TRADITIONS IN TIME
FRANCISCAN LITURGICAL PRAYER

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Introduction

Liturgy is technically defined as the official public worship of the Church. Since the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963) this includes all rites contained in officially published post-conciliar liturgical books, including: the sacraments, the liturgy of the hours, and various other officially approved rites. It does not include private prayers, devotional practices or other pious exercises. This late twentieth century definition of liturgical prayer was not that of the late medieval period, however, where distinctions between devotional practices and public worship were less clearly defined, and ritual books did not require the ecclesial approbations that are necessary today. Consequently, under the rubric “liturgical” the mapping of early Franciscan liturgical practices could include a breadth of public rituals which the followers of Francis were either required or encouraged to undertake. Given the centrality of the Eucharist and the Divine Office in Francis’s own life and writings, as well as their importance in the emergence of a distinctive style of Franciscan prayer, we will focus primarily on these key elements. Furthermore, given the ferment and even tumult around liturgical issues in the emerging Franciscan community, we will concentrate on developments in the first half of the thirteenth century. Also, given the prejudice in the maxim lex orandi, lex credendi for a ritual rather than

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2 These include the rites of installation to the liturgical ministries of acolyte and reader; rites for dying (viaticum and the commendation of the dying); rites of Christian burial; rites for the dedication of a church, religious profession and consecration of virgins; and the contents of the revised Roman Book of Blessings. Lawrence Madden, “Liturgy,” The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, ed. Peter Fink (Collegeville, 1990), p. 741.

3 The locus classicus of this notion is the maxim of Prosper of Aquitaine, “legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi” (PL 51:209); for a further discussion of this concept see Paul De Clerck, “Lex orandi, lex credendi,” Sens originel et avatars historiques d’un adage équivoque,” Questions liturgiques 59 (1978), pp. 193–212.