

Minister: “Welcome, my sister Death! “With these words, our Seraphic Father, St. Francis, indicated his disposition toward that which causes fear and sorrow among much of the human family. The reality and tragedy of death cannot be ignored on the human level, and yet, as Christians, we believe that death has “lost its sting” through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. As Franciscans, we believe even more strongly that “it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

In view of this faith stance, death takes on an entirely new meaning. Thus, we celebrate the passing of a brother/sister to a new and more fruitful life in the company of the saints. While we express our feelings of loss, we continue to hope and trust in the promises of Christ. Death teaches us to cling to the cross of the Lord with the knowledge that having “been conformed with Him in His death, we will be conformed with Him in His resurrection from death. (Cf. Phil 3:10-11)

For our father Francis, life was to search and strive for union with Christ through faith. Death was for him not a harsh reality, but the door through which he passed toward his ultimate goal, total union with the Father. What Francis sought through faith on earth, he achieved totally after death. The celebration of the death of a Franciscan shows forth the same faith as that which Francis possessed: our belief that death is the gateway to total union with God.

Minister: In the name of the Lord, Amen. Grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

All: May God be praised for His mercy to us, and may we experience His consolation now in our sorrow and be strengthened and enabled to share His love with all people.

(The placing of the Secular Franciscan Order Rule Book)

Minister: Our brother/sister was washed clean in baptism and nourished with the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Eucharist. As a Secular Franciscan, he/she was united more closely with the Lord and with us through the observance of our way of life. As he/she strove to follow this Rule of Life, may the Lord now take him/her to Himself and grant him/her a place among His saints in glory.

Hymn: Prayer of St. Francis - (All are invited to sing)

1. Make me a channel of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love.
Where there is injury, Your pardon, Lord. And where there's doubt, true faith in You.
2. Make me a channel of Your peace. Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, only light, and where there's sadness, ever joy.
3. Oh, Master, grant that I may never seek, so much to be consoled as to console. To
be understood as to understand. To be loved as to love with all my soul.

4. Make me a channel of Your peace. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. In giving of ourselves that we receive, and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Minister: As we contemplate the mystery of death and how it has affected our fraternity in the passing of our brother/sister, let us listen to the account of our father Francis passing to the Lord.

Reader: *(From the Major Life of St. Francis by Brother Bonaventure)*

As the moment of his death drew near, the saint had all the friars who were there called to his side; he spoke to them gently with fatherly affection, consoling them for his death and exhorting them to love God.

He mentioned especially poverty and patient endurance and the necessity of holding to the faith of the holy Roman Church and gave the Gospel preeminence over any other rule of life. The friars were grouped about him, and he stretched out his arms over them in the form of a cross, because he loved that sign, and blessed all the friars, both present and absent, in the power and in the name of the Crucified. Then he added, "I bid you goodbye, all you my sons, in the fear of God. Remain in Him always. There will be trials and temptations in the future, and it is well for those who persevere in the life they have undertaken. I am on my way to God, and I commend you all to His favor." When he had finished his inspiring admonition, he told them to bring a book of the Gospels and asked to have the passage of St. John read, which begins, "Before the Pascal feast began." Then, as best he could, he intoned the psalm, "Loud is my cry to the Lord, the prayer I utter for the Lord's mercy," and recited it all down to the last verse. Too long have honest hearts waited to see You grant me redress."

At last, when all God's mysteries had been accomplished in him, his holy soul was freed from his body and assumed into the abyss of God's glory, and Francis fell asleep in God.

One of the friars, a disciple of his, saw his soul being borne on a white cloud over many waters to heaven, under the appearance of a radiant star. It shone with the brightness of sublime sanctity, full of the abundance of divine wisdom and grace which had earned for him the right to enter the home of light and peace, where he rests with Christ forever.

(A period of silent reflection)

Reader:

All praise be Yours, my Lord through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

All: All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

Reader:

Most High, all-powerful, all good, Lord! All praise is Yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing. To You alone, Most High, do they belong. No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your name.

All: All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

Reader:

All praise be Yours, my Lord, through all that You have made, and first my Lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and light You give us through him. How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendor! Of You, Most High, he bears the likeness.

All: All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

Reader:

All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars; in the heavens You have made them bright and precious and fair. All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and fair and stormy, all the weathers' moods, by which You cherish all that You have made.

All: All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

Reader:

All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Water, so useful, lowly, precious and pure. All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom You brighten up the night. How beautiful is he, how joyful! Full of power and strength.

All: All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

Reader:

All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother, who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

All: All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

Reader:

All praise be Yours, my Lord, through those who grant pardon for love of You, through those who endure sickness and trial. Happy those who endure in peace, by You, Most High, they will be crowned.

All: All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

Reader:

Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Happy those she finds doing Your will! The second death cannot harm them. Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks, and serve Him with great humility.

All: All praise be Yours, my Lord, through Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5 1-12 - **The Sermon on the Mount:**

Jesus saw the crowds and went up on a hill, where He sat down. His disciples gathered around Him, and He began to teach them:

“Happy the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!”

“Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them!”

“Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised!”

“Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully!”

“Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!”

“Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God!”

“Happy are those who work for peace: God will call them His children!”

“Happy are those who are persecuted because of my sake; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!”

(A period of silence)

Minister: (General Intercessions)

The Lord Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even if they die, will live, and every living person who puts faith in Me will never suffer eternal death.

Let us pray to Him for our brother/sister _____. Lord Jesus, You raise those who sleep in death to life. Give _____, our brother/sister Life Eternal.

All: Lord, have mercy

Minister: You washed our brother/sister clean in the waters of baptism and sealed him/her with the seal of the Holy Spirit. Bring him/her to a place of light and refreshment in Your kingdom.

All: Lord, have mercy

Minister: Our brother/sister was fed with Your Body and Blood, may he/she find a place at the table with You at the heavenly banquet.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Minister: Our brother/sister was united with us in the Franciscan Family. Grant him/her all that was promised by our father Francis.

All: Lord, have mercy

Minister: Remember us, Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom and teach us to pray.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Amen.

Minister: Lord Jesus Christ, we trust in You, and hope in Your glorious resurrection. Hear our prayers for our brother/sister _____, whom You have called to Yourself and grant him/her eternal life. We praise and glorify You who live in perfect Trinity and simple Unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

All: Amen

Minister: Before we take leave of our brother/sister _____ for the last time, let us bless him/her with the Blessing of St. Francis.

(All raise your right hand toward the casket together, pray)

All: May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He show His face to you and be merciful to you. May He turn His countenance to you and give you peace. May the Lord bless you, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Minister: Our prayer for our brother/sister _____ has ended. Let us go now, and until that time when the Lord shall gather us all into His kingdom, let us live in His peace.

All: Thanks be to God