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LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV TO THE MINISTERS GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE EIGHTH CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

[Assisi, 10 January 2026]

To the Ministers General
of the Conference of the Franciscan Family

“Our Sister Death”, exclaimed Saint Francis on 3 October 1226 in Porziuncola, as he went towards her as a man finally at peace. Eight centuries have passed since the death of the *Poverello* of Assisi, who wrote the word of Christ’s salvation indelibly in the hearts of the people of his time.

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 a profound echo in the Church and society today.

At the beginning of his evangelical life, he 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 friars 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 can be built by human efforts alone! And yet it is an active gift, to be welcomed and lived every day[2].

It is the same greeting that, on the evening of Easter, the Risen Lord addresses to his disciples, afraid and locked in the Upper Room: "Peace be with you" [3]. It is not a formula of courtesy, but the certain proclamation 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 whom he loves" [4] – so the peace that the Seraphic Father proclaims is the peace that Christ himself made resound between heaven and earth.

In this age, marked by so many seemingly interminable 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 the relations between human beings, but also 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 be extended to the entire family of Creation. This insight resonates with particular urgency in our time, when our common home is threatened and cries out under exploitation. Peace with God, peace among human beings and 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 towards his neighbour, inspire in everyone the importance of trusting in the Lord, of living 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 wish to offer you a prayer that Saint Francis of Assisi may continue to instil in all of us perfect joy and harmony:

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

*You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano,
teach us to seek in 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 raises up boundaries.*

*In this time afflicted by conflict and division,
intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers:
unarmed and disarming witnesses of 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, 7 January 2026

LEO PP. XIV

[1] *Testament* 23.

[2] Cf. Pope Leo XIV, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 16 May 2025.

[3] *Jn* 20:19.

[4] *Lk* 2:14.

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