

The  
Blessing  
of the  
Cord  
of  
St. Francis



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# A Brief History of the Cord of St. Francis

**S**T. FRANCIS, THE “poor man of Assisi”, changed the world forever with his radical, unquestioning, and unfailing following of Christ, his love of the world that God created, and his dedication to his “Lady Poverty” which gave him the clarity of soul to love them both. As part of his detachment from everything earthly, he wore only a humble tunic of rough cloth, bound at the waist by a simple cord. That cord, in which three knots (for the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience) were tied, became an important sign of the children of St. Francis, as well as an object of great devotion in itself. Famously, when St. Dominic met St. Francis he asked him for his cord, and wore it ever after under his own habit as a sign of his devotion to the greatest of all poor men.

Those who wear the cord without religious vows tie five knots, rather than three, into its end. The cord calls to mind the rope with which Christ was bound as He was led to His death, and the five knots always call to mind the five Wounds of Christ by which He won our salvation. It is further a sign of penance, a sign of the binding we put on our passions, the better to dedicate ourselves to follow the Savior Whose cord this is. The cord serves further as a sign of chastity, as well as of moderation in all things—food, drink, and whatever other worldly goods that the Devil may corrupt to our damnation. With this cord, we bind ourselves to Christ, as St. Francis bound himself so many centuries ago, and thus protect ourselves from the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and fit ourselves to join Him, and St. Francis, in Heaven.

Once a large confraternity with many chapters, the Archconfraternity of the Cord of St. Francis effectively no longer exists, and the many indulgences once offered to its members have likewise fallen by the wayside. Nevertheless, it is still a powerful and effective devotion that many Christians would do well to pursue. The devotion requires very little, and carries a great many benefits. Traditionally, the requirements were as follows:

- 1.) To wear the cord habitually around the body, either over or under the clothing, nor to lay it aside without necessity or for a significant time.
- 2.) By custom, though not by mandate, to pray daily five Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory bes, one each in honor of each of the Five Wounds of Christ; and one extra of each for the intentions of the Pope. These prayers are prayed with

arms outstretched in the form of the Cross, an ancient tradition of the Franciscans that goes back to St. Francis himself.

Increasing our personal fastings, almsgiving, and other good works is also strongly encouraged. In particular, fasting on Fridays throughout the year, fasting on all weekdays in Lent, and fasting during “St. Martin’s Lent” (12 November until Christmas) are traditional Franciscan practices, and would serve the Cord-bearer well. To this must be added fervent devotions to the Five Wounds of Christ and the praying of the Stations of the Cross, which any Cord-bearer should do frequently.

The cord itself should be made of some natural material, such as linen, hemp, wool, or cotton. It must be worn “around the body”; this arguably permits smaller cords when appropriate, such as cords worn around the wrist rather than the waist. It must, however, have the five knots in its end.

The wearing of the Cord—becoming a “Cord-bearer”, the term once worn with great devotion by many—is a powerful lead to holiness. Notably, St. Benedict Joseph Labre (1748–1783), the patron of homeless persons, fervently desired to enter a monastery but was unable due to poor health and academic difficulties. Instead, he embraced the life of St. Francis, bore the Cord, and has since been elevated to the altars; as such, in addition to all the Franciscan saints, he is regarded as a patron of Cord-bearers everywhere.

## Blessing of and Investiture with the Cord

*Sacerdos indutus superpelliceo ac stola alba, dicat:*

✠. Adjutórium nostrum ✠ in nómine Dómini.

℟. Qui fecit cælum et terram.

✠. Ora pro nobis, beáte Pater Francíscē.

℟. Ut digni efficiámur promissionibus Christi.

✠. Dómine, exáudi oratióem meam.

*Let the priest, wearing a surplice and white stole, say:*

✠. Our help ✠ is in the name of the Lord.

℟. Who made heaven and earth.

✠. Pray for us, O Holy Father St. Francis.

℟. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

✠. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. Et clamor meus ad te véniat.

ψ. Dóminus vobíscum.

R. Et cum spíritu tuo.

Oremus.

**D**EUS, QUI UT servum redímeres, Fílium tuum per manus impiórum ligári voluísti: béne ✠ dic, quæsumus, funem ístum, et præsta; ut fámulus tuus, qui (fámula tua, quæ) eo velut ligámíne pæniténtiáli sui córporis cingétur, vinculórum ejúsdem Dómini nostri Jesu Christi perpétuo memor exístat, et in órđine, quem assúmpsit, perénnter perseverét, túsque cum afféctu semper obséquii se alligátum (-am) esse cognóscat. Per eúndem Dóminum nostrum Jesum Christum, Fílium tuum: Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitáte Spíritus Sancti Deus, per ómnia sácula sæculórum.

R. Amen.

Oremus.

**O**MNÍPOTENS SEMPITÉRNE Deus, qui ómnibus peccatóribus quæréntibus véniam et misericórdiam, quæsíta et optáta misericórditer tribuísti: orámuS imménsam cleméntiam tuam; ut has chordas (hanc chordam) bene ✠ dicere, et sancti ✠ ficáre dignéris; ut, quicúmque iis (ea) pro peccátis suis cincti fúerit (cinctus fúerit), et cleméntiam tuam imploráverint (imploráverit), méritis et intercessióne beatíssimi servi tui Francisci, véniam et indulgéntiam suórum peccatórum, fruc-

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

ψ. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

**G**OD, WHO, THAT Thou mightest redeem a slave, didst will that Thy Son should be bound by the hands of the wicked; bless, ✠ we beseech Thee, this cord, and grant that Thy servant being girded with it as with a penitential bandage of his body, may be ever mindful of the bonds of the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord, and may he (she) persevere in the order which he (she) has embraced, and always recognize with affection that he has been bound to thy services. Through the same Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

R. Amen.

Let us pray.

**A**Lmighty and everlasting God, who, to all sinners seeking pardon and mercy, hast ever mercifully granted the things they sought and desired: we pray Thine immense clemency, that Thou wouldst deign to bless ✠ and sanctify ✠ these cords (this cord); that whoever shall be bound by them (it) for his sins and implore Thy clemency, may, through the intercession and merits of Thy most blessed servant, Francis, obtain pardon and remission of all his (her) sins, and

túmque tuæ sanctæ misericórdiæ consequántur (consequátur). Per Christum, Dóminum nostrum.

R. Amen.

Deinde aspergatur aqua benedicta; mox Sacerdos cingendo postulánte chorda, dicat:

**A**CCIPE CHORDAM super lumbos tuos: ut sint lumbi tui præcincti in signum castitátis. In nómine Patris, et Filii, ⁊ et Spiritus Sancti.

R. Amen.

*Thereafter, when putting on the Cord, the following prayer may devoutly be said:*

**O**MNIPOTENS ET misericors Domine Deus, hoc funi me cingente in imitatione sancti fidelisque servi tui sancti Francisci, quæso, ut meritis et intercessione ejus spiritum superbiæ aviditatisque de me auferas, et gratiam mihi dones ut exemplum humilitatis paupertatisque ejus imitem, ut perfectius imitem vitam passionemque Jesu Christi Filii tui dilecti, Domini nostri, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus: per omnia sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

the fruits of Thy holy mercy. Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Then it is sprinkled with blessed water; then the priest, binding the postulant with the cord, says:

**R**ECEIVE THE CORD upon thy loins, that thy loins may be girded as a sign of chastity. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, ⁊ and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

**O**LMIGHTY AND MERCIFUL Lord God, girding myself with this cord, in imitation of Thy holy and faithful servant St. Francis, I beseech Thee, by his merits and intercession, to take from me the spirit of pride and covetousness, and give me grace to copy his example of humility and poverty, that I may the more perfectly imitate the life and passion of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

