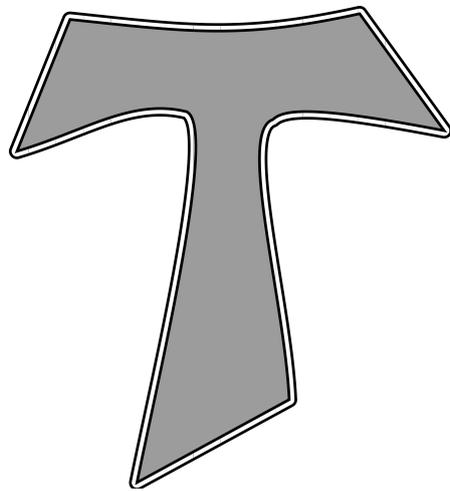


*Service for a
Secular Franciscan
who has gone to God*



A Service for a Secular Franciscan who has gone to God

INTRODUCTION

“*Welcome my Sister Death.*” (II Cel. 217) With these words our Seraphic Father 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 sister or brother 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.*” (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.

As the Franciscan Fraternity gathers to pray for its departed member, it seeks also to support one another in the faith which it shares. In this way the Fraternity expresses its sorrow at the parting which death has occasioned, and its joyful and confident hope of ultimate re-union with the deceased member and with the Lord. The Wake Service is a unique way for the Community to console one another at a time of loss and to honour the memory of one who now enjoys and shares in the triumph over death which has been won by the Lord.

The wake service takes the form of a Service of the Word. Members of the Fraternity gather in the funeral home at a convenient time, led by

the Fraternity Minister in prayer for the deceased. Other fraternity members assist as reader and also leader of song. When the fraternity has gathered, the Fraternity Minister begins:

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.

(If possible, the Minister places a copy of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order on the casket saying:)

Minister: Our Brother/Sister N., 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.

All Sing: Make me a channel of your peace ...

Minister: As we contemplate the mystery of death and how it has affected our Fraternity in the passing of our brother/sister N., 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 pre-eminence 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 good-bye, 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 favour.”* 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 paschal feast began.”* Then, as best he could, he intoned psalm 141: *“I have cried to the Lord with my voice, with my voice I have implored the Lord.”* and recited it all the way down to the last verse. *“The Just will await me until you have rewarded me.”*

At last when all God’s mysteries had been accomplished in him, his holy soul was freed from his body and was 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 the 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 (Major Life XIV, 5-6)

Pause for 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 honour 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 to us through him. How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendour! 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 weather's 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 you, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother, who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces various fruits with coloured 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 can do no harm to 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)

(please stand)

If a deacon, priest or bishop is present they should read the Gospel. A Deacon is ordained with these words: "Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become..."

C. The Lord be with you.

All. And with your spirit.

C: A Reading from the holy Gospel of St Matthew.

All: Glory to you O Lord.

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his Disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

How happy are the poor in spirit:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Happy the gentle:
they shall have the earth for their heritage.
Happy those who mourn:
they shall be comforted.
Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:
they shall be satisfied.
Happy the merciful:
they shall have mercy shown them.
Happy the pure in heart:
they shall see God.
Happy the peacemakers:
they shall be called sons of God.
Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

C: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

(Pause for reflection)

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Minister: 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 the Lord for our brother/sister N.

Minister: Lord Jesus, you raise those who sleep in death to life. Give N., our brother/sister Life Eternal.

All: Lord have mercy.

Minister: You washed our brother/sister N., 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 N., was fed with your Body and Blood may he/she find a place at 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:

All: Our Father

Minister: Lord Jesus Christ, we trust in you, and hope in your glorious resurrection. Hear our prayers for our brother/ sister N., 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 N., for the last time, let us bless him/her with the Blessing of St Francis.

All present raise their right hand toward the casket and 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 brother/sister N.**

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

All: Thanks be to God.

