



*Vocavit nos Deus
ut eamus per mundum*

Laudate Dominum

Let us pray

CAPITULUM GENERALE OFM 2003

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VERSICLES AND COLLECTS AFTER THE READINGS

1 - Simplicity

Saint Francis was carefully attentive to show forth in himself, and he loved in others, holy simplicity, the daughter of grace, the sister of wisdom, the mother of justice. Not all simplicity, however, was approved by him, but only that which, being content with her God, considers everything else as of little value. This is she who seeks not the rind but the marrow, not the shell but the kernel, not the many but the much, the supreme and enduring Good. [2Cel 189]

V/. Hail, pure and holy Simplicity, sister of holy Wisdom:

R/. *You confound all the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the flesh.*

Let us Pray:

*O God, who fashioned us in secret,
you alone can penetrate the tangle
of our motives and longings.*

*Enable us, we pray, so to anchor our desires in you
that we may discern where our happiness lies
and, amid the beauty with which you have adorned the world,
seek in all things you, the supreme Good,
in whom alone we are truly blessed.*

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



2 - Poverty

Holy Poverty was the brothers' only provision. It made them prompt for every obedience, energetic for work and unencumbered for travelling. Since they had nothing earthly, they loved nothing, and so they feared to lose nothing. They were serene everywhere: no fear could hinder them, and no worry could distract them. They lived with untroubled minds, and each day looked forward to the morrow without any solicitude as to where they might find shelter for the night. [LM 4.7]



4

V/. Hail, holy Lady Poverty, sister of holy Humility:
R/. *You confound cupidity, avarice and the cares of this world.*

Let us Pray:
*God our Father,
when Brother Francis stood naked before the world
and claimed his birthright as your son,
you clothed him in a garment of joy and freedom
and bade him walk on earth as your herald.
Give us the courage and simplicity we need
to lay hold of the heritage he bequeathed to us:
to trust that you, who feed the ravens
and adorn the flowers
with a splendour greater than Solomon's,
will always be our Father and our Provider,
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.*

3 - Prayer

The brothers begged Francis to teach them how to pray, because, walking in simplicity of spirit, up to that time they did not know the Church's office. Francis told them: "When you pray. Say 'Our Father' and 'We adore you, O Christ, in all your churches throughout the whole world, and we bless you, for by your holy cross you have redeemed the world'." The brothers, on fire with the Holy Spirit, used to sing the "Our Father" with supplication and melodious voice. They did this, not just at the appointed hours, but at all hours, being little occupied with earthly concerns and the nagging anxiety of cares. [1Cel 45.47]

- V/. Let us always make within ourselves a home and dwelling-place for the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
R/. *Let us adore Him with a pure heart, for the Father seeks such worshippers.*

Let us Pray:

*Most High, Omnipotent, Good Lord God,
all praise be yours for Jesus, your Son,
in whose cross the world is reconciled to you
and the walls of division broken down.
Fill our hearts with the peace he gives.
Make us daring, through the Spirit he breathes on us,
to become ambassadors of reconciliation and unity,
so that your Kingdom may come
and your will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Amen.*

4 - Going through the World

Blessed Francis used to say: "The brothers' way of life among the people should be such that whoever hears or sees them will be drawn to glorify the heavenly Father and praise him devoutly". And he would add: "As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure you have it, and in greater measure, in your hearts. Let no one be provoked by you to anger or scandal, but rather let your gentleness encourage everyone towards peace, benevolence and concord. For we have been called for this: to heal the wounded, to bind up the broken, and to bring home those who have lost their way. In fact, many who seem to us to be members of the devil will yet turn out to be disciples of Christ." [L3S 58]

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V/. The Lord revealed a greeting to me:
R/. *That we should say, "The Lord give you peace".*

Let us Pray:
*Make us grow each day, Almighty Father,
in the likeness of your Son and Servant, Jesus,
who did not break the bruised reed
or quench the smouldering wick,
and whose standard of victory was the shameful cross.
Plant in our hearts the peace Christ won
through the glorious wounds he bore for us,
and send us to share his love
with all who labour and are burdened,
that they may find rest for their souls.
Amen.*

5 - Pilgrims and Strangers

Often when he spoke to the brothers about poverty, Francis would insist on the saying of the Gospel: *“foxes have holes and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head”*. Because of this, he taught the brothers to build small houses, like the poor, and not to live in them like proprietors, but as strangers and pilgrims in a house which was not their own. For the law of pilgrims, he used to add, is to shelter under another’s roof, to yearn for one’s homeland, and to pass on peacefully. [LM 7.2]

V/. Take nothing for your own, neither house, nor place, nor anything at all:

R/. *As pilgrims and strangers in this world, serve the Lord in poverty and humility.*

Let us Pray:

*Increase our longing, O Lord,
for the new heavens and the new earth
in which justice dwells,
and enable us to hasten its coming
by living as brothers who seek neither power nor possessions.
May we proclaim the good news to the poor,
healing to the broken-hearted
and liberty to captives.
Make us willing to be taught by the poor,
lest having preached to others
we risk your condemnation.
Hear our prayer, O Lord,
for the love of your Son, Jesus, our brother.
Amen.*

6 - All Praise to you, my Lord!

Just as of old the three young men in the fiery furnace invited all the elements to praise and glorify the Creator of the universe, so also Francis, filled with the Spirit of God, never ceased to glorify, praise and bless the Creator and Ruler of all things in all the elements and creatures. Flowers, fields and vineyards, rocks and woods and all the beauties of the field, fountains of water and leafy gardens, earth and fire, air and wind: all these he urged, with the most candid purity, to love God and serve Him joyfully. He called every creature brother, and in a marvellous way, granted to nobody else, he could discern the hidden things of nature with his sensitive heart, like one who has already passed through to the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [1Cel 80.81]

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- V/. Let every creature in heaven, on earth, in the sea and in the depths, praise, honour and bless the Lord God:
R/. *Who alone is holy, praiseworthy and blessed for ever.*

Let us Pray:

*Lord of the planets and the swirling galaxies,
when you fashioned the earth in beauty
the morning stars sang in chorus
and the choirs of angels shouted for joy.
Give us, we pray, the glorious freedom of your children
so that we can give a voice to creation
by praising you in all your works
and serving you in great humility.
This we ask through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.*

THE RULE OF THE FRIARS MINOR

Honorius, Bishop, Servant of the servants of God, to our beloved sons, Friar Francis and the other friars of the Order of the Friars Minor, greetings and apostolic Benediction.

The Apostolic See is accustomed to grant the pious wishes and the upright desires of those petitioning to share in her benevolent favor. Wherefore, beloved sons in the Lord, having yielded to your pious entreaties, We confirm by Our apostolic authority the Rule of your Order, approved by Our predecessor, Pope Innocent, of good memory, quoted herein, and We thoroughly fortify with the patronage of this present writing that, which is as follows:

Chapter 1.

In the name of the Lord begins the life of the Friars Minor

The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, namely, to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without property, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to his holiness Pope Honorius and his lawfully elected successors and to the Church of Rome. The other friars are bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.

Chapter 2.

Of those who wish to take up this life and how they are to be received

If anyone wants to profess our Rule and comes to the friars, they must send him to their provincial minister, because he alone, to the exclusion of others, has permission to receive friars into the Order. The ministers must carefully examine all candidates on the Catholic faith and the sacraments of the Church. If they believe all

that the Catholic faith teaches and are prepared to profess it loyally, holding by it steadfastly to the end of their lives, and if they are not married; or if they are married and their wives have already entered a convent or after taking a vow of chastity have by the authority of the bishop of the diocese been granted this permission; and the wives are of such an age that no suspicion can arise concerning them: let the ministers tell them what the holy Gospel says (Mt. 19:21), that they should go and sell all that belongs to them and endeavour to give it to the poor. If they cannot do this, their good will is sufficient.

The friars and their ministers must be careful not to become involved in the temporal affairs of newcomers to the Order, so that they may dispose of their goods freely, as God inspires them. If they ask for advice, the ministers may refer them to some God-fearing persons who can advise them how to distribute their property to the poor.

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When this has been done, the ministers should clothe the candidates with the habit of probation, namely, two tunics without a hood, a cord and trousers, and a caperon reaching to the cord, unless the ministers themselves at any time decide that something else is more suitable. After the year of the novitiate, they should be received to obedience, promising to live always according to this life and Rule. It is absolutely forbidden to leave the Order, as his holiness the Pope has laid down. For the Gospel tells us, No one, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (Lk. 9:62).

The friars who have already vowed obedience may have one tunic with a hood and those who wish may have another without a hood. Those who are forced by necessity may wear shoes. All the friars are to wear poor clothes and they can use pieces of sackcloth and other material to mend them, with God's blessing.

I warn all the friars and exhort them not to condemn or look down on people whom they see wearing soft or gaudy clothes and enjoying luxuries in food or drink; each one should rather condemn and despise himself.

Chapter 3.

Of the Divine Office and fasting, and how the friars are to travel about the world

The clerics are to recite the Divine Office according to the rite of the Roman Curia, except the psalter; and so they may have breviaries. The lay brothers are to say twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins and five for Lauds; for Prime, Terce, Sext, and None, for each of these, they are to say seven; for Vespers twelve and for Compline seven. They should also say some prayers for the dead.

All the friars are to fast from the feast of All Saints until Christmas. Those who voluntarily fast for forty days after Epiphany have God's blessing, because this is the period our Lord sanctified by his holy fast (cf. Mt. 4:2). However, those who do not wish to do so, should not be forced to it. All the friars are bound to keep the Lenten fast before Easter, but they are not bound to fast at other times, except on Fridays. However, in case of manifest necessity, they are not obliged to corporal fasting.

And this is my advice, my counsel, and my earnest plea to my friars in our Lord Jesus Christ that, when they travel about the world, they should not be quarrelsome or take part in disputes with words (cf. 2 Tim. 2:14) or criticize others; but they should be gentle, peaceful, and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to everyone, as is expected of them. They are forbidden to ride on horseback, unless they are forced to it by manifest necessity or sickness. Whatever house they enter, they should first say, "Peace to this house" (Lk. 10:5), and in the words of the Gospel they may eat what is set before them (Lk. 10:8).

Chapter 4.

The friars are forbidden to accept money

I strictly forbid all the friars to accept money in any form, either personally or through an intermediary. The ministers and superiors, however, are bound to provide carefully for the needs of

the sick and the clothing of the other friars, by having recourse to spiritual friends, while taking into account differences of place, season, or severe climate, as seems best to them in the circumstances. This does not dispense them from the prohibition of receiving money in any form.

Chapter 5.

The manner of working

The friars to whom God has given the grace of working should work in a spirit of faith and devotion and avoid idleness, which is the enemy of the soul, without however extinguishing the spirit of prayer and devotion, to which every temporal consideration must be subordinate. As wages for their labour they may accept anything necessary for their temporal needs, for themselves or their brethren, except money in any form. And they should accept it humbly as is expected of those who serve God and strive after the highest poverty.

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Chapter 6.

That the friars are to appropriate nothing for themselves; on seeking alms; and on the sick friars

The friars are to appropriate nothing for themselves, neither a house, nor a place, nor anything else. As strangers and pilgrims (I Pet. 2:11) in this world, who serve God in poverty and humility, they should beg alms trustingly. And there is no reason why they should be ashamed, because God made himself poor for us in this world. This is the pinnacle of the most exalted poverty, and it is this, my dearest brothers, that has made you heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven, poor in temporal things, but rich in virtue. This should be your portion, because it leads to the land of the living. And to this poverty, my beloved brothers, you must cling with all your heart, and wish never to have anything else under heaven, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherever the friars meet one another, they should show that they are members of the same family. And they should have no hesitation in making known their needs to one another. For if a mother loves and cares for her child in the flesh, a friar should certainly love and care for his spiritual brother all the more tenderly. If a friar falls ill, the others are bound to look after him as they would like to be looked after themselves.

Chapter 7.

Of the penance to be imposed on friars who fall into sin

If any of the friars, at the instigation of the enemy, fall into mortal sin, they must have recourse as soon as possible, without delay, to their provincial ministers, if it is a sin for which recourse to them has been prescribed for the friars. If the ministers are priests, they should impose a moderate penance on such friars; if they are not priests, they should see that a penance is imposed by some priest of the Order, as seems best to them before God. They must be careful not to be angry or upset because a friar has fallen into sin, because anger or annoyance in themselves or in others makes it difficult to be charitable.

Chapter 8.

The election of the Minister General of the Order and the Pentecost Chapter

The friars are always bound to have a member of the Order as Minister General, who is the servant of the whole fraternity, and they are strictly bound to obey him. At his death the provincial ministers and the custodes are to elect a successor at the Pentecost Chapter, at which the provincial ministers are bound to assemble in the place designated by the Minister General. This chapter should be held once every three years, or at a longer or shorter interval, if the Minister General has so ordained.

If at any time it becomes clear to all the provincial ministers and custodes that the Minister General is incapable of serving the friars and can be of no benefit to them, they who have the power to elect must elect someone else as Minister General.

After the Pentecost Chapter, the provincial ministers and custodes may summon their subjects to a chapter in their own territory once in the same year, if they wish and it seems worthwhile.

Chapter 9.

Of preachers

The friars are forbidden to preach in any diocese if the bishop objects to it. No friar should dare to preach to the people unless he has been examined and approved by the Minister General of the Order and has received from him the commission to preach.

Moreover, I advise and admonish the friars that in their preaching, their words should be examined and chaste. They should aim only at the advantage and spiritual good of their listeners, telling them briefly about vice and virtue, punishment and glory, because our Lord himself kept his words short on earth.

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Chapter 10.

On admonishing and correcting the friars

The ministers, who are the servants of the other friars, must visit their subjects and admonish them, correcting them humbly and charitably, without commanding them anything that is against their conscience or our Rule. The subjects, however, should remember that they have renounced their own wills for God's sake. And so I strictly command them to obey their ministers in everything that they have promised God and is not against their conscience and our Rule. The friars who are convinced that they cannot observe the Rule spiritually, wherever they may be, can and must have recourse to their ministers. The ministers, for their part, are bound to receive them kindly and charitably, and be so sympathetic towards them that the friars can speak and deal

with them as employers with their servants. That is the way it ought to be; the ministers should be the servants of all the friars.

With all my heart, I beg the friars in our Lord Jesus Christ to be on their guard against pride, boasting, envy, and greed, against the cares and anxieties of this world, against detraction and complaining. Those who are illiterate should not be anxious to study. They should realize instead that the only thing they should desire is to have the spirit of God at work within them, while they pray to him unceasingly with a heart free from self-interest. They must be humble, too, and patient in persecution or illness, loving those who persecute us by blaming us or bringing charges against us, as our Lord tells us, Love. your enemies, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you (Mt. 5:44). Blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:10). He who has persevered to the end will be saved (Mt. 10:22).

Chapter 11.

The friars are forbidden to enter the monasteries of nuns

I strictly forbid all the friars to have suspicious relationships or conversations with women. No one may enter the monasteries of nuns, except those who have received special permission from the Apostolic See. They are forbidden to be sponsors of men or women lest scandal arise amongst or concerning the friars.

Chapter 12.

Of those who wish to go among the Saracens and other unbelievers

If any of the friars is inspired by God to go among the Saracens or other unbelievers, he must ask permission from his provincial minister. The ministers, for their part, are to give permission only to those whom they see are fit to be sent.

The Ministers, too, are bound to ask the Pope for one of the cardinals of the holy Roman Church to be governor, protector, and corrector of this fraternity, so that we may be utterly subject and

submissive to the Church. And so, firmly established in the Catholic faith, we may live always according to the poverty, and the humility, and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we have solemnly promised.

The Confirmation of the Rule

Let it not be in any way licit to anyone among men to infringe this page of our confirmation, or to contravene it with rash daring. If anyone however would presume to attempt this, let him know himself to have incurred the indignation of the Omnipotent God and of Blessed Peter and Paul, His Apostles.

Given at the Lateran, on the third day of the Kalens of December, in the eight year of Our Pontificate.

The Testament of St. Francis

This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of penance. When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure; but then God himself led me into their company, and I had pity on them. When I had once become acquainted with them, what had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation for me. After that I did not wait long before leaving the world.

And God inspired me with such faith in his churches that I used to pray with all simplicity, saying, "We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all your churches in the whole world, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."

God inspired me, too, and still inspires me with such great faith in priests who live according to the laws of the holy Church of Rome, because of their dignity, that if they persecuted me, I should still be ready to turn to them for aid. And if I were as wise as Solomon and met the poorest priests of the world, I would still refuse to preach against their will in the parishes in which they live. I am determined to reverence, love and honour priests and all others as my superiors. I refuse to consider their sins, because I can see the Son of God in them and they are better than I. I do this because in this world I cannot see the most high Son of God with my own eyes, except for his most holy Body and Blood which they receive and they alone administer to others.

Above everything else, I want this most holy Sacrament to be honoured and venerated and reserved in places which are richly ornamented. Whenever I find his most holy name or writings containing his words in an improper place, I make a point of picking them up, and I ask that they be picked up and put aside in a suitable place. We should honour and venerate theologians, too, and the ministers of God's word, because it is they who give us spirit and life.

When God gave me some friars, there was no one to tell me what I should do; but the Most High himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel. I had this written down briefly and simply and his holiness the Pope confirmed it for me. Those who embraced this life gave everything they had to the poor. They were satisfied with one habit which was patched inside and outside, and a cord, and trousers. We refused to have anything more.

Those of us who were clerics said the Office like other clerics, while the lay brothers said the Our Father, and we were only too glad to find shelter in abandoned churches. We made no claim to learning and we were submissive to everyone. I worked with my own hands and I am still determined to work; and with all my heart I want all the other friars to be busy with some kind of work that can be carried on without scandal. Those who do not know how to work should learn, not because they want to get something for their efforts, but to give good example and to avoid idleness. When we receive no recompense for our work, we can turn to God's table and beg alms from door to door. God revealed a form of greeting to me, telling me that we should say, "God give you peace".

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The friars must be very careful not to accept churches or poor dwellings for themselves, or anything else built for them, unless they are in harmony with the poverty which we have promised in the Rule; and they should occupy these places only as strangers and pilgrims.

In virtue of obedience, I strictly forbid the friars, wherever they may be, to petition the Roman Curia, either personally or through an intermediary, for a papal brief, whether it concerns a church or any other place, or even in order to preach, or because they are being persecuted. If they are not welcome somewhere, they should flee to another country where they can lead a life of penance, with God's blessing.

I am determined to obey the Minister General of the Order and the guardian whom he sees fit to give me. I want to be a captive in his hands so that I cannot travel about or do anything against his command or desire, because he is my superior. Although I am ill

and not much use, I always want to have a cleric with me who will say the Office for me, as is prescribed in the Rule.

All the other friars, too, are bound to obey their guardians in the same way, and say the Office according to the Rule. If any of them refuse to say the Office according to the Rule and want to change it, or if they are not true to the Catholic faith, the other friars are bound in virtue of obedience to bring them before the custos nearest the place where they find them. The custos must keep any such friar as a prisoner day and night so that he cannot escape from his hands until he personally hands him over to his minister. The minister, then, is strictly bound by obedience to place him in the care of friars who will guard him day and night like a prisoner until they present him before his lordship the Bishop of Ostia, who is the superior, protector, and corrector of the whole Order.

The friars should not say, this is another Rule. For this is a remainder, admonition, exhortation, and my testament which I, Brother Francis, worthless as I am, leave to you, my brothers, that we may observe in a more Catholic way the Rule we have promised to God. The Minister General and all the other ministers and custodes are bound in virtue of obedience not to add anything to these words or subtract from them. They should always have this writing with them as well as the Rule and at the chapters they hold, when the Rule is read, they should read these words also.

In virtue of obedience, I strictly forbid any of my friars, clerics or lay brothers, to interpret the Rule or these words, saying, "This is what they mean". God inspired me to write the Rule and these words plainly and simply, and so you too must understand them plainly and simply, and live by them, doing good to the last.

And may whoever observes all this be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father, and on earth with that of his beloved Son, together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and all the powers of heaven and all the saints. And I, Brother Francis, your poor worthless servant, add my share internally and externally to that most holy blessing. Amen.

