

and for the Church. St. Bonaventure relates several miracles which were wrought through the cord of St. Francis. In the course of time Cordbearers banded together and formed confraternities. By the constitution *En Supernae Dispositionis* of November 19, 1585, Sixtus V erected the Archconfraternity of the Cord of St. Francis in the Patriarchal Basilica of St. Francis at Assisi, endowed it with indulgences and authorized the Minister General of the Friars Minor Conventual to erect confraternities and aggregate them to the Archconfraternity. On August 29, 1587, he granted the Minister General of the Minors Observant the faculty to erect confraternities in churches of his Order. On June 27, 1622, Gregory XV conceded this faculty to the Minister General of the Third Order Regular and Pius X, through a rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences of December 14, 1904 to the Minors Capuchin.\*

St. Benedict-Joseph Labre is honored as the patron of the Cordbearers. He was born at Amettes, France on March 26, 1748; he received the cord at Assisi on November 20, 1770, died in Rome on April 16, 1783, and was canonized by Leo XIII on December 8, 1881. He distinguished himself by detachment from the world, heroic self-denial and an extraordinary love for God and his fellow men.

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\* Transcriber's Note: The First Order of the great Franciscan Family is divided into three major groups: the Friars Minor Conventual, the Minors Observant, and the Minors Capuchin.

### **Concerning Membership & Obligations**

(from the *Third Order of St. Francis Handbook*, pp. 431-4.)

**336. Membership.** All good Catholics of both sexes may receive the cord of St. Francis. It is especially desirable that school children do so. A well-conducted confraternity of Cordbearers is an excellent preparatory school for the Third Order.

No obligations binding under sin are assumed. **The wearing of the cord is a necessary condition for gaining the indulgences and sharing the spiritual benefits** [emphasis added]. The Cordbearers are advised to recite daily five Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glories to the five wounds of Our Lord and in honor of St. Francis and one Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory for the intention of the Pope. They are expected to attend the customary monthly processions where these are held. All should zealously practice the virtues symbolized by the cord.

What has been said of the material thickness of the Tertiary cord applies also to the cord of Francis.† **Fervent Cordbearers wear it day and night** [emphasis added]. At the reception the cord must be blessed by a priest who has the necessary faculty. ... The names of those who receive the cord must be inscribed in the register of a

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† "The cord is an essential part of the Tertiary garb.... It is made of wool, cotton, flax or hemp. Costly material although not invalid, would not be in keeping with the Franciscan spirit. There are no prescriptions concerning its thickness, but it must be a cord not a mere string. It is customary to make three or five knots near the ends in memory of the Blessed Trinity or of the Five Wounds of Jesus" (*Third Order of St. Francis Handbook*, No. 79).

canonically established confraternity or be sent to the Father Superior of the Sacro Convento, Assisi.

**Spiritual benefits of the Cordbearers** (as given by the Traditional Capuchin Friars of Morgon, France, June A.D. 2010):

Although the previous indulgences have been removed, new plenary indulgences were accorded in 1972 to Cordbearers. These may be gained under the usual conditions with the requirement that on each occasion one renews his commitment to the Archconfraternity of the Cord, being inscribed in the register and observing its statutes, in particular, the daily wearing of the Cord.

Archconfraternity members can gain a plenary indulgence on the following days:

1. The day on which one is enrolled in the Cord.
2. February 18<sup>th</sup> — St. Bernadette
3. April 16<sup>th</sup> — St. Benedict Joseph Labre
4. June 13<sup>th</sup> — St. Anthony of Padua
5. August 25<sup>th</sup> — St. Louis, King of France
6. September 4<sup>th</sup> — St. Rose of Viterbo
7. October 4<sup>th</sup> — St. Francis of Assisi
8. December 8<sup>th</sup> — The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Cordbearer benefits as well from the prayers, Masses and merits offered by the members of the three Franciscan Orders, as well as by the special intercession of those who are in Heaven, as the enrollment ceremony assures them: "In virtue of the authority which has been conceded to me, I

receive and remit to you all the spiritual goods enjoyed by the whole Order of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis, by the grace of God.”

### **Further Signification of the Cord**

According to Father Pacificus Baker, O.F.M. in his *Essay on the Cord of the Seraphical Father St. Francis* (A.D. 1792):

As the design of this Confraternity is to refresh the minds of devout Christians with a daily remembrance of the Passion of their dear Redeemer, that they may more effectually do this, the members of it wear a cord, wherein are made five knots in honour and remembrance of the five wounds of Our Blessed Saviour. This cord must first be blessed by a Superior of the Order of St. Francis, or some other priest to whom power is given to admit persons into the Confraternity, who, putting it about the waist of the person admitted, gives it to him as a symbol of penance, and chastity, and a perpetual memorial of Christ's Passion; that with St. Paul we may learn to glory in the Cross of Christ. It is a symbol of penance, to put us in mind that as sinners we ought daily to do penance for our sins, and to offer up to God, especially in the Holy Mass, the infinite merits of Christ's sufferings in satisfaction for our sins. The life of a Christian ought to be a life of penance, as the holy Council of Trent observes. Penance is absolutely necessary for us, sinners as we are. Truth itself has said, "Unless you do penance, you shall all perish" (Lk. xiii). The cord is also a symbol of chastity, to inform us that as Christians we are consecrated temples of the Holy Ghost by baptism, children of God, and heirs of heaven, into which no unclean thing shall enter. Our great care then must be to

preserve our bodies and souls chaste and undefiled, free from the least impurity either by thought, word or deed. The cord is further a symbol or perpetual memorial of Christ's Passion, and of those rough cords with which He was cruelly bound by the Jews, tied to a pillar, and dragged to His Crucifixion.

All who enroll may choose a *Cordbearer Name*. Usually (though not necessarily) this new heavenly patron will be chosen from one of the Franciscan Orders.

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- 1) **Wear the Cord always.**
  - 2) **Pray daily the 5 (+1) Paters, Aves and Glorias.**
  - 3) **Study to imitate the life and the virtues of St. Francis.**
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### **TO BECOME A CORDBEARER**

Contact Rev. Father Jacques Emily  
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P.O. Box 1379  
Los Gatos, CA 95031-1379  
Email: [trad.thirdorderofpenance@gmail.com](mailto:trad.thirdorderofpenance@gmail.com).

If you have interest in **the Third Order of St. Francis** you may also inquire with Father Emily as listed above. Information on the Third Order may also be found at: [sspax.org/third\\_orders/tosf/tosf.htm](http://sspax.org/third_orders/tosf/tosf.htm).



### **THE ARCHCONFRATERNITY OF THE CORD OF ST. FRANCIS**

The Cord of St. Francis is a sacramental similar to the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Just as one wears the scapular as a sign of devotion to Our Lady, so one becomes a Cordbearer out of devotion to St. Francis of Assisi and in honor of the Sacred Passion of Christ. All Catholics — adults and children (having reached the age of reason) — may be enrolled in the Cord. Priests, Religious and members of the various Third Orders are *not excluded*. Some priests of the Society of St. Pius X are Cordbearers.

**History of the Cord of St. Francis** (from the *Third Order of St. Francis Handbook*, pp. 431-4.)

**334. Historical Notes.** (...) *The Cordbearers are not a part of the Third Order. They were not instituted by St. Francis, but their origin dates back to his time. One day his friend St. Dominic asked him for his cord. Dominic wore it for the rest of his life. Many of the devout faithful followed his example. They wore the cord as a symbol of penance and humility, and to honor St. Francis and obtain graces through his intercession for themselves, for others*