

RITE FOR BLESSING
A “*VIA MATRIS*”

INTRODUCTION

1. Blessing and installation of the *Via Matris* in a church or chapel should take place during a service or celebration when people are present. Immediately after installation the *Via Matris* devotion take place.

If the stations have been installed in a church that has not yet been dedicated or blessed there is no special rite for their erection.

2. The images of the stations should be placed in an appropriate fashion in the presence of the faithful or put in the places designated beforehand.

DAY

3. It would be best if the rite of blessing the *Via Matris* takes place on a Friday in preparation for the weekly celebration of the Easter – the Lord’s Day. In Lent the blessing would be part of the annual preparation for the celebration of Easter. A good time for the rite would be the Friday after the Fifth Sunday of Lent – the feast of Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross – or September 15th, the patronal feast of the Order.

MINISTER

4. A priest or deacon should preside at the rite of blessing, preferably the rector of the church.

ADAPTATION

5. Individual parts of the structure of the rite can be adapted to meet the needs and circumstances of people or place.

RITE OF BLESSING

I. OPENING PRAYERS

6. Once assembled the faithful will sing an appropriate hymn or spend time in reflection.

HYMN

Holy Mother of Sorrows
You accompanied the Redeemer
To his death.

With Jesus in agony
His affliction made you
A Suffering Servant.

R. Holy Mother of the Lord
the mystery of your suffering
gives us hope.

When your Son was flogged
you too shed your blood
Woman of sorrow.

With his head crowned with thorns
he is the silent lamb
but your heart cries out. *R.*

On the road to death
you follow him, strong woman
you are his disciple.

With him you die on the cross
with him you enter peace
trusting in God. *R.*

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

7. Everyone makes the sign of the cross while the presider says:

L. In the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

GREETING

8. The presider greets all those present with the following words – or other appropriate words preferably from Holy Scripture:

L. The Lord Jesus
who opened the path to the Father
through the sacrifice of his life
be with you.

A. And with your spirit.

ADMONITION

9. The presider or an appointed reader begins the rite of blessing and the “*Via Matris*” devotion with these or other similar words:

Brothers and sisters
life is a journey we make
as disciples
who follow Christ:
he tells us that
“Whoever does not carry his cross
and come after me
cannot be my disciple.”

Our Lady too
walked behind Christ
she was his mother and his disciple.
Her journey was one of suffering
but like her Son’s journey it led to joy.

By listening to the Word of God
in faith and love
we want to follow the Sorrowful Mother’s journey.
to make this journey known
to all who come to this place
we place and bless the seven stations
of the “*Via Matris Dolorosae*.”

II. WORD OF GOD

10. At this point a text from Sacred Scripture is proclaimed – preferably a text from the “*Lectionary for Masses of the Blessed Virgin*” for Lent or one of the texts that follow.

BIBLICAL READING

11. The reader or one of those attending the service reads the following text:

R. From the Book of Sirach (51, 13-17)

I will give glory to the one who grants me wisdom

While I was still young, before I went on my travels,
I sought wisdom openly in my prayer.

Before the temple I asked for her,
and I will search for her until the end.
From the first blossom to the ripening grape
my heart delighted in her;
my foot walked on the straight path;
from my youth I followed her steps.
I inclined my ear a little and received her,
and I found for myself much instruction.
I made progress in her;

ALTERNATE READINGS

12. *L.* From the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (8, 31-39)

Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

Brothers and Sisters, if God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of God.

A. We give thanks to God.

13. *Or.*:

R. From the Gospel according to Matthew (12, 46 – 50)

Here are my mother and my brothers

While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

A. Praise to you, O Christ.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (*Psalm* 25 [24], 4 -9)

14. After the reading a psalm, responsory or other hymn is sung.

R. Make me to know your ways, O Lord.

Teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long. R

Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD! R.

Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way. R.

MEDITATION ON THE WORD OF GOD

15. After reciting the responsorial psalm there should be a time of silence for meditation or the presider could comment on the texts that have been read. He may also give a brief description of the episodes commemorated in the seven stations of the *Via Matris* emphasizing how Mary, Mother and Disciple, was associated to her Son's passion; or he could read a homily text preferably chosen from the documents of the Order.

III. PRAYER AND BLESSING

16. At this point we recite the *Prayer of the Faithful* or the *Lord's Prayer*.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

One is free to choose from among the invocations proposed those that seem most appropriate. Others that meet particular situations or needs can be added.

L. May the example of Mary
the humble handmaid and faithful disciple
who shared the passion
help us as we follow the Lord Jesus
on the road to Jerusalem
to fulfill the Father's will.

R. Lead us to yourself, O Lord.

Holy Father
you gave Our Lady
the grace of being a disciple of the Word
even before she became the mother of the Incarnate Word
give your Church community the ability to perceive
and obey in faith
every indication of your will. We pray. R.

Gracious Father
you entrusted all mankind
redeemed by your Son
to the Virgin Mother's heart

grant your disciples
the ability to share
the sufferings and hopes of all. We pray. *R.*

Just Father,
who joined the Mother to the sacrifice of the Son
support all who suffer
sickness and loneliness
that they may experience the joy and hope
that is born at the foot of the Cross. We pray. *R.*

Merciful Father
in living memory of our baptism
you call us to walk towards Easter,
grant that by watching Mary, Mother and Model of the Church
we may be led to you
who await our return. We pray. *R.*

L. Almighty Father
at the right time
you call us to conversion of heart
and renewal of life,
grant that in imitation of Our Lady
we may enjoy the happiness of disciples of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord
who lives and reigns throughout the centuries.

A. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

18. When the above invocations are omitted, before the blessing the presider should lead the Lord's prayer beginning with these words:

L. Led by the Holy Spirit
we have, from the day of our baptism
followed in the footsteps of the Son.
Together with him and Our Lady, his faithful disciple
we dare to say:

Our Father ...

PRAYER OF BLESSING

19. The presider extends his arms and recites the prayer of blessing:

L. Blessed are you, Father
Lord of heaven and earth,
because you have placed
the root of all grace
and the source of all blessing
in the holy Cross.

A. Blessed be the Lord throughout the centuries.

Blessed are you, Father
who arrange all things with wisdom and love
because you have willed that the Virgin Mother
strong, fearless and
supported by the Spirit
should follow your Son on the way of the Cross.

A. Blessed be the Lord throughout the centuries.

Blessed are you, Father
lover of life
through your merciful design
Our Lady
at the foot of the Cross
became the mother of the living.

A. Blessed be the Lord throughout the centuries.

Bless, Father
these stations of the "*Via Matris*"
as a sign and commemoration of
Our Sorrowful Mother's journey of faith
and may we, following in her footsteps,
find our way to the City of life.
Through Christ our Lord.

A. Amen.

20. *Or:*

L. O God
for our sake you delivered your Son
to the death of the cross
and through the power of the Spirit raised him from the dead
grant that we may die to sin
and live in holiness of life;
help and bless your faithful people
who walk with Our Lady
on her journey of suffering
and grant that by bearing our cross with patience
we may rejoice in the manifestation of her glory.

Through Christ our Lord.

A. Amen.

INCENSE

21. After the blessing prayer the presider, if possible, should put incense in the thurible and incense the images of the *Via Matris*. During the incensation the antiphon *Blessed are you Queen of Martyrs*, the *Stabat Mater* or some other appropriate hymn can be sung.

Blessed are you, Queen of Martyrs:
Joined to the passion of Christ
You have become our mother
A sign of hope on our journey.

IV. VIA MATRIS

22. At this point the *Via Matris* using one of the five formulas in this booklet should be prayed beginning with the First Station.

APPENDIX

MEDITATIONS ON OUR LADY OF SORROWS

One of the following documents of the Order can be used for the meditation on Our Lady of Sorrows proposed on page ??? of this booklet.

1

From the Marian document “Do what he tells you” from the 208th General Chapter of the Servite Order (no. 92).

*The image of Our Lady of Sorrows
Leads us to seek “life solutions” where we find sorrow*

The image of Our Lady of Sorrows moves us and leads us to approach the mystery of suffering and death with eyes of faith; we see these tragedies in the light of life. Faced with these mysteries we have no rational explanation – all we can provide is our experience of faith: the Paschal Christ – death is overwhelmed by life (cf. *I Cor* 15, 54), and the assurance that in his graciousness God transforms “the pain of suffering into an instrument of salvation.” Mary shared this experience with her Son. Marian devotion will give us hope and move us to find “life solutions” even in the midst of suffering and death.

2

From the letter *Con Maria accanto alla Croce* by Fra Hubert M. Moons, Prior General of the Order of Friar Servants of Mary, no. 15.

From Mary’s Seven Sorrow to all the suffering in the world

Age-old meditation on the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin can be easily turned towards the realities of the present age. We confront the Sorrows with the many and complex sufferings that characterise modern life. Seven, after all, a symbol of totality: we can easily compose our own chaplet of Seven mystery-meditations, echoing the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, involving every sort of tribulation of body and spirit that we witness today.

Because of our fundamental Christian calling, we know that our being and existence will be pierced by the sword of sorrow. Following the way of Jesus, we will take up our cross each day (*Lk* 9, 23; cf. *Mk* 8, 34; *Mt* 16, 24). Deeply conscious of the drama of countless people and groups forced to migrate from poor places towards rich nations, in search of bread or freedom, we will extend the hand of rescue to anyone being persecuted, and actively help welcome immigrants and refugees. May the Holy Virgin, who with Joseph and her Child knew such agony, guide the hearts and minds of her Servants, and teach us even to open the doors of our houses.

So many people seek the Face of the Lord amid the uncertainties of life, or look for Him in sorrow after losing Him. Our communities must support them in their arduous search. Let our communities become sanctuaries of consolation for the many parents who suffer the physical or moral loss of their children. We make the self-same journey of faith when we accompany our brothers and sisters

on their road to Calvary. Perhaps we can show some tender gesture of gentleness like Veronica, or help them with their load, like Simon of Cyrene.

We often come into contact with people when they are dying, as they are passing over from this world to the Father. It is our wish to be present with them instilling perseverance in the midst of suffering, so that the grain that falls into the ground and dies may bear much fruit (cf. *Jn* 12, 24) When the light of day is enshrouded in the shadows of death, each of us must become like a womb of life, wherever new life needs to be re-born out of sicknesses, calamity and accident, hateful malice ...The body must rise again, because "...the mercies of the Lord are not over yet ...and so for this I wish to place my trust in Him"(*Lam* 3, 22. 24)

Then we wish to be present in front of the ice-cold hard reality of the tomb, where all seems irreparably lost. It is for us to rekindle the flame of hope. The tomb, after all, is also the figure of the: Womb of Mother-Earth. The Spirit of the Lord, who wrought the blessing of Life in the Womb of Mary, Woman-Mother, will rise up new life. With the Risen Christ we can then sing, "You, O Lord, will not abandon my life to the Tomb ...you will fill me with joy in your presence" (*Acts* 2, 27. 28; cf. *Ps* 16, 10. 11).