

Transitus Service¹
Vigil of the Feast of St. Francis
3 October

Roles: N = Narrator
S = Speaker
L = Lector

Greeting

N: (Introduction: We begin in the chapel, with the lights dim and the Paschal Candle lit.)

**Tonight is a night when Franciscans
and all who cherish the memory of St. Francis -
gather to remember and to tell stories.**

**We have a simple story to tell:
the story of Francis' transitus - or passage -
from this life to eternal life.**

**And we tell the story in the simple and faith-filled words
of Thomas of Celano, one of the early biographers of Francis.**

**We tell this story to remember our heritage,
to renew our Christian faith,
and to evoke our Christian hope.**

(Opening Song)
“What Wondrous Love”

(Before beginning the song, instruct everyone to go up to Pascal candle and light their vigil candles. This instruction can be done most effectively by modeling it: Approach the Paschal Candle and light your own taper, then motion for others to do the same. During the hymn, place incense in the brazier.)

¹This liturgy was created by the Kenneth Smits, OFM Cap for the Province of Saint Joseph of the Capuchin Order. The music was added later and can certainly be changed to fit a specific community.

“What Love”

Wondrous



1. What won - drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul?
2. To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing;
3. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on;



What won - drous love is this, O my soul?
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing;
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;



What won - drous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am,
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joy - ful be,



To bear the dread - ful curse for my soul, for my soul;
While mil - lions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing;
And through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on, I'll sing on!



To bear the dread - ful curse for my soul?
While mil - lions join the theme, I will sing,
And through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on.

(The Keyboard, or harp, will continue to softly play “What Wondrous Love” during the first narration, at the end of which we will sing the hymn again.)

The Transitus of St. Francis

Narration I: Approaching Death

N: The time after Francis' conversion had now reached almost twenty years; the limit to which he would live, as had been made know to him as the divine will.

The following incident happened on an occasion when Francis and Brother Elias were staying at Foligno. One night, after they had gone to sleep, a priest clothed in white, venerable in appearance and of advanced age, appeared to Brother Elias and said:

S: "Arise, brother, and tell Brother Francis that eighteen years have passed since he renounced the world to cleave to Christ. He will remain in this world just two more years, and then he will go the way of all flesh, and the Lord will call him to himself."

N: Thus it turned out, and the word of the Lord was fulfilled at the time appointed, just as he had foretold long before.

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 specially 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.

(“What Wondrous Love” will be sung again)

Narration II: Troubled Hearts

N: 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:

S: "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."

N: Francis answered him:

(At this point the piano begins to softly play "The Will of Your Love")

S: "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."

"The Will of Your Love"

OSTINATO REFRAIN/ESTRIBILLO: All/Todos

The will of your love, the will of your love be
Tu vo-lun-tad, tu com-pa-sión

done on earth as it is in heav-en.
se-a en la tie-rra co-mo en el cie-lo.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time. The piano part consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a similar accompaniment in the left hand. The vocal line is in the treble clef and features a melody with some grace notes and slurs. The lyrics are written below the vocal line, with Spanish translations in smaller text.

Narration III: Opening of the Scriptures

(After a period of silence, this narration is begun.)

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:

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

(Pause for silent reflection)

Psalm 142
(Lead by the choir)

(At the end of the psalm, the narrator and speaker lead the congregation from the chapel into the living room, in silence. All gather around the table
Once everyone has reach the living room, the fourth narration then begins)

Narration IV: The Breaking of Bread

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.

N & S: (Extinguish your candle, signaling others to do the same.
Go to the table. Hold up the loaf of bread and break it in half in the sight of all. Then each of you take one half, breaks off a piece, eats it, and distributes the bread.
At the conclusion of the song, all are seated.)

“Taste and See”

Refrain

Taste and see, taste and see the good - ness of the
Lord. O taste and see, taste and see the
good - ness of the Lord, of the Lord.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes. The second staff continues the melody with a long note on 'O' and then continues with quarter notes. The third staff concludes the phrase with quarter notes and a final double bar line.

Narration V: The Death of Francis

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.

**(All lights are out except the light of the fireplace. All pause now in prayer.
The piano begins to softly play “The Love of the Lord”)**

“The Love of the Lord”

1. All that I count - ed as gain
 2. Rich - es and hon - ors will fade,
 3. Sil - ver and gold have I none,
 4. Faith is the wealth I pos - sess

now I con - sid - er as loss,
 earth - ly de - light dis - ap - pear,
 no land to count as my home, yet
 Find - ing its source in my God:

emp - ty and worth - less to me in the
 fade like the grass of the field in the
 wealth be - yond meas - ure I own in the
 faith in the prom - ise of Christ is my

1., 3. light of the love of the Lord.
 light of the love of the Lord.
 light of the love of the Lord.
 life and my love of the Lord.

2., 4. Lord.
 Lord.
 Lord.

What more could bring us hope than to know the pow'r of his
 life? What more could bring us peace than to
 share in his suf - f'ring and death? What more could be our
 fi - nal wish than to live in the love of the Lord?

(In silence and darkness a voice proclaims:)

Narration VI: The Testimony of Brother Elias

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

S: 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.

N: In the spirit of Francis, our Father and Brother, let us now offer each other a sign of Christ's peace.