

# A Secular Franciscan Penitential Service for Lent

## General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order

### Article 13

1. *Rule 7* Secular Franciscans, called in earlier times "the brothers and sisters of penance", propose to live in the spirit of continual conversion. Some means to cultivate this characteristic of the Franciscan vocation, individually and in fraternity, are: listening to and celebrating the Word of God; review of life; spiritual retreats; the help of a spiritual adviser, and penitential celebrations. They should approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently and participate in the communal celebration of it, whether in the fraternity, or with the whole people of God<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ordo Poenitentiae. Praenotanda* 22 ff.

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*[This service may include the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance if desired and if a priest is present (who also leads the service); otherwise it is led by a deacon present, the Spiritual Assistant or the Minister]*

**Hymn** *[Any appropriate Lenten hymn may be sung]*

## Opening Prayers

Leader: In the name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Lord open our ears and our hearts today to the message of your Son,  
so that through the power of his death and resurrection we may walk  
in newness of life, following in the footsteps of St. Francis.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

## Liturgy of the Word

*First Reading: Sirach 28:1-7 or Isaiah 55:1-11 or Joel 2:12-19 or Ephesians 1:3-7 or 1 John 1:5-9*

Reader: A reading from ... [At the end: The Word of the Lord]

*Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 146: 5-10*

Resp.: Lord, come and save us.

Happy the man who has the God of Jacob to help him,  
whose hope is fixed on Yahweh his God,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
and the sea, and all that these hold!

Resp.: Lord, come and save us.

Yahweh, forever faithful,  
gives justice to those denied it,  
gives food to the hungry,  
gives liberty to prisoners.

Resp.: Lord, come and save us.

Yahweh restores sight to the blind,  
Yahweh straightens the bent,  
Yahweh protects the stranger,  
he keeps the orphan and widow.

Resp.: Lord, come and save us.

Yahweh loves the virtuous,  
and frustrates the wicked.  
Yahweh reigns forever,  
your God, Zion, from age to age.

Resp.: Lord, come and save us.

*Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:1-10 or Matthew 25: 31-46 or Mark 12: 28-34 or Luke 13:1-5 or John 15:9-14*

Reader: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to... [At the end: The Gospel of the Lord]

*[A priest or deacon if present, should give a brief homily on the readings]*

## **Examination of Conscience**

Leader: In the silence of our hearts, let us examine our consciences as we ponder the following:

- Is my heart really set on God, whom I should love above all things?
- Do I make a sincere effort to live a Gospel life according to the Rule I have professed?
- Have I been faithful to a prayer life, especially the Liturgy of the Hours and other forms of prayer?
- Have I made a sincere effort to grow in my Franciscan commitment in my daily life?
- Am I willing to serve in a leadership position in the fraternity, or do I decline, making excuses for myself?
- Do I live a simple lifestyle or am I still concerned about the things of this world?
- Do I share my possessions with the less fortunate?
- Do I do my best to help the victims of oppression, misfortune, and poverty?
- Do I share in the apostolic and charitable works of the Church and specifically those of my fraternity?
- At work, am I just, hard-working, and honest?
- If I am in a position of responsibility or authority, do I use this for the good of others in a spirit of service?
- Am I always ready to forgive and make peace for the love of Christ?
- Do I really love and accept all people as brothers and sisters in Christ?
- Do I avoid rashly judging other people and gossip?
- Do I use the gifts God has given me to build up a more fraternal world?
- Have I kept silent or gone against my conscience out of fear or hypocrisy?
- Have I always turned to God in times of sickness, despair, sorrow and disappointment and trusted in his goodness?
- Do I approach the Sacrament of Penance as often as I should?

*[A period of silence should be included so that each person may examine his or her conscience]*

*[If the Sacrament of Penance is celebrated, individuals now go to the priest and confess their sins and receive absolution; they then return to their places]*

**or**

## **Act of Repentance**

Leader: Our God is a God of mercy, slow to anger and full of patience. Let us pray to him with trust in his goodness asking him to forgive our sins:

Leader: By our misuse of your gifts we have sinned against you.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: By straying from you in mind and heart we have sinned against you.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: By forgetting your love we have sinned against you.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: By indulging ourselves, while neglecting our true good and the good of our neighbor, we have sinned against you.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: By failing to help our neighbor in their need we have sinned against you.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: By being slow to forgive we have sinned against you.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

Leader: By failing to remember your repeated forgiveness we have sinned against you.

All: Forgive us, Lord.

[Members of the fraternity may add other invocations]

*[After the individual confessions have been completed or the Act of Repentance:]*

Leader: Let us now pray to the Father in the words Christ gave us:

All: Our Father...

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, gentle and humble of heart, full of compassion and maker of peace,  
you lived in poverty and were persecuted in the cause of justice.

You chose the cross as the path to glory to show us the way to salvation.

May we live with joyful hearts the word of your Gospel as true sons and daughters of St. Francis  
and one day live as heirs of your kingdom, where you live and reign for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

**Blessing** *[If a priest or deacon is present - The Blessing of St. Francis, or as from the Liturgy of the Hours]*