

TRANSITUS LITURGY¹
VIGIL OF THE FEAST OF SAINT FRANCIS

Ministers: N=Narrator P=Presider L= Lector

The liturgy begins in the living room. The Paschal Candle is burning, charcoal in a brazier has been lighted for the procession. The liturgy begins with the introduction, lead by the Narrator:

N: Tonight is a night when we—
 and all who cherish the memory of St. Francis—
 gather to remember and to tell stories.

As we hear the simple and faith-filled words
of our father Francis in the Canticle of the Creatures,
we call to mind the joy and gratitude
with which he lived his life,
always conscious of that life of God that surrounds us
in each of our brothers and sisters and in all of creation.

Brother Thomas of Celano,
the first biographer of Saint Francis, wrote:
“After Francis had rested a few days
in that place so dear to him, knowing that the time
of his approaching death was at hand;
he summoned two friars
who were his especially beloved sons.
He bade them sing the Song of Praise to the Lord
concerning his approaching death, or rather,
concerning his life, which was at hand.

We have a simple story to tell:

¹This liturgy for the Transitus was created by Larry Webber, OFM Cap and Steven Kropp, OFM Cap for use at Saint Clare Friary, a community of the Province of Saint Joseph of the Capuchin Order. It was originally used with the hymn “Laudate Dominum” but can be adjusted for a particular community celebration, using hymns such as “Canticle of the Sun” or “All Creatures of our God and King”.

to remember our heritage, to renew our Christian faith,
and to evoke our Christian hope.

And finally to tell the story of Francis' transitus— or passage—
from this life to eternal life.

(Pause) All assembled begin to softly sing the refrain *Laudate Dominum*

Ostinato Refrain

Lau-da - te Do - mi-num, lau - da - te Do - mi-num om - nes

1. gen-tes, al - le - lu - ia. 2. al - le - lu - ia.

P: Most High, all-powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises,
the glory, and the honor, and all blessing,
To You alone Most High, do they belong,
And no one is worthy to mention your name.

The Presider takes his taper and lights it from the Paschal Candle, then he lights the candle in front of the first print. The hymn refrain continues to be sung, while the cantor chants the verse.

STATION 1: BROTHER SUN

The narrators for each of the stations are distinct, and will be Friars who share reflections, about the memory of Francis in relation to each of the elements in this Canticle.

N: Brother Thomas wrote about the
“sweetness Francis enjoyed
while contemplating in creatures
the wisdom of their Creator,
his power and his goodness.
Indeed he was very often filled with a wonderful
and ineffable joy from this consideration
while he looked upon the sun....”

Today, science has taught us so much more
about our brother, the Sun:
its power and its effects on the earth.

Indeed it is a reflection of our Creator,
whose power and influence affects us in every moment,
and keeps us in his loving orbit.

P: Loving Creator, in the same way that our brother,
the Sun, surrounds us with warmth
and holds us carefully in that place
which makes life possible,
hold us in your love,
and in fidelity to that same reverence
for all of your creation
which filled our Brother Francis.
We ask this in Jesus’ name.
Amen.

As the Presider moves to the next station and lights its candle, the congregation sing the refrain.

STATION 2: SISTER MOON AND STARS

N: Brother Thomas later reflected that Francis,
“the prophet of our time” as he called him,
didn’t fix his eyes on the darkness of earthly things,
but was “illuminated by the rays of eternal light.”
“What do you think is the reason, “ he continued,
“except that we, being friends of the flesh,
are bogged down in the dust of worldliness?
Bogged down in the mire, we can only see the mire;
but with our eyes fixed on heaven,
we cannot possibly *not* see heavenly things.”

P: Lord of earth and sky, of the moon and stars;
in the darkness that surrounds us in our world,
in the midst of the terror of our human capacity
for arrogance, hatred and unimagined violence,
lift our eyes to the heavens,
to the light that shines even in the darkness,
to remind ourselves of your light
that illumines and guides our world
even in its darkest hours.
We ask this in Jesus’ name.
Amen.

As the Presider moves to the next station and lights its candle, the congregation sing the refrain.

STATION 3: BROTHER WIND

N: Francis wasn't afraid of the Wind,
but welcomed it as his brother
as he walked along the roads of Perugia,
or heard it rustle through the woods of Alvernia,
or felt it's cold in the caves and hermitages
he often visited.

Nor was he afraid of the "winds of change"
that swept through his world
of the 12th and 13th century.

He trusted that Brother Wind was of the Holy Spirit,
and for that reason chose Pentecost as the day
his brothers should gather together
to reflect together on their lives
and listen to where the Spirit was calling them.

P: Spirit of God: move in us.
Let brother Wind continue to remind us of your call
to listen for your Spirit speaking in our world.
Grant us the trusting spirit of our Brother Francis,
so that we might follow that call
with courage and creativity.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

As the Presider moves to the next station and lights its candle, the congregation sing the refrain.

STATION 4: SISTER WATER

N: Francis knew that our sister water is not only precious,
but necessary.

He understood the thirst of that generous farmer
who had lent him his mule during his travels.

And God who had created water allowed her
to respond to her brother Francis
when he asked the Lord
for her to quench that thirst.

He even called on his sister water
to cool the yearnings of his flesh
without extinguishing the fire of his love.

Francis revered water in every moment as a sister
who fills us and leads us to true life.

P: Source of life, you who in the waters of Baptism
filled our brother Francis, and us as well,
with the fullness of life, grant that those waters
might renew us each day to quench the thirst for Justice,
for Peace and for holiness in our world.

Help us to reverence all of your creation.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

As the Presider moves to the next station and lights its candle, the congregation sing the refrain.

STATION 5: BROTHER FIRE

N: Brother Francis respected Brother Fire.
His confidence and trust in him was such
that he asked Brother Fire to be gentle
when the doctors seared his eyes
with irons heated in his flames.
He regretted withholding from brother fire
the mat he slept on when fire devoured his hermitage.
Francis was so much a brother to fire
that when he prayed in the depths of the woods,
the signs of fire frightened the brothers,
until they realized it was simply the fire of
Francis's intense love of God, revealing itself.

The originality, joy and authenticity of Francis
vision of the Gospel ignited a fire
in the world of his time
that continues to burn in our hearts
and in the hearts of all who throughout history
have been touched by it.

P: Fire of life, may the strength of brother fire
embolden our hearts.
May the flame of the Holy Spirit enkindle in us
that same fire of the love of God that will ignite anew
the fire of the Gospel in our world.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

As the Presider moves to the next station and lights its candle, the congregation sing the refrain.

STATION 6: SISTER MOTHER EARTH

- N:** Our Brother Francis revered Mother Earth
and all her creatures in a way
that we in our world today have forgotten.
All created things are created for God,
are called to witness to Gods' goodness and love.
For this reason, as Celano reminds us,
"he exhorted with the sincerest purity cornfields and
vineyards, stones and forests and all the beautiful things
of the fields, fountains of water and the green things
of the gardens, earth and fire, air and wind,
to love God and serve him willingly."
Would that we too would recognize them all
as brothers and sisters, and treat them
with the reverence they deserve as Gods' creatures.
- P:** Lord of all, make us aware of the oneness of your creation.
Open our eyes to see our interdependence
with all forms of life that inhabit
our Sister, Mother earth:
from the smallest molecule of life
to the largest and most complicated mysteries of life
that are in us and surround us.
Make us once again brothers and sisters of one another.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

As the Presider moves to the next station and lights its candle, the congregation sing the refrain.

STATION 7: THOSE WHO PARDON

N: Brother Francis' heart, like the heart of Christ,
desired that all might be one
and that all might be reconciled.
He reconciled the wolf with the people of Gubbio.
He reconciled the Mayor and the Bishop of Assisi.
In the midst of the violence of the Crusades
he went in peace as a Christian
to visit the Islamic Sultan,
and established a basis for mutual respect.

Near the time of his death, Celano tells us,
One of the friars who was present,
one whom Francis loved with great affection,
was extremely worried about all the friars
when he saw what was happening
and realized that the holy father's end was near.

So he said to Francis:

“Good father, your sons and daughters
will now be without a father,
and will be deprived of the true light of their eyes.

Remember, therefore, the orphans whom you leave behind.

Forgive them all their faults,

and bestow the joy of your blessing upon all of them,
those who are absent
as well as those who are here present.”

Francis answered him:

“Behold, my son, I am being called by God.

I forgive all my friars, those present and those who are
absent, all their faults and failings, and I absolve them
insofar as I am able.

When you tell them these words of mine,
bless them all for me.”

P: God of mercy and love, in our world so divided
by ideological and religious conflicts,
grant us the courage of our Brother Francis
to act boldly in favor of forgiveness and reconciliation.
And help us to begin
with humbly and generously forgiving ourselves
and the brothers and sisters around us.
We ask this in Jesus name.
Amen.

Here all process to the chapel. The procession is lead by incense and the Paschal Candle.
The refrain *Laudate Dominum* is sung throughout the processions by all, with some verses
interspersed between.

Ostinato Refrain

The musical score is written for a 3/4 time signature. The first system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melody of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment of chords. The lyrics are: "Lau-da - te Do - mi-num, lau - da - te Do - mi-num om - nes". The second system also has two staves. The treble staff has two measures, each with a first ending bracket labeled "1." and "2." respectively. The lyrics are: "gen-tes, al - le - lu - ia. al - le - lu - ia." The bass staff continues the accompaniment.

When every one has reached the chapel, the song is concluded, and the narration for the 8th
station– Sister Death– begins.

STATION 8: SISTER BODILY DEATH

The lector then prepares to read the Gospel while the narrator continues:

N: Then Francis had them bring the book of the Gospels,
and he asked that the Gospel according to John
be read to him from the place that begins:

N and L: “Before the feast of the Passover...”

L: ...Jesus realized that the hour had come
for him to pass from this world to the Father.
He had loved his own in the world,
and would show his love for them to the end.
And so, during supper, Jesus- fully aware that he had come
from God and was going to God, the Father,
who had handed everything over to him –
rose from the meal and took off his cloak.
He picked up a towel and tied it around himself.
Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his
disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel
he had around him.
Thus he came to Simon Peter, who said to him:
“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

Jesus answered:

“You may not realize now what I am doing,
but later you will understand.”

Peter replied: “You shall never wash my feet.”

And Jesus responded:

“If I do not wash you,
you shall have no share in my heritage.”

Then Simon Peter said to him:
“Lord, then not only my feet,
but my hands and head as well.”

After Jesus had washed their feet,
he put his cloak back on
and reclined at table once more.
He said to them: “Do you understand what I just did for you?
You address me as ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’”
and fittingly enough, for that is what I am.
But if I washed your feet – I who am Teacher and Lord –
then you must wash each other’s feet.
What I just did was to give you an example:
as I have done, so you must do.”

N: After these things, Francis raised his hands to heaven
and praised his Christ, because, freed now of all things,
he was going free to his Lord.
Indeed, in order that he might show himself
to be a true imitator of Christ in all things,
he loved to the end his brothers and sisters
whom he had loved from the beginning.
He had all the brothers present there called to him,
and soothing them with comforting words
in view of his death,
he exhorted them with paternal affection to love God.
And he said to his brothers:

L: “I have done what was mine to do;
may Christ teach you what you are to do.”

Psalm 142 (141) is now sung. The verses are alternated between canotrs / all.

1. **With all my voice I cry to you, O God;
with all my voice I entreat you.**
2. I pour out my troubles before you; I tell you all my distress.
3. **While my Spirit faints within me,
but you, O God, know my path.**
4. On the way where I shall walk, they have hidden a snare to entrap me.
5. **Look on my right and see,
there is not one who takes my side.**
6. I have no means of escape, no one cares what happens to me.
7. **I cry to you, O Lord, I have said: You are my refuge,
all I have left in the land of the living.**
8. Listen, then, to my plea, for I am in the depth of distress.
9. **Rescue me from those who pursue me,
for they are stronger than I.**
10. Bring me out of this prison, and I shall praise your name.
11. **The saints will assemble around me,
because of your goodness to me.**
12. Give glory to God the Creator, who made both heaven and earth,
13. To Jesus, the Christ, the Lord, whose dying and rising have saved us,
14. To the Spirit who dwells in our midst, both now and forever. Amen.
15. **With all my voice I cry to you, O God; .
with all my voice I entreat you.**

N: While the brothers were weeping very bitterly and grieving
inconsolably, the holy father commanded
that bread be brought to him.

He blessed and broke it and gave a small piece of it
to each one to eat.

He was recalling that most holy supper
which the Lord celebrated as his last supper
with his disciples.

He did all of this in reverent memory of that supper,
showing thereby the deep love he had for his brothers.

The Presider goes to the altar, accompanied by another appointed minister. The Presider holds up the loaf of bread and breaks it in half in the sight of all. Then they each take one half of the loaf, break off a piece, eats it, and distributes the bread, giving each person present a small piece of the loaf. Everyone eats in silence, while music plays softly in the background.

(Pause)

N: Francis then commanded that a hair shirt be put upon him,
and that he be sprinkled with ashes,
for he was soon to become dust and ashes.
Then when many brothers had gathered about,
whose father and leader he was,
and while they were standing reverently at his side
awaiting his blessed death and happy end,
his most holy soul was freed from his body
and received into the abyss of light,
and his body fell asleep in the Lord.

The Presider lights his candle from the Paschal Candle burning in the center of the chapel and shares it with those present. While this is happening, the refrain *Laudate Dominum* is sung, with the verse that corresponds to the 8th station— Sister Death.

After the antiphon finishes, and all candles are lit and everyone has had a chance to observe a moment of silence, the narrator begins the final narration for this station...

The Narrator continues:

N: Soon after the death of Francis, Brother Elias,
the leader of the brothers, wrote to them as follows:

In truth, in very truth, the presence of Francis,
our Brother and our Father,
was a light, not only to us who were near to him,
but also to those who were more removed from us
in calling and in life.

He was a light sent forth from the true Light
to enlighten those who were in darkness
and who sat in the shadow of death,
that he might guide their steps in the way of peace.

When he preached the kingdom of God,
when he turned the ears of parents to their children,
when he brought the foolish to the prudence of the just,
he made ready for the Lord a new people
throughout the whole world.

His name was spread far and wide,
and all nations wondered at his admirable works.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, bless the God of heaven,
confess him in the sight of all,
for God has shown to us his mercy.

Hold fast to the memory of our Father and Brother, Francis,
for the praise and glory of God who made him great
among people, and glorified him in the sight of angels.

Pray for him, as once he asked us, and pray to him,
that God may make us sharers with him
of his holy grace.

STATION 9: CONCLUSION

The assembly continues to sing the refrain, while the presider then gives the blessing:

P: Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
and serve him with great humility.

(Pause)

May the Lord bless us and keep us. *Amen.*

May God's face shine upon us and be gracious to us. *Amen.*

May the Lord look upon us kindly and give us peace. *Amen.*

After the blessing, all sing the final hymn: "Canticle of the Sun":

Refrain

The heav-ens are tell-ing the glo-ry of God, and
all cre - a-tion is shout-ing for joy. Come, dance in the
for - est, come, play in the field, and sing,
sing to the glo - ry of the Lord.

Verses

1. Praise for the sun, the bring - er of day, He car - ries the
2. Praise for the wind that blows through the trees, The seas might - y
3. Praise for the rain that wa - ters our fields, And bless - es our
4. Praise for the fire who gives us his light, The warmth of the
5. Praise for the earth who makes life to grow, The crea - tures you
6. Praise for our death that makes our life real, The knowl-edge of

light of the Lord in his rays; The moon and the stars who
storms, γ the gen - tl - est breeze; They blow where they will, they
crops γ so all the earth yields; From death un - to life her
sun γ to bright-en our night; He danc - es with joy, his
made γ to let your life show; The flow - ers and trees that
loss γ that helps us to feel; The gift of your - self, your

light up the way Un - to your throne.
blow where they please To please the Lord.
mys - t'ry re - vealed Springs forth in joy.
spir - it so bright, He sings of you.
help us to know The heart of love.
pres - ence re - vealed To lead us home.