



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS

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Dear Brothers and Sisters!

May the Lord give you his peace!

We have been preparing for this year's Christmas already for a while, because the 800 years jubilee puts it in a special light on it. The name of the tiny village, Greccio, has become well-known among those too, who are not familiar with the Franciscan spirituality. Greccio became the symbol of the Christmas celebration. And it is right and just. The evening when Saint Francis preached as a deacon, and the Holy Mass was really in the focus, literally the only way to celebrate, life has become a different, a very special meaning. Everyone and everything in Greccio was alive, the animals, the priest, the village people, the brothers, except for one: Jesus. However, although Saint Francis wanted to see what happened in Bethlehem, a miracle happened in front of someone else: Jesus came to life, became alive.

*This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery. (Admirabile Signum 2.)* Since then, over the centuries, following the example of Saint Francis, through his intercession, walking with him on the road, Jesus has become alive for many.

This year in this simple message for Christmas I invite you all: Let this be the real gift of Christmas for us too, let Jesus come alive for us. Jesus has become a man, *the word has become flesh (Jn. 1:14)*, so that *may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity. (Ordo Missae)* He became man and thus opened up his divinity, allowed us to participate, allowed us insight. This is such a strong invitation, as it was for Mary, for Joseph, and all the others who could participate at those wonderful moments around the crib.

In Greccio there was no nativity scene. There were no statues around, but living people. I invite you all to experience this miracle, together with Saint Francis, being those around the 'Christmas crèche'.

Let us be the living family, in which Jesus can be born and can find a warm family spirit.

Let us be Mary, his mother, *when we carry Him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) by means of divine love (amor) and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to Him through holy work, which ought to shine upon others as an example! (EpFid I)*

Let us be Joseph, humbly wondering the things we understand and also those we do not understand, alike. Let us be those faithful companions who fully trust in the promises of God.

Let us be the shepherds, who are pure-hearted enough to be *struck with great fear (Lk. 2:9)* but are also ready to rejoice, *glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen (Lk- 2:20)*

Let us go, like the kings, and let us praise Jesus who is God who came to us but who will not be recognized as God, who is king who is the 'king of kings', reigning not over the earthly but the heavenly kingdom among us, and is a fragile man who is suffering and dying for us to redeem you and me, everyone.

This year I am thinking more than ever of those who are suffering a lot and for whom it will be difficult or even impossible to joyfully celebrate Christmas. I am thinking a lot of those for whom this Christmas time is a time of war, of persecution, of suffering, of lacking the essentials. I invite all of you to give less attention to the material side of the feast, and dedicate more time, prayer, attention to what has happened in Bethlehem. May Christmas be very important to us for the same reason it was to Saint Francis. Let us wish to see what really happened. I wish you all to be part of the Christmas miracle: Jesus has become alive. May he become alive for us all!

May you all have  
peace and good!



Tibor Kauser  
CIOFS general minister

