

THE TRANSITUS OF ST. FRANCIS AND ST. CLARE

A COMBINED RITUAL FROM THE

9TH NATIONAL FRANCISCAN FORUM

DYING, AS A FRANCISCAN:

APPROACHING OUR OWN TRANSITUS TO ETERNAL LIFE,

ACCOMPANYING OTHERS ON THE WAY TO THEIRS

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Special thanks also to Cathy Tisel Nelson for permission to reprint her “Blessing of St. Francis” and “Blessing of St. Clare” from her musical collection, *What You Hold*. For more information on her music used in this *Transitus* or for any other selection by Cathy Tisel Nelson contact her at ctisnels@charter.net.

Special thanks to Julianne Wallace for preparing this *Transitus* script for publication on the Franciscan Federation website.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE RITUAL

The following ritual was celebrated as the 9th National Franciscan Forum began at Regis University in Denver, CO. The theme of the Conference was *Dying, as a Franciscan: Approaching Our Transitus to Eternal Life, Accompanying Others on the Way to Theirs*. The goal in creating this celebration was to combine both the stories of St. Francis and St. Clare into one Transitus. This ritual is not a typical Transitus, however you will find that elements of the traditional Transitus celebrations are included in this creative celebration.

In this Transitus there are two especially powerful ritual moments. The first moment is the reading of the Transitus of St. Francis and St. Clare from various sources. Interspersed through these readings weavers braid (or weave) together two pieces of fabric (one brown and one beige) that represent the stories of Francis and Clare. When the readings and weaving are complete, the assembly can see one unified braided piece fabric (where there once was two). This fabric represents how all of our own personal stories, experiences and emotions of Transitus are unified through the Franciscan tradition.

The second ritual moment occurs as assembly members place upon a cross (without a corpus) the names of loved ones (they have been praying for the person named on the cloth throughout the celebration). After we have seen our Franciscan tradition unified through the weaving of the stories of Francis and Clare, we then carry to the cross our own prayer intentions. This particular tradition is celebrated every year at the St. Bonaventure University Transitus celebration of St. Francis.

While we cannot include the full text of the readings for the weaving ritual we do provide a reference citation for each reading. For more information on where to find the readings please refer to the resources guide on page 11. In addition, the musical choices for this ritual are only suggestions. Feel free to substitute with music that is more familiar to your particular community.

Since this is a detailed and action-oriented service, you should take great care to recognize the balance of silence vs. sound. At several points in the worship script, there are denoted times for silence. These times should be respected and if possible silence should be observed at other times throughout the ritual.

The ritual follows this basic structure:

- I. GATHERING SONG
- II. OPENING PRAYER
- III. THE WEAVING OF THE TRANSITUS STORIES OF ST. FRANCIS AND ST. CLARE
- IV. PSALM 142
- V. SHORT REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)
- VI. INTERCESSIONS
- VII. PROCESSION TO THE CROSS
- VIII. FINAL BLESSING
- IX. SINGING OF THE *ULTIMA*

PROCEDURES

MINISTERS NEEDED

- ❖ Four Readers
- ❖ Four Weavers
- ❖ One Presider
- ❖ One Homilist (this could also be the presider)

MATERIALS

- ❖ Two very large, long rectangular pieces of fabric, one brown piece (to represent Francis) and one beige piece (to represent Clare). Fabric should be at least 15-20 yards in length, if not more.
- ❖ Readings for the Weaving of the Transitus of St. Francis and St. Clare (the citations for selected readings are provided, but you will need to refer to the resources section of this script for the books needed to look up the selected texts).
- ❖ Small Square Pieces of Cloth (brown and beige, 5x5 in size), should be enough for everyone in attendance.
- ❖ One large Cross (positioned in the worship space so that the square pieces can be placed on the Cross without falling off).

PROCEDURE FOR SMALL CLOTH PIECES

As the people enter the place of worship, participants will be asked to write a name of someone who has either died or is sick on a piece of cloth. After they have written down a name, they will then pick up a different (already finished) piece of cloth to carry with them into the worship space. The idea behind this process is that each person has a piece of cloth but might not know the person they are praying for throughout the service.

If there is an opportunity, people can write on the cloth in advance of the service and then pick up the square (with the name on it) on their way into the worship space.

PROCEDURE FOR THE WEAVING OF TRANSITUS STORIES

This procedure is contained within the ritual. See below for directions.

THE TRANSITUS OF ST. FRANCIS AND ST. CLARE

GATHERING SONG

Mater Ecclesie by Ricky Manalo, available through Oregon Catholic Press
Or another Marion Hymn that would be appropriate for a gathering song.

OPENING PRAYER

The prayer below or another appropriate opening prayer may be selected and prayed at this time.

Let us pray,

(pause for silent reflection)

Good and Gracious God, we come together to remember and recall the passing of your beloved St. Francis and St. Clare. As we celebrate the richness of these two stories, may our own lives become unified together with St. Francis, St. Clare and entire Body of Christ. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

THE WEAVING OF THE STORIES FROM THE TRANSITUS OF ST. FRANCIS AND ST. CLARE

There will be four sets of two readings (one Francis and one Clare reading in a set). After each set of readings there will be a sung Taizé refrain (suggestion: "In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful") in which the weaving of the fabric will take place.

The two pieces of fabric (one brown and one beige) should be placed on the floor in a prominent spot in the worship space, parallel to each other. When the Taizé refrain begins, the weavers will stand up and approach the fabric. As the Taizé refrain continues each weaver will pick up an end of the fabric and begin to weave the two colors together. It will be essential to practice this motion with the four weavers so they know how to choreograph each movement. The Taizé refrain should be sung one or two times during this movement.

When the Taizé refrain is finished the weavers set the partially braided fabric on the floor and return to their seats. This action is repeated after every two readings (a total of four times).

During the final Taizé refrain (the fourth time it is sung), the weavers will finish the weaving of the fabric and the fabric should look like one long braided piece of fabric. This single braid represents the unity of the stories of Francis and Clare.

READING 1

A Reading from *The Major Legend of Saint Francis* by St. Bonaventure, Chapter 14, an excerpt from #1, from *Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents (FA:ED), Volume II*, pg. 640.

Note: Begin with “Since he could not walk” and end at “in a state of collapse for his work.”

READING 2

A Reading from *The Legend of St. Clare*, Chapter XXVII, #43, from *Clare of Assisi: The Early Documents (CA:ED)*, pg. 315.

All sing “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful” while weaving takes place.

READING 3

A Reading from *The Life of Saint Francis* by Julian of Speyer, Chapter XII, #69, from *FA:ED, Volume I*, pg. 415.

READING 4

A reading from *The Legend of St. Clare*, Chapter XXIX, #45:6-8, #46:18-22, from *CA:ED*, pg. 316-7.

All sing “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful” while weaving takes place.

READING 5

A Reading from the *Letter on the Passing of Saint Francis Attributed to Elias of Assisi*, #2, from *FA:ED Volume II*, pg. 489.

READING 6

A reading from *The Notification of the Death of Clare of Assisi*, #2-5, from *CA:ED*, pg. 135-6.

All sing “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful” while weaving takes place.

READING 7

A reading from *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, St. Bonaventure, The Conclusion of Chapter Fourteen (3C 32), from *FA:ED, Volume II*, pg. 644.

READING 8

The Canticle of Exhortation to Clare and the Poor Ladies, St. Francis, from *CA:ED*, pg. 394.

All sing “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful” while weaving takes place.

SILENCE

PSALM

At this time a setting of Psalm 142 is proclaimed.

Song Suggestion: *Psalm 142*, by Robert Hutmacher, OFM, available through GIA Publications

SHORT REFLECTION

At this point, there may be a short reflection or homily given by either the presider or someone else from the assembly.

SILENCE

INTERCESSIONS

One of the assigned readers will read the intercessions. These or other appropriate intercessions may be used.

Please note: Intercessions two and three were taken from in *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise* published by the Franciscan Federation.

For all the faithfully departed, especially our Franciscan brothers and sisters, our families, and our friends, that Sister Death may lead them to the most high, all powerful, and all good Lord. We pray,

R. Hear us, O God.

Clare brought your healing presence to those who were sick: may we bring your comfort and healing love to those who are ill among us. We pray,¹

R. Hear us, O God.

You gave us Francis as a model of burning love of the Crucified: enlarge our hearts so that in knowing the sufferings of our own journeys, we may respond to them with a life of compassion and love. We pray,²

R. Hear us, O God.

PROCESSION TO THE CROSS

The presider then invites people to bring their cloth pieces to the cross and carefully place them on the cross. An appropriate song is sung to accompany this movement.

Song Suggestion: *Peace, Be Not Anxious*, by Lori True, Available through GIA Publications

¹ *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise*, Franciscan Federation Third Order Regular of the Sisters and Brothers of the United States (Philadelphia: Franciscan Federation, 2009) pg. 1130.

² *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise*, pg. 1193.

FINAL BLESSING

The ritual concludes with two blessings: one from Francis and one from Clare. The presider may read both blessings or you may choose to have to different readers for the blessings. There is also an option to have these blessings sung by the presider or a cantor. Words and music are used by permission from Cathy Tisel Nelson. See appendix for music.

❖ Blessing of Clare

May you always be with God wherever you may be and may God be with you always. Always be lovers of God and your souls and the souls of your sisters and brothers, and always be eager to observe what you have promised to God. May you always be with God wherever you may be and may God be with you always. Amen.

❖ Blessing of Francis

May God bless you and keep you, smiling graciously on you, granting mercy and peace, granting mercy and peace. May God bless you and keep you, May you see the face of God, granting mercy and peace, granting mercy and peace. Amen. Amen. Amen.

SENDING FORTH SONG

After the blessings, the Ultima is sung. This is a traditional hymn used in the Transitus of St. Francis and for some Franciscan Funerals. There are several versions of the song, two of which can be found in the book Franciscans At Prayer (1983).

RESOURCES

The Franciscan readings are taken from the following three sources. You will need these books to reference the readings.

Armstrong, Regis J., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds. *Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents*, Vol. 1. New York: New City Press, 1999.

Armstrong, Regis J., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds. *Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents*, Vol. 2. New York: New City Press, 2000.

Armstrong, Regis J., ed. *Clare of Assisi: The Early Documents*. New York: New City Press, 2006.

These additional resources were consulted in creating this ritual:

Cathy Tisel Nelson. *What You Hold: A Musical Collection*. For information or to buy this collection contact Cathy at ctisnels@charter.net

Franciscans at Prayer, ed. Committee for Franciscan Liturgical Research. Pulaski, WI: Franciscan Publishers, 1983.

Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise. The Franciscan Federation Third Order Regular of the Sisters and Brothers of the United States. Philadelphia: Franciscan Federation, 2009.

APPENDIX

May God Bless You and Keep You

*Text based on the
Blessing of St. Francis
to Brother Leo.*

*Dedicated to the Rochester Franciscans,
deceased and living.*

Cathy Tisel Nelson

May God bless you and keep you, smil - ing gra - cious - ly on

you, grant - ing mer - cy and peace, grant - ing

mer - cy and peace. May God bless you and keep you,

May you see the face of God, grant - ing mer - cy and

peace, grant - ing mer - cy and peace. A - men, A -

men, A - men.

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Blessing of St. Clare

Text based on words of
St. Clare translated by
Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap.

Cathy Tisel Nelson

Refrain

May you al - ways be with God wher - ev - er you may
be and may God be with you al - ways.

1. To Verse

be and may God be with you al - ways.

2. Final Ending

ways. A - men. A - men. A - men.

Verse

Al - ways be lov - ers of God and your souls, and the
souls of your sis - ters and broth - ers, and
al - ways be ea - ger to ob - serve what you have prom - ised to God.

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