

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



Every religious community has a charism, or “gift,” that is given to the Church and the world through the vowed witness of its members. The Servite Charism is expressed in three ways: Devotion to the Mother of God, Service, and Fraternity. In this month’s newsletter let us explore the Servite understanding of Service. I am indebted to Fr. Christopher Ross, OSM, for his writing on this subject in his book *The Charism of the Servants of Mary*.

CALLED TO SERVE

ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY

Vocation Newsletter

Who is a servant? Servite friar Fr. Raffaello M. Taucci notes that the term “servant” used in the Middle Ages denotes a perfectly free man who limits his liberty by “obligating himself to certain services and contributions to a ‘lord.’” The lord in return granted security. The Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order felt themselves to be poor, humble, and in need of conversion, so they sought the help and protection of Our Lady. Placing themselves under her protection, they were her servants. Her way (faithfulness to God and compassionate presence at the Cross) became their way of serving each other and all people. Our Lady became their “lady” so that the Seven served her by honoring her with

devotional acts and by acts of charity to others. Through continual meditation on the life of the Blessed Virgin, the Seven understood themselves as servants, serving others as Mary served Jesus. Today, Servites profess that “we are all servants and that is that what we call ourselves. We all have the same dignity inasmuch as we are brothers and we are all equal” Servite Constitutions, art. 9 (hereafter SC).

In our reflection on being servants, the following Scripture passages guide us in a deeper understanding of and responding to the call to be servants: Matthew 28:18-20 • Luke 10:27 • 2 Corinthians 5:20 • 2 Corinthians 8:9 • Galatians 5:13b-14 • Galatians 6:2 • Colossians 3:12-15 • 1 John 3:16. As servants, our desire is to extend the kingdom of God through our vowed witness to Christ and in our ministerial service to others. The Servite Charism to serve is likewise a challenge to see all people as brothers and sisters of the same heavenly Father. We serve not for our glory, but to proclaim that all are worthy of the Father’s love. By our ministry, we witness God’s love to others, that they can come to a deeper understanding that they are loved the same as we are,





unconditionally, and with an everlasting love. It is whom we serve that defines us as servants of God and of Mary.

First, and foremost, we serve God. Our daily encounter with God in the Eucharist and prayer, and in fraternity, deepens our sense of the presence of God in our lives. The love and forgiveness which we experience from these daily “God encounters” become the source of how and why we serve. Second, we serve Christ and His Gospel. Article 112 of our Constitutions state that “the Servant of Mary should be aware that he is sent by Christ to serve as a living witness of the gospel.” Like the twelve apostles and the seventy-two disciples, we Servites are

and are instructed that all people are our sisters and brothers of the heavenly Father. The Church nurtures and guides our service. Lastly, we serve our each other as brothers.

While each friar is a unique individual, blessed with gifts and talents, we choose to live in community, drawing strength from each other’s lives and faith, and challenged to become more faithful witnesses to Jesus by the witness we give to each other. Serving each other in community is the work of helping each other become the best version of ourselves in the light of Christ’s love. The communal life is challenging, but the joy is that Servites walk with each other through

Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. How does the Servite Charism inspire me to serve as a Christian?
2. In what ways do I/can I respond to Jesus; call to serve right now? Why?

sent by Christ, endowed with His Spirit to do what He did: announce the presence of God’s kingdom, take care of the sick and dying, stand with those who are alone, and offer the hope of Christ to all. Whether we are serving as parish priests, school chaplains or shrine chaplains, we see our service as the response to Jesus’ mission to help all encounter God’s love in their life’s circumstances. Next, we serve the Church.

life’s journey where our care for the other brings hope and love to each friar. No matter what a friar is facing or celebrating, he is never alone. We serve each other as brothers as Christ serves us individually. We carry each other’s burdens as Christ carries ours with hope, joy, compassion and courage. Serving each other is being brothers to each other.

The characteristic of the Servite charism of service is that we serve together (fraternity), and Mary, the Mother of God is our example and intercessor in our service. “Faithful to our vocation of service we seek to understand the significance of the Virgin Mary for the modern world. Brothers to everyone, we journey together to achieve a more intense communion of love” SC, art.7. Whether it is in ministry with others or serving the brothers of our community, Servite service is about building the family of God on earth, seeing all people as brothers and sisters and witnessing to peace founded on God’s unconditional and everlasting love. As God serves us in love, we, in turn, do the same.

Our solemn profession of the three evangelical vows of chastity, poverty and obedience within the church consecrates our lives “to the service of God and his people in the perfect following of Christ and in complete dedication to our Lady” SC, art. 144. The Church is our home, the place where we learn about Christ and through whom we serve others in Jesus. The Church is our life’s guide and it is the place where we encounter Jesus in the Church’s liturgy. The Church’s doctrines and teachings guide our response to Jesus to do to others and God does for us. As members of the Church, our service assists in the Church’s mission to extend the love of Jesus to all. It is the Church that teaches us about God and His love; that we experience God’s loving mercy in Jesus; are aware of God’s presence through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit;

Vocation Directors

Fr Donald Siple, OSM
donaldsiple@servitesusa.org

Mr Eddie Murphy
vocations@servitesusa.org

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