

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



The total dedication to the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the essential elements of the life of the Servite Order. It is rooted in the same experience of our Seven Holy Fathers at the beginning of “their spiritual itinerary:” “As they were aware of their imperfection, they humbled themselves, and with much devotion surrendered themselves at the feet of the glorious Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven, because she as a mediator and advocate, reconciled them to her Son and made them bear much fruit. That is why, from then on, they wanted to be called “Servants of Mary.”

MARIAN INSPIRATION...

In fact the Order was convinced about the presence of Mary down through the centuries of its life. Already in the time of the Seven Holy Fathers and St. Phillip Benizi, the Servite friars were aware of the reality that the Order was a sign of the maternal and merciful figure of Mother Mary, as Innocent IV himself referred to the Order (in the Bull *Ut religionis vestrae* of 1st August 1254), as a vineyard planted by the Virgin Mary. Down through the centuries the Order felt the presence of Mary close to itself and venerated the Virgin Mary with devoted service to her. And it felt consoled and protected whenever it feared the risk of losing its

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ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY
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spiritual patrimony. In those moments of trials and difficulties, the conviction that the Order was Our Lady’s community gave a new hope and strength to take up again its evangelical commitments. In the Constitutions of 1987, the whole mystery of the Blessed Virgin Mary is proposed for contemplation. In the tradition of the Order, some of the following Marian aspects are highlighted:

- The incarnation of the Word, a great event in which the Servites contemplate the holy Virgin of annunciation who gives her “fiat” as a humble and faithful servant of the Lord. It is from her that the Servites learn “to welcome the Word of God and to be attentive to the call of the Spirit.”
- The role of Mary taking part in her Son’s salvific sufferings inspires Servites to have a special veneration towards Our Lady of Sorrows.
- The maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, to whom her Servants appeal and whose merciful love they strive to live out in their life.



•Her glorification in heaven being close to her Son, by which she is resplendent as the most glorious Lady to whom the Servites offer their devoted service under her maternal protection.

MERCY...

Conversion

In the iconography of the Servants, we find the image of the Mother of mercy as one who welcomes her servants and protects them from every physical and spiritual evil, imploring graces and mercy from her Son. But, in this piety of the Servants of Mary, we recognize a constant internal process which calls for Conversion which is understood as our

to the symbolism of the black habit, which the writers of the 14th century recognized a sign of humility of the Virgin and the sufferings she underwent as she took part in the passion of her Son. The great Servite St. Philip Benizi, responding to two Dominican friars who asked him about the Order of Servants of Mary, explained the significance of the black habit of the Servites. And also according to an early Servite author, the Marian vision that St. Peter Martyr experienced gives us a clear idea of the connection between the black habit of the Servites and the mystery of the sufferings that the Virgin Mary underwent. This special attention toward the sorrowful Mother developed in the following centuries and

Reflection Question

I. As I discern Jesus's call for my life, what do I need to let go of to respond to his invitation? What needs to be emptied so that I can be faithful to the Lord? How will I do this?

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follow



constant effort to come back to God and our day-to-day progress in our spiritual journey based on the Gospel values. And conversion is a component characteristic of the spirituality of the Servants. It is rooted in the serious admonishment of Jesus towards whoever desires to be his disciple: "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15) and it implicates a "radical and constant orientation of the community and of the individuals towards the newness of Christ." For Servites, the convincing example for the *conversio morum*, the moral change, is that the Seven Holy Fathers renounced everything and made a radical choice to follow Christ. The moral change demands an austere, sober and penitential way of life so that in each of us the words of St. Paul the apostle may come true: "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:24-25)."

it has become a very important element of the spirituality of the Servite Order. In fact, the particular devotion toward Our Lady of Sorrows was expressed with devotions like Rosary of the Our Lady of Sorrows, the *Via Matris* (The Way of the Sorrowful Mother), and a votive Mass of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. From the 17th to 19th century, there occurred a gradual development of this devotion among the friars of the Servite Order. On the 9th of August 1692, the Sorrowful Virgin was declared as Patroness of the Order. In the Constitutions of the Order, we find an epilogue that synthesizes the figure of the Mother of God in the mystery of the Redemption:

"In our commitment of service, the figure of Mary at the feet of the Cross shall be our model. Since the Son of Man is still being crucified in his brothers and sisters, we, Servants of his mother, wish to be with her at the foot of those countless crosses in order to bring comfort and redemptive cooperation."

Mary in the mystery of the Redemption
For the Servants of Mary, their devotion to the Sorrowful Virgin is connected

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