

Prayers and Suffrages of the Dominican Laity

On Going Formation 4-17

2022

Mother of Mercy Chapter

Any discussion of prayers and suffrages should begin from an historical perspective. In the First Rule of 1285, it states:

“When any one of the brethren departst out of this world, let his death be announced to the rest of the brethren who are in the same city or place that they may endeavour to be present at the funeral of the deceased, from which they must not retire until the body is buried. The same we will also have to be observed with respect to the deceased sisters. Moreover, within the eight days immediately following the burial of the deceased, let every brother and sister say for his or her soul, the priests one Mass ; the rest, those that know the Psalter, fifty psalms ; those who do not, one hundred Pater nosters, adding at the end of each, " Requiem aeternam," And besides this, every Tertiary is obliged to have* three Masses said in the course of the year for all the brethren and sisters, both living and dead ; those who know it, must say the whole Psalter ; those who do not are bound to recite + five hundred Pater nosters. • Those who are unable to have three Masses said may offer three communions for the same intention.
+ The obligation of saying 500 Pater nosters in the year may be fulfilled by saying two Pater nosters every day. The Dominican Order celebrates four anniversaries of the dead in the course of the year, which will be found in the Calendar ; and Tertiaries are invited to keep these also, that they may share in the indulgences which have been annexed to their celebration.”

In the Second Rule of 1923, it states:

“45. The death of a member of the Fraternity shall be announced as soon as possible to the other members, who, unless lawfully prevented, should personally attend the obsequies for the deceased.

46. Moreover, within eight days from the- receipt of the notice of the death, each member of that Fraternity shall recite a third part of the Rosary, hear one Mass and apply one Holy Communion for the deceased soul.

47. Each Tertiary shall daily say one Pater, Ave and Requiem for the living and dead of the whole Order.

48. Besides, each Tertiary shall annually have celebrated, or at least assist at, three Masses for the welfare of the Brothers and Sisters, both living and dead. “

There were several interim and temporary “Rules”, 1964, 1968 and 1987, but **we are now at the Sixth Rule** of 2019. It states “Unless provision is made by the National Director, the Provincial Directory must determine suffrages for deceased brothers and sisters of the Lay Fraternities, and for the whole Order.”

For Dominicans, suffrages are an integral part of our vocation. One of the jokes that often get told in Dominican circles concerns what is termed "the Good Life." We say that the good life consists in three things: **To live like a Jesuit, dine like a Franciscan, and to die like a Dominican.** But what, you may ask, is so great about dying like a Dominican?

There are many traditions that the friars have concerning devotion to deceased brethren. If a friar is privileged to be present at the death of a brother, they are to commend his soul to the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary by chanting the Dominican version of the Salve Regina. Further, the house where the brother was assigned is asked to pray the office of the dead for him and everyone in the province is required to pray one rosary for him and to say or attend one mass for his soul.

But prayers of the Friars for our Dominican brothers do not stop there. **Every year they celebrate a Mass for all Dominican departed on November 8. They also say a Mass for all benefactors and friends of the order on September 5, and one for deceased family members on February 7.** But the prayers do not stop even there. Every week, each house of the province must say at least one Mass and each Dominican must pray one rosary for the deceased of the province. Finally, every evening, usually before dinner, they pray the De Profundis (Ps. 130) for all those whose anniversary of death is the following day in all the American provinces.

As you can see, Dominicans have a great devotion to our dead and one of the great consolations of being a Dominican is knowing that your brothers will pray for you continually after you die. However, it can be a two way street. Our Holy Father Dominic on his death bed promised to be more helpful to his brethren once he was before God. We also have the assurance that when the departed brothers come before the Lord they too will pray for us who are still in the fight for souls here on earth.

There is a second story concerning the laity that occurred a few years ago. As many may know TAN Publishing publishes books that are out of print and have expired copyrights. One year they decided to reprint "HOW TO AVOID PURGATORY" By Fr. Paul O'Sullivan O.P.". The following is taken from this very popular leaflet.

"Among the extraordinary graces which Catholics gain by becoming members of a Lay Fraternity is a share in many Masses and prayers."

The laity office was deluged with notes and letters requesting membership, some even including a donation for the privilege. There were many who rightfully may have been concerned that the family members would forget them after death in their prayers. All these requests had to be answered and declined. It was a huge undertaking.

To mention, for instance, the Lay Fraternity of Saint Dominic, Pope Benedict XV, himself a Member, said: "One of the easiest and most effectual ways of reaching a high degree of sanctity is by becoming a Dominican Member" The members of this order receive during life a share every day in thousands of Masses and prayers, and after death, when, alas, so many are neglected by their relatives, those who are members of this Lay Fraternity have a share daily in thousands of other Masses and prayers, this for as long as they remain in Purgatory!

Among the many beautiful characteristics of the Order of St. Dominic is its intense devotion and love for the Holy Souls, especially for the souls of its members, friends and benefactors. So true is this that a young Italian nobleman who consulted the Pope as to which religious order he would do well to enter received for answer: "My dear son, you may with much profit join any of the Orders, for in each you will find abundant means of becoming a Saint. After death, however, be a Dominican" The Holy Father meant to imply that the suffrages given after death to their deceased members are, indeed, most abundant in the Dominican Order. The conditions of becoming a member of this order are so easy and the advantages so many that half the world would become Dominican Tertiaries did they know these advantages."

Blessed Henry Suso, of the Dominican Order, made a compact with a fellow religious to the effect that, when one of the two died, the survivor would offer two Masses each week for his soul, and other prayers as well. It so fell out that his companion died first, and Blessed Henry commenced immediately to offer the promised Masses. These he continued to say for a long time. At last, quite sure that the soul of his saintly friend had reached Heaven, he ceased offering the Masses. Great was his sorrow and consternation when the soul of the dead brother appeared to him suffering intensely and chiding him for not celebrating the promised Masses. Blessed Henry replied with deep regret that he had not continued the Masses, believing that his friend must be enjoying the Beatific Vision but he added that he had ever remembered him in prayer. "O dear Brother Henry, please give me the Masses, for it is the Precious Blood of Jesus that I most need!" cried out the suffering soul. Blessed Henry began anew and, with redoubled fervor, offered Masses and prayers for his friend until he received absolute certitude of his delivery. Then it was his turn to receive graces and blessings of all kinds from the dear brother he had relieved, and very many times more than he could have expected.

As a footnote for the Laity today, I would recommend these details:

- The yearly celebration of 3 masses for all living and deceased Dominicans is that the request and stipend offering be made to a Dominican Priory or location.
- Also, I know that many people have a Last Will. Consider inserting into the will the request that a Gregorian Mass Series be offered for YOUR soul obviously after your death. It is a series of 30 masses that can only be offered for the deceased at a cost of about \$200. They can be requested from many Dominican Houses. You can find more information on these on the chapter website.

Prayers and Suffrages of the First and Current Rule Compared

FIRST RULE

Prayers and Liturgy of the Hours

The brethren and sisters shall say daily all the Canonical Hours, unless hindered by sickness. For Matins they shall say 28 Pater noster; for Vespers, 14; for each of the other Hours, 7. (a total of 49) Moreover, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, they are bound to say for each hour as many Ave Marias as Pater noster. For the blessing of the table, they must say one Pater noster. When they rise from table, they must, in like manner, say one Pater noster; and for thanksgiving, the Psalm Miserere or the Psalm Laudate may be said by those who know them. All who know the Apostles' Creed must say it once at the beginning of Matins (morning prayer); also before Prime (early morning), and at the end of Compline (night prayer). But those who know and can say the Canonical Hours as clerics do, shall not be obliged to recite the above mentioned Paters and Aves.

OF RISING TO MATINS.

All shall rise to Matins (morning prayer) on Sundays and festivals from the Feast of All Saints to Easter Sunday.* In Advent and Lent they shall rise every night. Those, however, who are engaged in daily manual labor may say all their Hours in the morning as far as Vespers (evening prayer); and in the evening they may say Vespers and Compline together.

FIRST RULE SUFFRAGES

OP **THE DEATH OF THE BRETHREN** AND SISTERS, AND OF THE SUFFRAGES FOR THEM.

When any one of the brethren departs out of this world, let his death be announced to the rest of the brethren who are in the same city or place, that they may endeavor to be present at the funeral of the deceased, from which they must not retire until the body is buried. The same we will also have to be observed with respect to the deceased sisters. Moreover, within the eight days immediately following the burial of the deceased, **let every brother and sister say for his or her soul, the priests one Mass**; the rest, those that know the Psalter, fifty psalms; those who do not, one hundred Pater noster, adding at the end of each, "Requiem aeternam,"

CURRENT RULE

Prayers and Liturgy of the Hours

A mature practice of Dominican Spirituality also calls the member to certain obligations, when possible according to their state in life, which include

- A) Participating in daily Mass
- B) Daily praying some portions of the Liturgy of the Hours, with a minimum component of **Morning and Evening Prayer**
- C) Daily recitation of the Rosary
- D) Daily reading and reflecting on Sacred Scripture
- E) Monthly reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- F) Frequent and ongoing study of matters pertaining to the Church, the world, and their apostolate
- G) An annual retreat, either on their own or with other members of the Fraternity.

CURRENT RULE SUFFRAGES

- C) **Upon the death of a member** of the fraternity:
- j . **Pray five decades of the Rosary and the Office of the Dead** for the deceased member:
- ii. Attend the deceased member's Funeral Mass: and Hi . If it is not possible to attend the **Funeral Mass**, then **participate in a Mass** with the personal intention for the soul of the deceased member.

And **besides this, every Tertiary is obliged to have* three Masses said in the course of the year for all the brethren and sisters, both living and dead** ; those who know it, must say the whole Psalter ; those who do not are bound to recite + **five hundred Pater nosters**.

- **Those who are unable to have three Masses said may offer three communions for the same intention.**
+ The obligation of saying 500 Pater nosters in the year may be fulfilled by saying two Pater nosters every day.
X **The Dominican Order celebrates four anniversaries of the dead in the course of the year, which will be found in the Calendar ; and Tertiaries are invited to keep these also,** that they may share in the indulgences which have been annexed to their celebration.
 - F. Cipolletti.

Following the tradition of the Church. the Order of Preachers, from its beginnings, has always honored and cherished the memory of its deceased members through the offering of prayers in suffrage for them. Likewise, and in keeping with Dominican tradition, members of the Lay Fraternities of Saint Dominic should preserve the memory of the members of their fraternity who have gone before them: therefore, members are encouraged to offer the following suffrages:

- a) Daily pray an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and Psalm 130 (De Profundis)
- b) Pray the Office of the Dead and, if possible, participate in a Mass with a personal intention for the following commemorations of the Dominican liturgical calendar: February 7, for deceased parents: September 5, for deceased benefactors and familiars of the Order and November 8 for all deceased Dominicans,