizi.
An ancient story tells how St. Philip
while still a child himself urged his mother
to give alms to certain friars
that he recognized as "Servants of Mary."
When he himself became a friar Servant of Mary
he was able to understand children.
There is story that tells how the Saint saw a boy
who had been scolded by a friar
and predicted that the boy would become a saint:
the prediction came true – the boy was Blessed Bartholomew of Cesena.
Today we are gathered here to ask God's blessing
upon you, dear children.
We ask this through the intercession of St. Philip.
We ask also for us, the teachers, parents and catechists,
the grace to help you grow into healthy and kind adults.

Gospel Reading

15. After the admonition the following pre-Gospel song (or something similar) is sung:

R. Alleluia, alleluia
Blessed are you, Father,

Lord of Heaven and Earth
Because you have revealed
the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven
to little ones.
R. Alleluia.

16. After the song a catechist (or someone else appropriate) will say a few words asking the children to listen closely to the Gospel passage and help them understand its meaning.

17. Then a lector or one of those present will read the following text (*Mk* 10, 13-16) or another appropriate passage. If possible “and if the text is not difficult it might be good to have the children read it assigning a portion to each of them – the way the Passion of the Lord is read during Holy Week” (*Lectionary for the Children’s Mass*).

L. Listen, children
to the words of the Gospel of Jesus
as written down by Saint Mark.
Jesus was blessing the children.
L. And people were bringing children to him
that he might touch them
but the disciples rebuked them.
When Jesus saw this
he became indignant and said to them,
“Let the children come to me;
do not prevent them
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.
Amen, I say to you,
whoever does not accept the kingdom of God
like a child
will not enter it.”
Then he embraced them
and blessed them placing his hands on them.
The Word of the Lord.
A. Praise to you, O Christ.

alternative texts

18. *Mt* 18, 1-5

L. Listen, children
to the words of the Gospel of Jesus
as written down by Saint Matthew.
Unless you become like children
you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
At that time
the disciples approached Jesus and said,

"Who is the greatest
in the kingdom of heaven?"
He called a child over,
placed it in their midst, and said,
"Amen, I say to you,
unless you turn and become like children,
you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
And whoever receives one child
such as this in my name
receives me."

The Word of the Lord.

A. Praise to you O Christ.

19. Or *Mt* 19, 13-15:

L. Listen, children

to the words of the Gospel of Jesus
as written down by Saint Matthew.

Let the little children come unto me.

Then children were brought to him
that he might lay his hands on them
and pray.

The disciples rebuked them,
but Jesus said,

"Let the children come to me,
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

After he placed his hands on them, he went away.

The Word of the Lord.

A. Praise to you O Christ.

20. Or *Mt* 21, 14-17:

L. Listen, children

to the words of the Gospel of Jesus
as written down by Saint Matthew.

Out of the mouths of infants you have brought forth praise.

At that time,

the blind and the lame approached him in the temple area,
and he cured them.

When the chief priests and the scribes
saw the wondrous things he was doing,

and the children crying out in the temple area,

"Hosanna to the Son of David,"

they were indignant and said to him,

"Do you hear what they are saying?"

Jesus said to them,

"Yes; and have you never read the text,

'Out of the mouths of infants and nurslings
you have brought forth praise?'"
And leaving them,
he went out of the city to Bethany,
and there he spent the night.
The Word of the Lord.
A. Praise to you O Christ.

21. Or *Lk 2, 41-52*:

L. Listen, children
to the words of the Gospel of Jesus
as written down by Saint Luke.
Jesus grew in wisdom and grace.
Each year his parents
went to Jerusalem
for the feast of Passover,
and when he was twelve years old,
they went up according to festival custom.
After they had completed its days,
as they were returning,
the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem,
but his parents did not know it.
Thinking that he was in the caravan,
they journeyed for a day
and looked for him
among their relatives and acquaintances,
but not finding him,
they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.
After three days they found him in the temple,
sitting in the midst of the teachers,
listening to them and asking them questions,
and all who heard him
were astounded at his understanding and his answers.
When his parents saw him, they were astonished,
and his mother said to him,
"Son, why have you done this to us?
Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."
And he said to them,
"Why were you looking for me?
Did you not know
that I must be in my Father's house?"
But they did not understand what he said to them.
He went down with them
and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them;
and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age
and favor before God and man.
The Word of the Lord.
A. Praise to you O Christ.

Allocution

22. If appropriate the Presider, the catechist or any adult who regularly talks to the children should briefly explain the Gospel passage after the reading. The explanation should be simple enough for children to understand yet substantial enough to engage the adults present.

23. After the allocution or reading a song (known to the children) should be sung.

Community Prayer

24. At this point we recite the community prayer. For this prayer to be fitting the following concepts should be borne in mind:

- a) The following formula is just a suggestion: one can eliminate the inappropriate intercessions, modify them or add yet other intercessions.
- b) Different children should recite the intercessions; the adults present can take part in this prayer and express their own intentions.

25. The Presider introduces the prayer with the following words:

P. Lord, Jesus,
who welcomed and blessed children,
listen to our prayer today today.

L. Let us pray together and say:

R. Hear us, Lord Jesus.

Protect us from all danger. R.

Lead us along the path of righteousness. R.

Make us grow, like you,
in age, wisdom and goodness. R.

Help us obey our parents
as you obeyed
your Mother, the Virgin Mary,
and St. Joseph. R.

Guard our parents,
brothers, sisters and grandparents
in your love. R.

Bless our teachers and instructors. R.

Let all children
know and love you. R.

Heal sick children. R.

Look with kindness on our friends,
on those who work
and on those who suffer. R

Welcome our dead
into the joy of heaven. R.
Give us, today, Jesus
through the intercession of St. Philip
your grace and blessing. R.

Prayer of Blessing

26. At this point there is the Blessing Prayer. The children should gather around the Presider; if possible their parents should be present.

P. Blessed are you, Lord our God,
you care for the humble and little:
the heavens recount your glory
and the mouths of infants proclaim your praise.
Look with kindness on these children [*names*]
for whom our community raises this prayer;
through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary
and St. Philip, her servant,
pour down upon them
the abundance of your blessings.
Keep far from them
all danger to body and spirit
so they can grow healthy and joyful,
simple and innocent.
Guided by their parents and teachers,
let them, like your son Jesus
grow in age and wisdom,
strength and grace,
in your sight and before men
so that one day the Church will rejoice in their virtue

and society will enjoy the benefit of their service.
Through Christ, our Lord.
A. Amen

Doing what Jesus did

27. After the blessing prayer and if circumstances permit the Presider should repeat Jesus' gestures with each child. Jesus "took the children in his arms, blessed them and laid hands on them" (*Mk* 10, 16). He should avoid making "the laying on of hands" resemble the solemn gesture that accompanies the consecration epiclesis.

Commemoration of Baptism

28. If appropriate there should be a commemoration of baptism after the blessing prayer. The Presider should hold the holy water vessel in his hands and say:

P. May this holy water,
dear children, recall
the baptism that made you
disciples of Jesus;
he loved you so much
and he died and rose for you.
He lives and reigns forever and ever.
A. Amen.

The Presider then sprinkles the children with holy water or presents the vessel to each child individually who dips his hand in the water and makes the sign of the cross. If the children are too young to do this on their own the parents should do it for them.

Homage to Our Lady

29. Among Servites Saint Philip is considered a model of the "faithful servant of Our Lady." It is only fitting that a rite that calls for his protection of children should, following the saint's example, include an act of homage to Our Lady. Again as circumstances dictate the children – or a delegation of children acting on behalf of all the others – should present flowers to the image of Our Lady while all sing a hymn in her honor.

Dismissal

30. The Presider should conclude the rite with these words:

P. May the Lord Jesus, friend of children,
guard in his love, you,
your parents,
and your teachers.
He lives and reigns forever and ever.

A. Amen.

31. If the Presider is an ordained minister he should add:

P. May the blessing of God, the Lord of Life,
Father and Son + and Holy Spirit,
come down upon you and remain forever.

A. Amen.

32. After the rite the children should enjoy and celebrate time together.

BLESSING RITE (shorter form)

33. If pastoral reasons dictate the shorter form of this same rite can be used however prominence must always be given to the Word of God.

Angelic Salutation

34. Following the Order's tradition the Presider invites all present to recite the Angelic Salutation to Our Lady:

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

Invoke the name of the Lord.

35. Then add:

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

Gospel Reading

36. The Presider or one of those present now reads a Gospel passage, e.g. *Mk* 10, 14.16:

P. Jesus said to them,
"Let the children come to me;
do not prevent them,
for the kingdom of God belongs
to such as these.
Then he embraced them and blessed them,

placing his hands on them.

37. Or *Mt* 18, 2-3, 5:

He called a child over, and said,
"Amen, I say to you,
unless you turn
and become like children,
you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
And whoever receives one child such as this
in my name
receives me."

38. If appropriate the Presider will then briefly explain the Gospel passage with words children can understand but which will at the same time engage adults.

Prayer of Blessing

39. The Presider will then recite the blessing prayer:

a. For several children:

P. Blessed are you, O Lord, our God,
you look after the lowly and little ones.
Look with favor on these children [*Names*]
and pour down upon them
the abundance of your blessings
through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary
and St. Philip her servant.
Keep them far from
every spiritual and physical danger.
Allow them to grow into healthy, happy,
simple and innocent children.
With the guidance of their parents and teachers,
may they – like your Son, Jesus –
grow in wisdom, age, strength and grace
in your sight and before all men.
Through Christ, Our Lord.
A. Amen.

b. For a single child:

P. Blessed are you, O Lord, our God,
you look after the lowly and little ones.
Look with favor on this child [*Name*]
and pour down upon him (her)

the abundance of your blessings
through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary
and St. Philip her servant.
Keep him (her) far from
every spiritual and physical danger.
Allow him (her) to grow into a healthy, happy,
simple and innocent child.
Led by his (her) parents and teachers,
may he (she) – like your Son, Jesus –
grow in wisdom, age, strength and grace
in your sight and before all men.
Through Christ, Our Lord.
A. Amen.

40. After the blessing prayer if possible the Presider should repeat Jesus' gesture for each child –
“Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them” (*Mk* 10, 16). He should
avoid making “the laying on of hands” resemble the solemn gesture that accompanies the
consecration epiclesis.

Dismissal

41. The Presider brings the rite to a conclusion with the following words:

P. May the Lord Jesus, friend of children,
guard in his love, you,
your parents,
and your teachers.
He lives and reigns forever and ever.
A. Amen.

42. If the Presider is an ordained minister he should add:

P. May the blessing of God, the Lord of Life,
Father and Son + and Holy Spirit,
come down upon you and remain forever.
A. Amen.

Illustration

Paolo Sbrissa

St. Philip miraculously heals a leper
and gives him some of his own clothing.

According to the *Legenda Arcaica* this episode took place in the Appenines between Cesena and Florence; according to the *Legenda Vulgata* it took place in the village of Gagliano in the Mugello area.

Study for a fresco, mixed technique (1985)

II

BLESSING OF THE SICK

Introduction

1. Blessing the sick through the intercession of St. Philip Benizi is a characteristic rite of the Servite Ritual. This is not just further evidence of the Church's ongoing solicitude for the sick, it reflects the concern and compassion of Jesus and his apostles ; it further reveals the confidence the faithful have in the power of St. Philip's intercession. On many occasions the Saint displayed his love and care for the suffering and the sick. The author of the so-called *Legenda Perugina* described the saint's miraculous cures in these words "Philip restored health to many sick people, he healed lepers, gave sight to the blind and cast out devils."

I. Time and Place

2. Any time a brother or sister is sick would be an appropriate time to perform the "blessing of St. Philip." The blessing can be imparted to several sick people at the same time on occasions such as his feast day (August 23), a day near his feast, a day of pilgrimage or a day when the Saint is being celebrated.

3. Depending on the condition of the sick person the rite can be performed in his house or in a church.

4. Wherever it is performed the sick person should be reminded of the importance and efficacy of the Anointing of the Sick and urged to receive it.

II. The Minister

The blessing can be imparted by an ordained or non-ordained minister, especially by a person (man or woman) who enjoys a special relationship with the sick person (relative, colleague, friend).responsible for the child's education – a teacher or a catechist. If a sick child is being blessed it is appropriate that the parents perform the rite.

III. Adaptation

6. While retaining the most significant elements (reading the Word of God, prayer and blessing) other parts of the ritual can be adapted to the specific circumstances in which the rite is performed and the condition of the sick person.

IV. Preparation

7. An image of St. Philip Benizi should be placed in an appropriate position in the place where the blessing is to be performed.

8. In an appropriate place the following things should be provided:

- an alb and white stole (or religious habit) if the rite is performed in a community setting it should take place in a church with an ordained minister presiding;
- a crucifix and if possible a relic of St. Philip.

RITE OF BLESSING

Greeting (in church)

9. If the blessing rite takes place in church it will begin with an appropriate hymn; after which the Presider says:

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

10. He then turns to the sick and those accompanying them and greets them with these or other appropriate words:

P. May the Lord Jesus
who went about doing good
and healing the sick
be with all of you.
A. And with your spirit.

11. Or:

P. May God the Father
who guides our hearts
in the patience of Christ
and the consolation of the Spirit
be with all of you.
A. And with your spirit.

Greeting (in the sick person's house)

12. If the blessing rite takes place in the home of the sick person the Presider, on entering the house, will greet the sick person and all who are present.

13. The rite begins with the following words:

P. Brothers and Sisters,
we are celebrating the blessing rite
for our brother (sister) [*Name*],
in the name of the Father

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

P. Peace be to this house and all who dwell herein.
A. And with your spirit.

Admonition

14. The Presider then prepares the sick person and those present for the blessing rite with these or similar words:

P. In his boundless goodness
the Lord Jesus restored health to the many sick people
who came to him with confidence
and asked to be healed.
He commanded his disciples
who went out to proclaim the Gospel
to lay hands on the sick
and cure them of their sickness.
Over the centuries
among the disciples
who gave relief and restored health to the sick
in his name
is Saint Philip Benizi.
One day as he was traveling from Cesena to Florence
he encountered a naked leper with terrible sores
who asked the saint to have pity on him.
The saint approached the leper with compassion,
kissed him
and gave the man his tunic.
When the leper put on the tunic
he was instantly cured of his leprosy.
At the time of St. Philip's death
many miraculous cures occurred.
Trusting in his intercession
and like the sick people in the Gospel
full of faith
we approach Jesus.

Gospel Reading

15. The Presider or one of those present will read the following passage from the Gospel (or some other similar passage). This passage is one of those suggested in the *Ordo Unctionis infirmorum eorumque pastoralis cura* and in the *Ordo Lectionum Missae, Pro infirmis*. The

reader should choose the passage that best fits the physical and spiritual condition of the sick person.

16. + From the Gospel according to Matthew (8, 5-17).

He bore our diseases

At that time

Jesus entered Capernaum,

a centurion approached him and appealed to him, saying,

"Lord,

my servant is lying at home paralyzed,

suffering dreadfully."

Jesus said to him,

"I will come and cure him."

The centurion said in reply,

"Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof;

only say the word

and my servant will be healed.

For I too am a person subject to authority,

with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one,

'Go,' and he goes;

and to another,

'Come here,' and he comes;

and to my slave,

'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard this,

he was amazed and said to those following him,

"Amen, I say to you,

in no one in Israel have I found such faith.

I say to you,

many will come from the east and the west,

and will recline

with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven,

but the children of the kingdom

will be driven out into the outer darkness,

where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth."

And Jesus said to the centurion,

"You may go;

as you have believed, let it be done for you."

And at that very hour (his) servant was healed.

Jesus entered the house of Peter,

and saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.

He touched her hand, the fever left her,

and she rose and waited on him.

When it was evening,

they brought him many who were possessed by demons,

and he drove out the spirits by a word

and cured all the sick,
to fulfill what had been said by Isaiah the prophet:
"He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases."
The Word of the Lord.

Alternative texts

17. Or:

+ From the Gospel according to Matthew (8, 1-4)
When Jesus came down from the mountain,
great crowds followed him.
And then a leper approached,
did him homage, and said,
"Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."
He stretched out his hand,
touched him, and said,
"I will do it. Be made clean."
His leprosy was cleansed immediately.
Then Jesus said to him,
"See that you tell no one,
but go show yourself to the priest,
and offer the gift that Moses prescribed;
that will be proof for them."
The Word of the Lord.

18. Or:

+ From the Gospel according to Luke (22,39-43)
Father, not my will but your will be done.
On the eve of his passion
he went, as was his custom,
to the Mount of Olives,
and the disciples followed him.
When he arrived at the place he said to them,
"Pray that you may not undergo the test."
After withdrawing
about a stone's throw from them
and kneeling, he prayed, saying,
"Father, if you are willing,
take this cup away from me;
still, not my will but yours be done."
And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him.
The Word of the Lord.

19. If opportune the Presider should explain, briefly, the meaning of the Gospel text. In this way the sick person and all those present can participate with faith in the rite and grasp its significance.

Intercessory Prayer

20. At this point a prayer of intercession is recited. It can be omitted or modified to fit the circumstances by eliminating some intercessions, changing others or adding new ones. The community response should relate to the sick person's condition.

P. Brothers and Sisters,
we address our prayer to Jesus
who made St. Philip like himself
in his solicitude for the needy
and love for the sick.

L. Let us say together:

R. Restore health to our sick brother (sister).

Or:

R. Give serenity and strength to our sick brother (sister) [*Name*].

L. Lord Jesus
you are the healer of our bodies and souls
you came to cure our infirmity. R.

Lord Jesus,
you made yourself like us in everything
to show us your mercy. R.

Lord Jesus,
you chose to share our weakness
to free us from evil. R.

Lord Jesus,
man of suffering
you took our infirmity upon yourself. R.

Lord Jesus,
from up on the cross
you gave us your mother, the Lady of Sorrows. R.
Lord Jesus,
you gave St. Philip Benizi
a compassionate heart

and the gift of healing. R.

Lord Jesus,
it is your will that in our own flesh
we make up for what was lacking in the sufferings of your passion. R.

Alternate Text

21. Or:

P. Brothers and sisters
we answer Jesus' call:
"Come to me all you
who labor and are oppressed."
We turn to him and ask
that he free our brother (sister) [*Name*]
from the suffering and oppression of sickness.

L. Let us say together with confidence:

R. Lord, if you will
you can heal our brother (sister).

L. Jesus, fulfillment of the messianic promise
you gave sight to the blind
hearing to the deaf
and speech to the dumb. R.

Jesus, light of the world,
you gave light to the man born blind
to reveal in him the wondrous work of God. R.

Jesus, you are the good Samaritan,
you bend over wounded mankind
to pour the oil and wine
of your saving sacraments. R.

Jesus, you are the brother of every human being,
the centurion's faith
and love for his sick servant
pleased you. R.

Jesus, you are the Savior of all mankind
because of her mother's faith
you healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman. R.

Jesus, you are the Holy One of God
you touched the leper with your hand
and healed his sores. R.

Jesus, you are the hope of mankind,
with just your word
you restored strength and movement to the paralytic
and forgave him his sins. R.

Jesus, you are our peace and consolation,
you bestowed the gift of relieving suffering
and consoling the afflicted
to St. Philip Benizi. R.

Prayer of Blessing

22. The Presider then pronounces the prayer of blessing. He should make an appropriate ritual gesture (laying on of hands, making the sign of the cross on the forehead ...) From among the available formularies he should choose the one that best fits the condition of the sick person and of the assembly.

23.

To God, the Father
for a sick adult.

P. Lord God, our Father,
in your goodness you have sent into the world
your Son, Jesus Christ, our only Savior.
By taking upon himself
our sins and infirmity
he healed the sickness of our body and our spirit.

A further gift of your goodness
was St. Philip Benizi,
a sign of your compassionate love
for the sick and afflicted.

We beg you, look upon your son (daughter) [Name].
Give him (her) strength in this trial
and serenity in this tribulation.
Put hope in his (her) heart
and strength in his (her) limbs
so that once restored to health
he (she) can continue his (her) service in the Church
and his (her) commitment to the community of mankind.
Through Christ, our Lord.

A. Amen.

The rite continues at number 27.

24.

To Jesus Christ
for a sick adult.

P. Lord Jesus
you went about this world doing good
healing the hearts and bodies of the sick.
We humbly pray
through the intercession of St. Philip Benizi,
a faithful servant of Our Lady,
Bless + our sick brother (sister).
Grant him (her) the spirit of consolation and peace,
enlighten his (her) mind
and bestow patience on his (her) soul,
so that he (she) may live through
this hour of trial and suffering
with faith.
Restore health to his (her) body and spirit
so that once he (she) is well
he (she) may bless your mercy
and serve you with renewed commitment.
You who live and reign forever and ever.
A. Amen.

The rite continues at number 27.

25. To the Most Holy Trinity
for a sick adult.

P. Father, source of all blessing,
look mercifully on your sick son (daughter)
and give him (her) relief and comfort in their time of sickness.
A. Amen.

P. Jesus, you are our hope,
bend over your sick brother (sister)
and heal his (her) infirmity
so that through this healing
it will be manifest that you are the Savior of mankind.
A. Amen.

P. Holy Spirit, you are the Lord who gives life,
put consolation and strength
in the heart of this disciple of Christ,

whom you have marked with the seal of your love
and have enriched with your seven gifts.
A. Amen.

The Presider makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the sick person.

P. Holy and glorious Trinity,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
through the intercession of St. Philip Benizi
we humbly beg you:
restore full health of body and soul
to this our brother (sister)
whom you have marked with the image of your glory
and carry out in him (her) your loving plan.
A. Amen.

The rite continues at number 27.

26.
To Jesus Christ
for a sick infant.

P. Lord Jesus
you are our brother, born of the Virgin Mary.
As a child among children, hidden and obedient
you experienced the weakness of childhood;
proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom
you revealed the Father's love
for children, the weak and the humble.
Look mercifully on this sick child
for whom we pray
trusting in the intercession of St. Philip Benizi.
Let his (her) eyes sparkle again
let his (her) lips smile again.
Lord, restore health and strength to him (her),
so that restored to health he (she)
can return to his loved ones and friends
to carefree play and study;
so that he (she) can thank you for your goodness
and glorify you for your mercy.
You who live forever and ever.
A. Amen.

The rite continues at number 27.

27. After the blessing prayer the Presider (if opportune) will give the sick person a crucifix – or relic of St. Philip – to kiss. If local custom dictates this kiss can be replaced by some other sign of veneration.

Dismissal

28. The Presider brings the rite to a conclusion with these words:

P. May the Lord, Jesus Christ
be at your side
to protect you.
A. Amen.

P. May he look upon you and console you.
A. Amen.

P. May he stretch out his hand to heal you.
A. Amen.

29. If the Presider is an ordained minister he adds:

P. May the Blessing of God, the Lord of life,
the Father, the Son + and the Holy Spirit
descend upon you and remain forever.
A. Amen.

30. If circumstances allow, the Presider can invite everyone to pay homage to Our Lady by singing *Sub tuum praesidium* or some other appropriate Marian hymn.

BLESSING RITE (shorter form)

31. If pastoral considerations so warrant the following shorter form of the rite may be used. It is important however that the Word of God be given appropriate emphasis.

Angelic Salutation

32. In conformity with Servite tradition the Presider invites everyone present to join in the Angelic Salutation:

A. Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Calling on the Lord's name

33. The Presider adds:

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

Reading the Word of God

34. The Presider or one of those present reads a Scripture passage, for example: *2 Cor 1, 3-4a*.

P. Blessed be the God
and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement,
who encourages us in our every affliction,
so that we may be able to encourage
those who are in any affliction.

Or *Mt 11, 28-29*.

P. At that time Jesus said:
"Come to me,
all you who labor and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you
and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for your selves."

Or *Mk 6, 53-56*.

P. At that time, after making the crossing,
they came to land at Gennesaret and tied up there.
As they were leaving the boat,
people immediately recognized him.
They scurried about the surrounding country
and began to bring in the sick on mats
to wherever they heard he was.
Whatever villages or towns or countryside he entered,
they laid the sick in the marketplaces
and begged him that they might touch
only the tassel on his cloak;
and as many as touched it were healed.

37. If circumstances allow the Presider should explain the Scripture passage briefly to encourage the sick person to trust in and surrender to God's merciful love.

Prayer of Blessing

38. The Presider recites the Blessing Prayer.

P. Lord God, our Father
out of kindness
you sent your son, Jesus Christ,
our only Savior into the world;
he took upon himself
our sins and weaknesses
and healed our physical and spiritual ills.
Look kindly on your son (daughter) [*Name*]
and through the intercession of St. Philip Benizi,
give him (her) strength in this time of trial,
and serenity in this time of suffering.
Send down upon him (her)
the Spirit of comfort and peace,
give hope to his (her) heart
and strength to his (her) limbs
so that once restored to health
he (she) may continue to serve you in the Church
and the community of mankind.
Through Christ our Lord.
A. Amen.

39. After the prayer, the Presider – if possible – should hold a crucifix or St. Philip's relic to the sick person's lips. Kissing the crucifix or relic can be replaced by other signs of veneration if such is the local custom.

Dismissal

40. The Presider concludes the service with the following (or similar) words:

P. May the Lord, Jesus Christ, remain at your side
to protect,
to comfort,
and to heal you.
A. Amen.

41. If the Presider is an ordained minister he adds:

P. May the blessing of God, the Lord of Life,

the Father, the Son + and the Holy Spirit,
descend upon you and remain forever.
A. Amen.

Illustration

Paolo Sbrissa

St. Philip miraculously provides bread
for a community of friars.

This episode took place in Florence (according to the *Legenda Arcaica*) or in Arezzo (according to the *Legenda Vulgata*).

Study for a fresco, mixed technique (1985)

III

BLESSING BREAD AND WATER

INTRODUCTION

1. Blessing bread and water is one of the most ancient rites associated with St. Philip. It began with certain episodes in the Saint's life. He miraculously provided bread for the Arezzo community in a time of famine (in *Legenda Perugina* it is the Florence community). On another occasion he miraculously found water for a traveling companion who was fainting from heat and thirst.

I. Occasion

2. According to tradition bread and water are blessed in honor of St. Philip on his feast day (August 23) or any other day to which the feast has been transferred for liturgical reasons. There is no reason not to celebrate this blessing on other occasions: on pilgrimages to places where the Saint is especially venerated, during prayer meetings or study forums devoted to St. Philip.

II. Celebration Settings

3. There are various settings in which the traditional "Blessing of Bread and Water in Honor of St. Philip" can be performed:

- Vespers (nos. 6-26);
- Celebration of Mass (nos. 27-34);
- Celebration of the Word of God (first formula: nos. 36-47; second formula: nos. 48-59);
- The family table, before beginning a meal (nos. 60-63).

III. Minister

4. Apart from the celebration of Mass, the Blessing of Bread and Water can be performed by either an ordained or a non-ordained minister (a man or a woman) who has pastoral, religious or other responsibility for the group present. In a family situation the head of the family should perform the blessing.

IV. Preparation

5. The following items should be prepared in an appropriate place:

- an alb and a white stole (or a religious habit) if the rite is celebrated for a community, takes place in church and is presided over by an ordained minister;
- a basket of bread (preferably natural and fresh) and a pitcher of water.

I. BLESSING BREAD AND WATER DURING VESPERS

6. The Vespers rite is from in the Liturgy of the Hours with a few adaptations, dictated by the nature of the service, in the Scripture reading, the responsorial and the intercessions.

Introduction

7.

V. Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.

R. Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

V. O God, come to save me.

R. Lord, come quickly to help me.

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.
World without end. Amen. Alleluia

Hymn

8.

Ad te, Philippe, debitas
laudes manusque tollimus
sacroque nostro dicimus
ducem Patremque coetui.
Currum secutus cælicum,
agno et leone concitum,
dilectus altam Virginis
ad servitutem convolas.

Tibi nitorem nominis
debemus atque plurima
exempla sanctitudinis,
gestasque res clarissimas.

Te facta sanctum prædicant
ad orbis usque limites;
colitque flexo poplite
civem suum Floréntia.

Vos, o Tudertes, pláudite,
quos prótegit Benítius,
suíque dono córporis

felicióres éfficit.

Servi fidéles, Vírgini
servíte cum Benítio;
cæli bonórum cópiam
affert Mariæ sérvitus.

Deo Patri sit glória,
Natóque Patris único,
Sancto simul Paráclito,
in sempitérna sácula. Amen.

9. Or:

You traveled throughout Europe
To proclaim the Good News
To bring Peace to all communities
Peace to cities in turmoil.

You preached only Christ and his Mother
And called the crucifix your book;
“Give me my book, my book,” you said
It was comfort on the last day of your life.

You were like John, standing with her on Calvary
You made our priories her home
And called the poor together.

Grace bloomed like a rose
When you but said her name:
Like Francis you gave life
To a leper by giving him your cloak.

Your cell became a spring of fresh water
For the whole Church;
You fed your brothers in the desert
And brought grace to prostitutes.

We sing our Song
To God Who chooses the humble
And reveals things to children
And to his Mother Like Philip we devote our lives. Amen.

Psalm

10. First Antiphon: Imitate me

as I imitate Christ.

Psalm 15

The Lord is my portion

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the LORD, “You are my LORD.
My happiness lies in you alone.”

As for the holy ones who dwell in the land,
they are noble, and in them is all my delight.

Those who choose other gods increase their sorrows.
I will not take part in their offerings of blood.
Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

O LORD, it is you who are my portion and cup;
you yourself who secure my lot.

Pleasant places are marked out for me:
a pleasing heritage indeed is mine!

I will bless the LORD who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.

I keep the LORD before me always;
with him at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

And so, my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my flesh shall rest in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to hell,
nor let your holy one see corruption.

You will show me the path of life,
the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand, bliss forever.

First Antiphon: Imitate me
as I imitate Christ.

11. Second antiphon: Philip left us
an example of fraternal charity
so that we may follow in his footsteps.

Psalm 111

The just man's life is a pledge of immortality

Blessed the man who fears the LORD,
who takes great delight in his commandments.

His descendants shall be powerful on earth;
the generation of the upright will be blest.

Riches and wealth are in his house;
his justice stands firm forever.

A light rises in the darkness for the upright;
he is generous, merciful, and just.

It goes well for the man who deals generously and lends,
who conducts his affairs with justice.

He will never be moved;
forever shall the just be remembered.

He has no fear of evil news;
with a firm heart, he trusts in the LORD.

With a steadfast heart he will not fear;
he will see the downfall of his foes.

Open-handed, he gives to the poor;
his justice stands firm forever.
His might shall be exalted in glory.

The wicked sees and is angry,
grinds his teeth and fades away;
the desire of the wicked leads to doom.

Second antiphon: Philip left us
an example of fraternal charity
so that we may follow in his footsteps.

13. Thirds antiphon. Philip, Servant of Mary
in you we see what our service should be

Canticle (Phil 2, 6-11)
Christ's Paschal Mystery

Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped.

Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;

and found human in appearance, he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to death,
even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
that is above every name,

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
of those in heaven and on earth
and under the earth,
and every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Third antiphon. Philip, Servant of Mary
in you we see what our service should be

Admonition

14. After the psalms the Presider or Lector introduces the Blessing with the following (or similar) words.

P. During his life St. Philip shone
with love of Our Lady,
charity towards the needy,
humility and apostolic zeal.
Among the many miracles he performed
we remember especially
the one in Arezzo:
war had brought famine
and the friars had nothing to eat.
St. Philip sought the help of Our Lady
and a basket of fine bread
miraculously appeared at the priory.
Another miracle occurred while the Saint was traveling:
his companion was about to faint
from heat and thirst.
Once more by praying to Our Lady

bread and fresh water miraculously appeared.
We, today, bless this bread and water
and hope never to forget
the wondrous signs he performed
may our faith in Providence grow
along with our confidence in the patronage
of Our Lady and St. Philip.

Scripture Reading

15. In place of the short reading found in the Liturgy of the Hours a more appropriate text should be proclaimed. For example: *1 Kings* 19, 4-8:

From the First Book of Kings

Elijah went a day's journey into the desert,
until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it.
He prayed for death:
"This is enough, O LORD!
Take my life,
for I am no better than my fathers."
He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree,
but then an angel touched him
and ordered him
to get up and eat.
He looked and there at his head
was a hearth cake
and a jug of water.
After he ate and drank,
he lay down again,
but the angel of the LORD came back a second time,
touched him, and ordered,
"Get up and eat,
else the journey will be too long for you!"
He got up, ate and drank;
then strengthened by that food,
he walked forty days and forty nights
to the mountain of God, Horeb.

16. Or *Sirach* 15, 1b – 4:
From the Book of Sirach

He who is practiced in the law will come to wisdom.
Motherlike she will meet him,
like a young bride she will embrace him,

Nourish him with the bread of understanding,
and give him the water of learning to drink.
He will lean upon her and not fall,
he will trust in her and not be put to shame.

17. The Presider will explain, briefly, the Scripture passage and the rite of Blessing bread and water.

Brief Responsorial

18. After the homily sing or recite the following responsorial:

R. Blessed is he who hungers and thirsts for justice
for he will be satisfied.

Blessed is he who hungers and thirsts for justice
for he will be satisfied.

V. Blessed is he who eats bread in the Kingdom of God,
for he will be satisfied.

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

Blessed is he who hungers and thirsts for justice
for he will be satisfied.

The Blessing of Bread and Water

19. The Presider blesses the bread and water. If he is an ordained minister he will make the sign of the cross at the end of the prayer and, if appropriate, sprinkle the bread and water with holy water.

P. Lord God,
we bless you;
in your mercy
you fed your people in the desert
with bread from heaven
and you quenched their thirst
with water from a rock.
Accept our praise
and thanksgiving
for the miracles you have performed
through your servant, Philip.
Through prayer he obtained
bread for his starving brothers
and water to quench his companion's thirst.
Bless (+) we implore you, this bread and water,
we offer you in his memory.
Satisfy our hunger and thirst for justice
with the bread of your Word

and the water of your Wisdom.
Through Christ our Lord.
A. Amen.

The Canticle of Our Lady (*Lk* 1, 46-55)

20. Vespers continues with the *Magnificat*

Magnificat Antiphon:
Today Blessed Philip
goes up to heaven and is surrounded by angels;
today the Queen of the universe
shows blessed Jesus to her faithful servant;
today Christ the Lord
lifts his humble servant to the glory of the Kingdom.

Rejoicing in the Lord.

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.

For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is from age to age
to those who fear him.

He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.

He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones
but lifted up the lowly.

The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,

according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

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. World without end.
Amen.

Antiphon: Today Blessed Philip
goes up to heaven and is surrounded by angels;
today the Queen of the universe
shows blessed Jesus to her faithful servant;
today Christ the Lord
lifts his humble servant to the glory of the Kingdom.

Intercessions

21. To God the Father
the beginning and end of our journey
we, pilgrims on the uncertain paths of the world,
lift up our prayer together:

R. Be with us, Lord, on our journey.

Father, source of unity,
you want us to be workers of peace and harmony
- allow us to pursue, unflinching,
the ideal of peace,
in dialogue with all others who seek this goal. [R.]

Father, you demonstrate the power of the Spirit
through the weakness of human beings,
- allow us to proclaim Christ's Gospel
trusting only in the strength of the Word. [R.]

Father,
you provide the necessary nourishment
for every living being,
- allow us to share with our brothers
the good things of the earth
and the riches of the Kingdom. [R.]

Father, author of life,
we entrust to your care the brothers and sisters
who have lived in our family seeking you
- grant them your mercy
and give them the peace of heaven. [R.]

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

Prayer

22. O God, you are the greatness of the humble,
you showed your loving care
for the family of the Servants of Mary,
through St. Philip
who spread that family abroad and gave it holy laws,
grant that we
who imitate our great Father
may serve Our Lady faithfully
and spread your Son's Word
with the zeal of apostles.
He lives and reigns.

23. Or:

Holy Father
mainstay of reconciliation
and source of agreement
through the Blessed Virgin Mary
you called St. Philip Benizi
to be a tireless worker for peace
and a humble herald of the Gospel,
grant that we too may follow Christ
and commit ourselves to the service of all creatures
working for justice and peace.
He lives and reigns.

Dismissal and distribution of the bread and water

24. Vespers are concluded in the usual way.

25. In accord with the Order's tradition we commemorate the Blessed Virgin by singing the *Salve Regina*, the *Supplica dei Servi* or some other Marian hymn.

26. Then the Presider, a deacon or some other person assigned the task distributes the blessed bread. It should be possible (following local custom) for the faithful to drink the blessed water or take it home with them. Care should be taken that the distribution of the bread and water be carried out in an orderly fashion.

II

BLESSING OF BREAD AND WATER DURING THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

27. For the convenience of the faithful we are reproducing here the “Blessing of Bread and Water” as it is found in the *Proprium Missarum OSM*.

28. The blessing is performed at only one Mass which the faithful can attend.

29. Somewhere near the altar in plain sight there should be a basket of bread and a pitcher of water brought there by the faithful if such is the custom.

Admonition

30. After proclaiming the Gospel the celebrant delivers a homily in which he explains the Scripture readings, the life and miracles of St. Philip and the significance of the blessing. After the homily the celebrant or a lector introduces the rite of blessing with the following or similar words:

P. During his life St. Philip shone
with love of Our Lady,
charity towards the needy,
humility and apostolic zeal.
Among the many miracles he performed
we remember especially
the one in Arezzo:
war had brought famine
and the friars had nothing to eat.
St. Philip sought the help of Our Lady
and a basket of fine bread
miraculously appeared at the priory.
Another miracle occurred while the Saint was traveling:
his companion
was about to faint
from heat and thirst.
Once more by praying to Our Lady
bread and fresh water miraculously appeared.
We, today, bless this bread and water
and hope never to forget
the wondrous signs he performed;

may our faith in Providence grow
along with our confidence in the patronage
of Our Lady and St. Philip.

Blessing the Bread

31. The celebrant blesses the bread and says:

P. Let us pray.

God our Father, in your kindness
you never cease to care for mankind;
in the desert you fed the people of Israel
with manna from heaven;
through your Son, Jesus Christ,
you miraculously multiplied loaves of bread
and fed the crowd
who were eager to hear the Word of eternal life
but had no earthly food.
We humbly pray you, Lord
through the love of St. Philip, your servant,
bless + this bread
so that whoever eats it
will never lack the food he needs,
and will be nourished by your Word.
May he share the good things of this earth
and the riches of the Kingdom
with his brothers.
Through Christ our Lord.
A. Amen.

Blessing of Water

32. The celebrant then blesses the water and says:

P. Let us pray.

Blessed are you, Lord,
who created water
to nourish and clothe the earth with green,
to quench man's thirst,
to refresh his tired limbs
and to give him a source of energy and life;
you willed that water be
a symbol and a sacrament
of the mysteries of redemption.

You quenched the thirst, Lord,
of your people, Israel
with water coming from a rock;
every day you quench your Church's thirst
with the living water that comes from Christ, the Savior.
Pour, we pray,
your blessings + on this water;
and grant that whoever drinks it with devotion
or is sprinkled with it
in memory of St. Philip
may enjoy forever the gift of water
and be revived by the dew of the Spirit.
Through Christ, our Lord.
A. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

33. The Prayer of the Faithful follows:

P. Beloved brothers and sisters,
we rejoice in the memory of St. Philip Benizi
the faithful servant of Our Lady,
a man of reconciliation and peace,
let us raise our prayers with confidence to God the Father.

L. Let us pray together and say:

R. Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

1.

a) For our Holy Father *Name*,
for all bishops, priests and deacons
that they may always be examples
of your divine wisdom and active charity,
we pray. R.

b) For all those who do not believe
in Christ our Lord:
that God may give them the light of faith,
we pray. R.

2.

a) For all the people of earth,
that they may live in harmony,
and peacefully enjoy Christian peace

and the fruits of their labor,
we pray. R.

b) For all in government:
that they do justice,
and promote peace and harmony among people,
we pray. R.

3.

a) For all who suffer
in mind and body”
that the Lord may relieve their sufferings
and make them feel
his presence and his love
we pray. R.

b) For the poor and needy:
that, through the mercy of God
and the commitment of man
they may never lack
their daily bread
and the love of their brethren,
we pray. R.

4.

a) For all the communities
of our Order:
that they may bear witness to evangelical life
through their service to every creature,
we pray. R.

b) For all the brothers and sisters
of the Order of Servants of Mary
that following St. Philip’s example
they may be faithful servants of Our Lady
and live in humility and fraternal charity,
we pray. R.

c) For all those gathered here
that we may foster
feelings of meekness, pardon,
justice, love and peace
in our hearts,
we pray. R.

P. O God, our Father,

the comfort of all who hope in thee,
look upon your children
and through the intercession of St. Philip
mercifully hear our prayers.
Through Christ, Our Lord.
A. Amen.

Distribution of the bread and water

34. At the end of Mass before the dismissal, the celebrant, a deacon or someone else assigned the task, will distribute the blessed bread. The faithful should be given the opportunity (as local custom permits) to drink the blessed water or to take it home with them. Special care should be taken to see that the bread and water are distributed in an orderly fashion. During the distribution of the bread and water *Psalm 22* (The Lord is my shepherd, nothing shall I want) or *Psalm 33* (I will bless the Lord at all times) or some other appropriate song can be sung.

III

BLESSING BREAD AND WATER DURING A CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

35. In the booklet *In lode di san Filippo Benizi* [In Praise of St. Philip Benizi] an full *Celebration of the Word* is described. Here we are presenting two formulas for blessing bread and water in the context of two shorter *Celebrations of the Word*.

First Formula

The sign of bread being multiplied
and water appearing miraculously

36. Through readings and prayers this formula celebrates the biblical signs of “bread being multiplied” and “water appearing miraculously.” Both these signs were foreshadowed in the Exodus (*Ex* 16: the miracle of the manna; *Ex* 17: water springing out of a rock). With Jesus these signs revealed their full significance (*Jn* 6: multiplication of the loaves and the discourse on the “bread of life”; *Jn* 7, 36-39” the promise of living water; *Jn* 19, 31-34: from Jesus’ pierced side “blood and water” poured forth. This continues in the Church: every day she gives her children the bread of the Word, the nourishment of the Body and Blood of Christ and the water of the Holy Spirit.

37. Throughout the history of the Church saints have performed “bread and water” miracles to relieve their brethren in times of famine or drought. Among these saints was St. Philip Benizi. On a different level of reality these “bread and water” miracles were a symbol, a prolongation of Christ’s saving actions.

The purpose of this liturgical action is to commemorate St. Philip’s miracles which call to mind the saving work of Our Lord. This rite fosters a hunger for the bread of Christ’s word and body, a thirst for the Spirit and a commitment to the law of fraternal love.

Angelic Salutation

38. The Presider invites all present to begin this service by turning to our Lady and in conformity with the Order’s tradition, reciting the Angelic Salutation.

P. Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Invoking the name of the Lord

39. The Presider goes on to say:

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

Admonition

40. The Presider or a Lector begins the blessing with the following (or similar) words:

P. St. Philip's life shone with
love of Our Lady,
charity for the needy,
humility and zeal for the apostolate.
Among the many miracles he performed
we remember what took place in Arezzo:
war had brought famine
and the friars had nothing to eat.
St. Philip sought the help of Our Lady
and immediately a basket of the whitest bread
was brought miraculously to the priory.
We recall another miracle
that occurred while the Saint was on a journey.
His companion was about to faint
from heat and thirst.
Again the Saint
prayed to Our Lady
and bread and fresh water
miraculously appeared.
We too bless bread and water
in the hope that these miraculous signs
will never be forgotten.
May our trust in Providence
and the patronage of Our Lady and St. Philip
ever grow.

Blessing the Bread

Scripture Reading

41. After the admonition a lector reads something from Sacred Scripture about the gift of bread:
e.g. *Jn* 6, 32-35.

L. Listen brothers,
a reading from the Gospel according to John.

So Jesus said to them,
"Amen, amen, I say to you,
it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven;
my Father gives you
the true bread from heaven.
For the bread of God is
that which comes down from heaven
and gives life to the world."
So they said to him,
"Sir, give us this bread always."
Jesus said to them,
"I am the bread of life;
whoever comes to me will never hunger,
and whoever believes in me will never thirst.
Word of the Lord.
A. Praise to you, O Christ.

Blessing Prayer

42. The Presider then recites the Blessing Prayer:

P. God, our Father, in your goodness,
you take ceaseless care of mankind:
in the desert you refreshed the people of Israel
with manna from heaven;
through your Son, Jesus Christ,
with loaves multiplied miraculously
you fed the crowd
that hungered from the Word of eternal life
but had no material food.
We humbly pray you, O Lord,
through the love of your servant, St. Philip,
bless + this bread, so that whoever partakes of it
will never lack the necessary sustenance,
and will always be nourished by your word;
so that he may share the riches of earth and the Kingdom
with his brothers.
Through Christ, Our Lord.
A. Amen.

Blessing of Water

Scripture Reading

43. After the blessing of the bread a lector reads something from Sacred Scripture about the gift of water: e.g. *Num 20, 7-9, 11.*

L. Listen brothers,
a reading from the Book of Numbers.

And the LORD said to Moses,
"Take the staff and assemble the community,
you and your brother Aaron,
and in their presence order the rock
to yield its waters.
From the rock you shall bring forth water
for the community and their livestock to drink."
So Moses took the staff
from its place before the LORD,
as he was ordered.
Then, raising his hand,
Moses struck the rock twice with his staff,
and water gushed out in abundance
for the community and their livestock to drink.
The Word of God.
A. Thanks be to God.

Blessing Prayer

44. The Presider then recites the Blessing Prayer:

P. Blessed are you, O Lord
for you have created water
to make the earth fruitful,
and covered with green;
to quench the thirst of mankind,
to refresh his tired limbs
and to give him a source of energy and life;
for you have willed
that water be a symbol and a sacrament
of the mystery of redemption.
O Lord, you quenched the thirst
of the people of Israel
with water gushing from a rock;
and every day you quench your Church's thirst
with the living water that pours forth from Christ the Savior.
Pour down, we pray,
your blessing + on this water;
and grant that whoever drinks it
or is sprinkled with it
in memory of St. Philip
may enjoy the gift of water forever

and be revived with the dew of the Spirit.
Through Christ, Our Lord.
A. Amen.

45. After the prayer, the Presider distributes the blessed bread. The faithful should be given the opportunity (as local custom permits) to drink the blessed water or to take it home with them.

Dismissal

46. Finally the Presider concludes the rite with the following (or similar) words:

P. Brothers and Sisters,
take this blessed bread and water
to your families and friends
as a sign of fraternity and friendship.
May the Lord Jesus remain ever with you
to nourish you with the bread of life
and to quench your thirst with grace.
A. Amen.

47. If the Presider is an ordained minister he adds:

P. And the blessing of God, the Lord of Life,
the Father and the Son + and the Holy Spirit,
descend upon you and remain forever.
A. Amen.

Second Formula

The value and meaning
of bread and water

48. Bread and water are two elements rich in symbolic value in both the natural and the supernatural order.

From the perspective of this formula blessing bread and water in honor of St. Philip Benizi implies honoring his memory and seeking his intercession – but above all it glorifies God through the symbolic value of these humble and common elements. It becomes an occasion to plead with the Lord to help us “understand and respect the values represented by bread” (no. 54) and to “respect and love humble water and discover its hidden significance” (no. 56).

49. Our spiritual attitude in performing this rite involves several components: a sense of respect and the desire to grasp the deeper significance of common things; an appreciation of the harmony between nature and grace and between God and mankind; the ability to focus on Sacred Scripture and see its reflection in the world around us; and finally the will to translate what we see in the celebration of bread and water into the reality of our daily lives.

The Angelic Salutation

50. The Presider invites all present to begin this service by turning to our Lady and in conformity with the Order's tradition, reciting the Angelic Salutation.

P. Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Invoking the name of the Lord

51. The Presider goes on to say:

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

Admonition

52. The Presider or a lector begins the blessing with the following (or similar) words:

P. By calling on the Blessed Virgin
St. Philip provided bread and water
for his brethren who were afflicted with famine
and the fatigue of travel.
In memory of these miraculous events
Servants of Mary, following an ancient tradition,
bless bread and water
on the feast of St. Philip and on other special occasions.
We must learn from St. Philip to care for the needy
and we must ask the Lord to make our thirst for truth
and hunger for justice grow.

Blessing the Bread

Scripture Reading

53. After the admonition the lector reads a passage from Scripture on the gift of bread, for example: *1 Kings* 17, 2-6.

L. Listen brothers,
a reading from the First Book of Kings.

The LORD then said to Elijah, the Tishbite:

"Leave here, go east
and hide in the Wadi Cherith,
east of the Jordan.
You shall drink of the stream,
and I have commanded ravens to feed you there."
So he left and did as the LORD had commanded.
He went and remained by the Wadi Cherith.
Ravens brought him
bread and meat in the morning,
and bread and meat in the evening,
and he drank from the stream.
The Word of God.

A. Thanks be to God.

Blessing Prayer

54. The Presider recites the blessing prayer

P. Bless this bread, O Lord,
the nourishment of our life
which we present to you in memory of St. Philip.
Allow us to understand and respect the values
it represents and signifies:
the mysterious energy of the sun and the earth,
the intelligent efforts of man,
and the fraternal sharing of possessions.
Allow all of us who eat this bread
to sit, one day, through your grace
at the banquet in the Kingdom.
Through Christ, Our Lord.
A. Amen.

Blessing the Water

Scripture Reading

55. After blessing the bread the lector reads a passage from Scripture on the gift of water, for example *Jn 7, 37-38*.

L. Listen brothers,
a reading from the Gospel according to John.

On the last
and greatest day of the feast,
Jesus stood up and exclaimed,
"Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink."

Whoever believes in me,
as scripture says:
'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.'
The Word of the Lord.

A. Praise to you, O Christ.

Blessing Prayer

56. The Presider blesses the water:

P. Bless, O Lord, this water,
which you have created and given to us.
We present it to you in memory of St. Philip.
Allow us to respect and love humble water
and to grasp its hidden significance:
it is a sign of life and death,
fruitfulness and purification,
humility and power,
refreshment and joy.
Make all of us, servants of life on earth,
who rejoice today in the memory of St. Philip
may one day, through your grace,
drink at the stream
that flows through your holy dwelling.
Through Christ, Our Lord.
A. Amen.

57. After the prayer the Presider distributes the blessed bread. The faithful should be given the opportunity (as local custom permits) to drink the blessed water or to take it home with them.

Dismissal

58. Finally the Presider concludes the rite with the following (or similar) words:

P. Brothers and Sisters,
take this blessed bread and water
to your families and friends
as a sign of fraternity and friendship.
May the Lord Jesus remain ever with you
to nourish you with the bread of life
and to quench your thirst with grace.
A. Amen.

47. If the Presider is an ordained minister he adds:

P. And the blessing of God, the Lord of Life,
the Father and the Son + and the Holy Spirit,
descend upon you and remain forever.

A. Amen.

IV

BLESSING BREAD AND WATER AT THE FAMILY TABLE

60. Along with the usual community occasions (Vespers, Mass, Celebration of the Word) the blessing of bread and water in memory of St. Philip can also take place in the family before a meal.

Bread and water are placed on the table to be blessed (if possible) by the head of the family.

Scripture Reading

61. From the Book of Exodus (23, 25)
You will serve the Lord, your God.
He will bless your bread and your water.
He will keep sickness far from you.

The Lord's Prayer

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

Prayer

63. O God, in your goodness,
you have given St. Philip Benizi
to mankind as a visible sign of evangelical life.
Through him, bless this bread + and this water;
keep the spirit of your service alive within us
and quench our hunger and thirst for justice
with the bread of your Word
and the water of your Wisdom.
Through Christ, Our Lord.

R. Amen.

INDEX

Letter of the Prior General

General Introduction

I. Blessing of children

Introduction

Rite of Blessing

Shorter Form

II. Blessing of the Sick

Introduction

Rite of Blessing

Shorter Form

III. Blessing of Bread and Water

Introduction

I. Blessing of bread and water during Vespers

II. Blessing of bread and water during Mass

III. Blessing of bread and water during Celebration of the Word

First Formula

Second Formula

IV. Blessing bread and water at the family table

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