



To the General Ministers
of the Conference of the Franciscan Family

"Our Sister Death," exclaimed St. Francis on October 3, 1226, at the Portiuncula, as he went to meet her like a man finally at peace. Eight centuries have passed since the death of the Poverello of Assisi, who wrote the words of Christ's salvation in the hearts of the men of his time with incisive lettering.

In commemorating the significant anniversary of the eighth centenary of his passing, I wish to join spiritually with the entire Franciscan Family and with all those who will take part in the commemorative events, hoping that the message of peace may find deep resonance in the Church and society today.

At the beginning of his evangelical life, he had heard a call: "The Lord revealed to me that we should say this greeting: 'May the Lord give you peace'"¹. With these essential words, he conveys to his brothers and to every believer the inner wonder that the Gospel had brought into his life: peace is the sum of all God's gifts, a gift that comes from above. What an illusion it would be to think that it could be built by human efforts alone! And yet it is an active gift, to be welcomed and lived every day².

¹ *Testament* 23.

² Cf. Pope Loe XIV, *Address to the Diplomatic Corp*, May 16, 2025.

It is the same greeting that the risen Lord addressed to his disciples on Easter evening, when they were frightened and locked in the Upper Room: "Peace be with you."³ It is not a formula of courtesy, but the certain announcement of Christ's victory over death. Like the voice of the angels on Christmas night – "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests"⁴ – so the peace that the Seraphic Father announces is the one that Christ himself made resound between heaven and earth.

In this era, marked by so many seemingly endless wars, by internal and social divisions that create mistrust and fear, he continues to speak. Not because he offers technical solutions, but because his life points to the authentic source of peace.

The Franciscan vision of peace is not limited to relations between human beings but embraces the whole of creation. Francis, who calls the sun "brother" and the moon "sister", who recognizes in every creature a reflection of divine beauty, reminds us that peace must extend to the whole family of creation. This insight resonates with particular urgency in our time, when our common home is threatened and groans under exploitation. Peace with God, peace among human beings, and peace with creation are inseparable dimensions of a single call to universal reconciliation.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the example and spiritual legacy of this Saint, strong in faith, steadfast in hope, and ardent in active charity toward his neighbor, inspire in everyone the importance of trusting in the Lord, of dedicating oneself to a life faithful to the Gospel, and of accepting and illuminating every circumstance and action of life with faith and prayer.

In this Year of Grace, I would like to offer you a prayer through which St. Francis of Assisi may continue to instill in all of us perfect joy and harmony:

³ *Jn* 20,19.

⁴ *Lk* 2,14.

*Saint Francis, our brother,
you who eight hundred years ago
went to meet Sister Death
as a man at peace,
intercede for us with the Lord.*

*In the Crucifix of San Damiano
you recognized true peace,
teach us to seek Him,
the source of all reconciliation
that breaks down every wall.*

*You who, unarmed,
crossed the lines of war
and misunderstanding,
give us the courage to build bridges
where the world erects borders.*

*In this time
afflicted by conflict and division,
intercede so that we may become peacemakers:
unarmed and disarming witnesses
to the peace that comes from Christ.
Amen.*

With these sentiments, I express my fervent wishes for good, especially for all of you who follow the charism of the Poverello of Assisi and for those who will commemorate the anniversary of his *Dies Natalis* in various ways, while I cordially impart my desired apostolic blessing.

From the Vatican, January 8, 2026

Leo P.P. XIV