

ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS

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Rome, December 20th, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

may the Lord give you his peace!

Every feast, every celebration is different, none of them are the same, but this is very much true for the Christmas of this year, for many reasons. There are many wounds in our life caused by war, natural disasters, or other tragedies of life. But when we are going to celebrate Christmas this year, we have a lot of things to give thanks for, too, in spite of our concerns that shadow our life.

Look at Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, in a difficult moment of history, in a poor place. Is it more difficult for us to live today than it was for him? Is it less comfortable for us? Are there more wars today? Are we poorer than he was? Should we move more from one place to another than he had to? Are we suffering of more persecutions than he had to? I invite you to remember all this, and to remember those who still today have the same hard conditions of life. Do not think about Christmas as a cozy feast, but let us make it a feast of being children of God.

Let's discover the Jesus in the other who deserves our worship, asks for our helpful service, awaits our presence and attention. We will also have many things to do while serving others. Let us not look at why it will be difficult to do, but at the joy of being involved in something good, together. Let Christmas deepen our vocation and mission, and inspire all of us to strengthen our dedication, move us to solidarity.

Next year we are going to begin the series of Franciscan Centenaries, first giving thanks to God for the Rule of Saint Francis and for the celebration of Christmas in Greccio, which opened the eyes of many to the endless love of God. I invite all of you to live these celebrations not only by remembering some significant moments in the life of Saint Francis, but look at these events as great possibilities to renew our faith, to renew the way we live our rich Franciscan charism. Please, find that way of celebration that fits the best to your fraternities, to the circumstances of life where you are living, so that you can live your vocation and mission more gratefully, more completely, in a renewed way.

In line of these celebrations which we begin next year, I'd like to invite you all again to come and participate at the Chapter of mats in 2024. It will be a privileged moment for the Secular Franciscan Order to meet, to rejoice, to pray together, to let God enrich all of us with an experience that might be once in a lifetime.

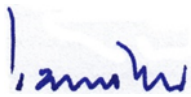
At the end I'd like to turn to all those sisters and brothers of us, who have been suffering of the consequences of war, natural disaster, financial difficulties, family problems, illness, or any other hardships. I feel a special affection and closeness to all of you, and I would like to encourage you all, that in spite of every difficulty, God is in control, he knows us and knows our problems. He is on our

side, together with us. This is why he decided to come „in human likeness; and found human in appearance”¹ to redeem the world and to show the glory of God in spite of all difficulties and all sufferings.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, I will bring all of you in my heart to Christ in a special way through my prayers, giving thanks to God for each and all of you. May God give peace to us all, in our hearts and in the world.

I send to you, to your families, to your fraternities my best wishes for a holy and peaceful Christmas and for the New Year.

Your minister and your brother



Tibor Kauser
CIOFS General minister



¹ Phil. 2:7