



EASTER MESSAGE of the Minister General, 2025

The prayer of Jesus and our prayer



ORDO FRATRUM
MINORUM

To the Friars of the Order
To the Poor Clare and Conceptionist Sisters
To the Franciscan Sisters affiliated to the Order
To the Franciscan Laity

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the Lord give you peace!

As we approach Holy Week, I wish to dwell on a central element in the passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus — his prayer.

The Gospels testify that Jesus prayed throughout his life, seeking spaces of intimacy with the Father. He prayed in the Temple with the apostles, and he prayed before important undertakings. His whole existence was imbued by prayer, and he invites us to enter into this mystery with him.

Jesus always prayed, even in the dark hours of his passion. On Palm Sunday, along with the crowds, he blessed the Father. During the Last Supper, he gives thanks for the gifts of bread and wine. In Gethsemane, his prayer becomes so intense that he sheds blood in his desire to do the Father's will. On the cross, he prays entrusting himself to the Father and forgiving his aggressors. In the silence of Holy Saturday, he remains completely handed over to the Father.

“I have risen, and I am with you still. You have laid your hand upon me.” The Entrance Antiphon for Easter morning shows us Jesus praying to the Father at the hour of the Resurrection, with the voice of a man who has suffered, weighed down by the days of his passion. And now *“he is always alive to intercede on their behalf”* (Heb 7:25).

With our gaze fixed on Jesus, let us remember that the source of prayer is already within us: it is the Spirit of the Crucified & Risen One and His holy operation (cf. LR 10:8). In Him, we can respond to the innate human orientation towards God that reveals itself more clearly in silence.

We must start afresh from God, start afresh from Him who is in us — and prayer is necessary for this journey. It is not easy to remain faithful to it, especially at this complicated time in history. Often, our prayer becomes mechanical, losing vital contact with daily life. It is precisely our personal prayer — meditation, silence, prayerful reading of the Word — that suffers most. Are we not tempted to abandon it, excusing ourselves because of our busyness? But when personal prayer weakens, the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist also becomes impoverished, the affections of our hearts do not pulse and remembrance of God fades.

I invite you to reflect in your personal meditation:

What is my prayer like? To what extent do I perceive prayer as a problem, or do I not have a problem with it because I do not take it seriously?



Do I feel the desire for personal prayer? Is it present in me or is it absent?

Do I struggle to seek what pleases the Lord in my prayer, recognising His will in my real life? What resistances do I sense?

As contemplative brothers and sisters in mission, we are called to cultivate an ongoing intimacy with the Lord: to meet him, love him, and allow ourselves to be transformed in him, to go beyond ourselves towards fullness of life in the world. I have no easy recipes to offer. In my experience, I have learnt that it is necessary to begin again every day, accepting the Lord's invitation to be with Him. As Francis reminds us, we must beware of the wiles of Satan who wants to turn our hearts away from the Lord through worldly concerns (cf. ER 22:9-25).

For this reason, prayer is an essential part of the spiritual struggle. Every genuine relationship knows its struggles, including that with God. Prayer reconnects us with ourselves and with the Spirit who dwells within us, helping us to discover both the true face of God as *Abba* and, at the same time, our own true face.

Prayer is not an option, but a vital necessity. The “ecological” quality of our human, Christian, and Franciscan life depends on it, making us capable, like Mary, of keeping the words and works of the Lord. There will be no authentic and lasting renewal without a determined return to God through faithful prayer that touches our actual lives.

St Francis exhorted us to pray together: “*Let us always make a home and a dwelling place there for Him Who is the Lord God Almighty*” (ER 22, 27). A fraternity that prays becomes a place that is truly inhabited and not a spiritual desert; a place where evangelical love and hope are exercised —not a mere stop-off location in between pastoral or social activities.

Let us enter Holy Week in a spirit of prayer, overcoming the weariness we may feel. Let us not delude ourselves that we can replace prayer with any commitment, however noble. A personal relationship with the Lord remains central to our choice to follow Jesus in the spirit of Sts Francis, Clare, Beatrice da Silva, and Elizabeth, who themselves became living prayer.

Let us experience Easter as a community that is alert and ready. Prayer enables us to live on this earth with our gaze turned to heaven and our hearts attentive to the cry of humanity. In this way, we can bring God's smile to a world lit by the light of hope in the midst of too many signs of death — wars and armies, injustice, the environmental crisis, rejection of the ‘little ones’, refugees and migrants, the arrogance of the rich few who are indifferent to the fate of the poor.

Do we still wish to fall in love with the gift of prayer and create an environment that fosters it in our fraternities? This Easter, as we approach the Sacrament of Re-



conciliation, let us acknowledge the obstacles that stand in the way of our prayer life, and begin afresh with renewed impetus. Let us make room for the Lord and experience the beauty of his face and thus we will find an answer to the cry of so many.

The joy that Francis experienced is the mature fruit of this journey. If we persevere in seeking the face of the Lord, we can become more peaceful people, centred in what truly matters, capable of authentic relationships in caring for others, even in our daily toil.

This is my wish as we recall the 800th anniversary of the Canticle of the Creatures, one of the highest expressions of St Francis' prayer in its praise and blessing. This Easter we too wish to say to the Lord:

O You who are holy and humble, we praise you with all your creatures. We praise You also for those things which frighten us, such as infirmity and death. We praise You for those who endure darkness with forgiveness. We praise you with all living beings and return everything to you, Lord, the source of life.

With these thoughts, I wish a holy and peaceful Easter to one and all.

Fraternally,



Fr. Massimo Fusarelli of

Br Massimo Fusarelli, OFM
Minister General

Prot. 114020/MG-36-2025



ORDO FRATRUM
MINORUM

Curia Generalis

Via di S. Maria Mediatrice, 25

00165 Roma, Italia

www.ofm.org

