



CONFERENCE OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY



2023 | A Multifaceted Centenary
2026 | in Which Several Centenaries
Will Be Celebrated



Conference of the Franciscan Family

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**To all the friars of our Orders
To the Franciscan Family**

**Dear Brothers of the First Order, Poor Clare Sisters,
and Brothers and Sisters of the TOR and the OFS-YouFra,**

May the Lord give you peace!

Several weeks ago, in a letter dated October 2, 2021, we announced the creation of a Coordination Committee for the Franciscan Centenary. We established this Committee in order to be better prepared for the Franciscan Centenary. During the Centenary we will commemorate the 800th anniversaries of the Later Rule, the Christmas at Greccio (2023), the Stigmata (2024), the Canticle of the Creatures (2025), and we will conclude with the Easter of Francis (2026). This Centenary will be “a multifaceted event in which several anniversaries will be celebrated.”

We announced that we wanted to entrust a working group of experts with the task of creating an outline for learning more about our charism at each stage of the Centenary, in order to benefit the ongoing and initial formation programs of all our brothers and sisters in the Franciscan Family; namely, to benefit formation in our Provinces, Custodies, OFS fraternities and other Jurisdictions. Our intention was to offer some common guidelines for deepening knowledge of our charism, within our fraternities and in the various entities that work with us.

Today we are pleased to give you the text which the working group of our brothers and sisters has prepared and we have adopted. This text lends itself to multifaceted use and will help us set out on this journey in communion. The text offers guidelines for organizing the various centenaries at the local level and provides a framework on which to base our formation programs. It is a flexible, worthwhile tool for working on the themes of the various centenaries. Together, these centenaries shall form the single 2023-2026 Centenary, which will conclude with the celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Easter of our Seraphic Father.

In giving you this tool, we wish you pleasant reading, fruitful work and a happy Centenary!
Fraternally yours,

Deborah Lockwood, OSF
President IFC-TOR

Tibor Kauser, OFS
Minister General

Massimo Fusarelli, OFM
Minister General

Roberto Genuin, OFM Cap.
Minister General

Carlos Alberto Trovarelli, OFM Conv.
Minister General

Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR
Minister General



General Observations

1. Themes

The five centenaries are part of a single thematic Centenary, which will develop gradually and harmoniously according to the chronology of the events celebrated.

The key themes proposed for the celebration of the centenaries are considered from multiple perspectives, present in each celebration. These will specifically refer to the theological dimension (*our being in Christ*); the anthropological dimension (*our being brothers and sisters*); the ecclesiological dimension (*our being in communion*); and the sociological dimension (*our being in the world*).

The documents of the Magisterium of the Church, understood from the Franciscan charismatic perspective, are used to provide a theological baseline. The celebration of each centenary is a promising opportunity for the Franciscan Family to support the ecclesial reform that the Pope is carrying out in his pontificate.

The basic purpose for celebrating the centenaries is to direct our gaze to the future and to strengthen our Franciscan identity and charism.

2. Recipients

First, the proposed themes are to be worked on and developed by our brothers and sisters all over the world. Therefore, the integration of all cultures must be standard practice.

The celebration of the centenaries is undoubtedly a good occasion to make the Franciscan Family visible in its entirety. Therefore, it would be very fitting for all activities and initiatives, at the national and/or regional level, to be coordinated by a commission representing the entire Franciscan Family.

Ad intra and *Ad extra*: The centenaries are not intended to have a positive impact only within the Franciscan Family. Imagination and creativity must be brought to bear so that the centenaries impact outwardly upon non-ecclesial social and cultural environments.



3. Methodology

We have already indicated the importance of the theological, anthropological, ecclesiological and sociological dimensions, which, as cross cutting components, should guarantee unity and thematic continuity during this multi-year celebratory event. All of these dimensions play an important role in the *ad intra* programs, but perhaps the anthropological and sociological dimensions could be further enriched in the *ad extra* programs.

There is a risk that these proposals could remain too focused on the theoretical and intellectual aspects. Therefore it would be appropriate to define, for each of the proposed themes, what *objective* is being pursued and to recommend an activity, so that the *experiential* and *practical* dimensions can be made more dynamic.

The *activities* are suggested in a very general way, since they should be made more concrete based on various real-life contexts.

The themes herein can be further explored and developed through lectures, meetings, Chapters of Mats, exhibitions, pilgrimages, mission experiences, etc.



Celebrating the Centenary as a Franciscan Family

Tres ordines hic ordinat: primumque fratrum nominat minorum pauperumque fit dominarum medius sed poenitentum tertius sexum capit utrumque.

Three were the Orders he arrayed: The Friars Minor he called the first; and the Poor Ladies were next, becoming the middle Order. Then thirdly came the Penitents, comprising men and women.

This is how we would have prayed the antiphon for Morning Prayer in the ancient *Rhythmic Office* by Julian of Speyer. He wrote it in 1235, for the canonization of St. Francis of Assisi. The antiphon mentions the direct filial relationship between the Saint and the three Orders. The first he called the Friars Minor, the second he called the Poor Ladies, and the third was for men and women who wanted to follow Jesus on the path of penance according to Francis. In the antiphon, verb *ordinat* is chosen to highlight the style of organization that belongs to the Franciscan Family. It is not reducible to a juridical structure, but rather indicates the reciprocity inherent in the bond of community, which is typical of the Franciscan charism.

The gift that St. Francis received from the Divine Giver is most fully realized in its complementarity and lively reciprocal communion. This is a motivating force in the lives of “all those who love the Lord with their whole heart” (*First Version of the Letter to the Faithful* 1, FF 178/1). Therefore, as a Franciscan Family, we invite everyone who is attracted to the evangelical beauty of the Poverello (cf. *Laudato si'* 10) to join us in celebrating these centenaries. The centenaries offer us a valuable opportunity to invigorate the richness of our charism with a prophetic vision toward the future.

Moreover we want to celebrate them in keeping with the mindset that comes with this gift we have received. Indeed, the hagiographic sources tell us that Francis of Assisi died naked, with nothing of his



Celebrating the Centenary as a Franciscan Family

own: “He asked to be taken to Saint Mary of the Portiuncula so that he might yield up the spirit of life...he threw himself in fervor of spirit totally naked on the naked ground” (*Major Legend* 14:4, *FF* 1240). His whole life was a journey of living *sine proprio*, that is, a life of giving back, from the beginning of his conversion, because only the man who keeps nothing for himself, but gives all of himself, is able to walk in fraternity, guided by his desire for the Supreme Good: “Let us refer all good to the Lord, God Almighty and Most High, acknowledge that every good is His, and thank Him, “from Whom all good comes, for everything.” (*Earlier Rule* 17:17, *FF* 49).

The Poverello recognized that everything in his life was a free gift of God’s love, as he himself affirms in his Testament: “The Lord gave me thus to begin doing penance...the Lord gave me some brothers... the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.” (*Testament* 1-14, *FF* 110-116). He not only received divine gifts but also chose to give them back, so today, eight hundred years later, we can celebrate these five centenaries as a Franciscan Family. The centenaries invite us to live according to the concept of receiving love and transforming it into self-giving and giving back to others.

Let us begin, sisters and brothers, because now it is up to us to give back to others the gifts that Brother Francis gave to us.



Celebrating the Rule 1223-2023

Texts

Later Rule 1:1, FF 75; *Rule of St. Clare* 1:1, FF 2750; *Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular* 1:1; *Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order* 2:4, FF 3424; *Testament* 14-15, FF 116; *Anonymous of Perugia* 11, FF 1497.

All members of the Franciscan Family profess a Rule that becomes a pattern of life and consists in observing the Gospel. As we celebrate the *Later Rule*, we are reminded that for Francis of Assisi, the nucleus of his Rule was the Gospel, as he stated in his *Testament*: “The Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me” (*Testament* 14-15, FF 116). Having listened prayerfully to the words of Jesus Christ, Francis and his first brothers exclaimed: “‘This is what we want; this is what we were seeking.’ And blessed Francis said: ‘This will be our rule’” (*The Anonymous of Perugia* 11, FF 1497).

No member of the Franciscan Family professes his own Rule privately, because he is called to live the Gospel in fraternity. It is important to remember that Francis composed the *Later Rule* at a time in his life when he was dealing with a lot of tension and crises at the fraternal level, but he never renounced the prophetic vision of living as a brother to all and he invites us to do the same. Today the Church, in promoting its synodal and communal dimensions, points to Francis of Assisi as a model of fraternity, calling him the “saint of fraternal love” (*Fratelli tutti* 2). His words and deeds can again, after eight hundred years, illuminate the path of an ecclesial community that seeks to become an outgoing, synodal Church, listening to all, in solidarity with the least, bearing the good news that has the power to fill the lives of those who accept it with joy and meaning (cf. *Evangelii gaudium* 21).



Celebrating the Rule (1223-2023)

Our being in Christ

Celebrating the *Later Rule* as a Franciscan Family gives us an opportunity to get to know each other better. It promotes communion and fosters mutual trust among ourselves. It lets us rediscover the importance of dreaming together, it opens new evangelical paths that help us become a more open and outgoing fraternity, a fraternity that can generate a new culture of encounter and social friendship, a fraternity that strives to reach out to all members of society, “each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all” (*Fratelli tutti* 8).

The Rule consists in “observing the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Later Rule* 1:1, *FF* 75).

Objective

To love and better understand the Rule we have professed.

Activities

- Assess the impact of the Gospel and the Rule we have professed in our daily lives.
- Use passages from the Rule to enrich our prayer life.
- Constantly evaluate ourselves in the light of the Rule, in such a way that it can illuminate personal and fraternal discernment.

Our being brothers and sisters

“For if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit!” (*Later Rule* 6: 8, *FF* 91).

Objective

To rediscover the fundamental importance of the Rule for protecting and nurturing fraternal life.

Activities

- Organize study days and reflections about our Rule in order to seek together, in fraternity, the most suitable ways to embody it in our daily activities.
- Encourage time for meetings that allow us to improve the quality of relationships within our families, our fraternities, our work areas, etc.
- Promote initiatives, in collaboration with other members of the Franciscan Family, which foster mutual knowledge and increase fraternal communion.



Celebrating the Rule (1223-2023)

Our being in communion

“Steadfast in the Catholic Faith, we may observe poverty, humility, and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised.” (*Later Rule* 12: 4, *FF* 109).

Objective

To restore meaning and significance to our way of living the Rule in the Church, promoting fraternity and synodality as ecclesial styles.

Activities

- Confirm whether the way we live our Rule, which we have professed in the Church, prompts us to carry out our pastoral work and our apostolic activities in communion with the local and universal Church.
- Participate in the synodal journey undertaken in our local Churches, valuing the variety of gifts and charisms that the Holy Spirit arouses to benefit the entire human family.
- Where possible, publicly renew the profession of our Rule.

Our being in the world

[They are] “not to quarrel or argue or judge others when they go about in the world” (*Later Rule* 3: 10, *FF* 85).

Objective

Starting from our witness of fraternity and minority in living our Rule, collaborate in building bonds of unity within society and the institutions that comprise it.

Activities

- Promote proposals aimed at reinvigorating relationships among members of Christian communities, as well as between those communities and other social and religious groups, nurturing a culture of encounter and social friendship.
- Enhance the evangelizing power of the cultural and artistic heritage that belongs to the Franciscan Family, in such a way that it becomes an instrument of encounter and dialogue with contemporary society.



Celebrating Christmas at Greccio 1223-2023

Texts

1 Celano 84-87, *FF* 466-471; *Admonitions* I, 16-21, *FF* 144; *Letter to the Entire Order* 26: 29, *FF* 221; *Office of the Passion* XV, *FF* 303.

When Thomas of Celano presents the story of the celebration of Christmas at Greccio, he talks about the reasons Francis of Assisi had for setting up the manger and celebrating the Mass in a cave. The Poverello stopped at Greccio because he wanted to contemplate the realness of the Incarnation, namely, the simplicity, poverty and humility of the Son of God “who gave Himself for us with supreme and indescribable love” (*1 Celano* 30: 87, *FF* 471). We find the same dynamic in his contemplation of the Eucharist. In fact, Francis invites us not only to see with our physical eyes but with our spiritual eyes as well, so that we might contemplate the humility and the real manifestation of divine love present in the Eucharist: “Behold, each day He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the Virgin’s womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of a priest” (*Admonitions* I, 16-18, *FF* 144).

As the Franciscan Family celebrating the centenary of the Christmas at Greccio, we are invited to pause before the mystery of the Incarnation in order to contemplate the depth of God’s love for humanity. The Son of God becomes the Son of man; he becomes one of us, our brother (cf. *Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful* 56, *FF* 201). Our faith in the Incarnation prompts us to discover the *seeds of the Word* present in all cultures and in contemporary society, so that we might bring to bloom the seeds of humanity we find there. Moreover, it urges us not only to defend life but also to become instruments of life and humanity in our families and fraternities, reaching out to those who are seen as social rejects, who are no longer considered human. The concrete way that Francis of Assisi celebrated the mystery of the Incarnation at Greccio, invites us to more fully realize “that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others” (*Evangelii gaudium* 264).



Celebrating Christmas at Greccio (1223-2023)

On Christmas day, the Poverello, together with his brothers, prayed: “This is the day the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it. For the Most Holy Child has been given to us and has been born for us on the way and placed in a manger because he did not have a place in the inn” (*Office of the Passion* XV, 5-7, *FF* 303). As we celebrate the centenary of the manger at Greccio, we are invited to think about the place that Jesus occupies in our hearts, and even more, whether we have a place in our hearts for those with whom Jesus wanted to be identified: “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40). By his Incarnation, Christ Jesus eliminated any distance that separated him from humanity. He calls us to do the same, that is, to be close to our brothers and sisters to welcome them, to touch them with mercy, as the Magisterium of the Church reminds us: “With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization... In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to ‘feel’ and ‘touch’ the poverty that God’s Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need” (*Admirabile signum* 3).

Our being in Christ

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16).

Objective

To renew our life of faith so that it can become more incarnational and concrete.

Activities

- Raise our awareness of daily life, with all its joys and difficulties, as a privileged place of encounter with the Lord.
- Ensure that adequate importance is placed on the liturgical and sacramental life, in order to progress in the life of faith.
- Reexamine how we celebrate Christmas and other liturgical feasts, ensuring they reflect the simplicity, poverty and humility that Francis of Assisi desired.

“Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body and to His likeness according to the Spirit” (*Admonitions* V, 1, *FF* 153).

Our being brothers and sisters





Celebrating Christmas at Greccio (1223-2023)

Our being in communion

Objective

To develop a more comprehensive view of humankind and its inherent male-female reciprocity, a view that is free of divisions and dichotomies.

Activities

- Ensure that the formation programs in our fraternities implement a formation process that is more comprehensive from a human, spiritual and interpersonal point of view.
- Encourage concrete initiatives that work toward overcoming discord between men and women or between the laity and priests or consecrated persons.

“Hail, O Lady, Holy Queen, Mary, holy Mother of God, Who are the Virgin made Church” (*Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary* 1, FF259).

Objective

To live in minority as members of the Church.

Activities

- Confirm whether our pastoral service in ecclesial communities reflects the maternal dimension of the Church and is characterized by humility and poverty, which are revealed in the Incarnation and in the Eucharist.
- Reexamine our way of celebrating the Eucharist, so that it may be authentically experienced as the source and summit of Christian life and a source of communion and fraternity.
- Bring the motherly compassion of the Church to our brothers and sisters who find themselves on the existential outskirts of our ecclesial communities.

Our being in the world

“God said: ‘Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness’” (Gn 1, 26).

Objective

To love and serve every human being, promoting his or her dignity as a person created by God and made in his likeness and image.

Activities

- Set aside time for reflection and discussion on promoting the dignity of every human life and make a commitment to defend life from conception until natural death.
- Promote activities to defend the rights of women.
- Offer help to parents who are finding it difficult to raise and educate their children.
- Provide assistance to shelters for orphaned children, street children, young people suffering from any kind of addiction, etc.





Celebrating the Gift of the Stigmata 1224-2024

Texts

1 Celano 94-95, *FF* 484-486; *Major Legend* 13: 1-10, *FF* 1222-1236; 1-2, *FF* 261; *Blessing for Brother Leo*, *FF* 262; *2 Celano* 49, *FF* 635.

The hagiographic sources tell us that Francis of Assisi, after an intense period of apostolic activity, withdrew to Mount La Verna to carry out a Lenten period of fasting and prayer, as was his custom. It was precisely in this context of silence and prayer that the Poverello received the visit from the winged Seraphim, because only in silence can one hear and be open to the words of the other. On Mount La Verna, the profound desire that motivated the Poverello to follow Christ and to conform himself totally to Him was realized in his encounter with the Crucified One, who imprinted the signs of His love on Francis' heart and body. St. Bonaventure summarizes Francis' experience in this way: "[The] true love of Christ transformed the lover into His image" (*Major Legend* 13: 5, *FF* 1228). The encounter with the Beloved became a song of praise; therefore, after his encounter with the Crucified One, Francis composed the *Praises of God*, a prayer which sprang from a heart in love, totally focused on the divine "You": "You are the holy Lord God Who does wonderful things. You are strong. You are great. You are the most high" (*Praises of God* 1-2, *FF* 261).

In celebrating the Centenary of the Gift of the Stigmata as a Franciscan Family, we are invited to restore the dimension of prayerful and contemplative silence in our daily lives, the silence that places us before the essential, that lets us recognize our desire for the infinite that resides in our hearts, that allows us to listen to ourselves, to others and to God. In fact, even today, the Poverello is presented as a person who made listening a way of life: "Saint Francis heard the voice of God, he heard the voice of the poor, he heard the voice of the infirm and he heard the voice of nature. He made of them a way of life. My desire is that the seed that Saint Francis planted may grow in the hearts of many" (*Fratelli tutti* 48).



Celebrating the Gift of the Stigmata (1224-2024)

After receiving the sacred stigmata, “Francis came down from the mountain, bearing with him the likeness of the Crucified, depicted not on tablets of stone or on panels of wood carved by hand, but engraved on parts of his flesh by the finger of the living God” (*Major Legend* 13: 5, *FF* 1228). Moreover, just as the finger of God touched Francis, so, Francis went forth to touch the poor, the sick and the needy, to transmit that divine love to them. Francis’ meeting with the Crucified One prompted him to meet those who had been crucified throughout history, those whose pain he wished to alleviate. We see this in St. Bonaventure’s account of the man who was suffering from cold: “Burning with the fire of divine love, he stretched out his hand and touched him. A marvelous thing happened! At the touch of his sacred hand, which bore the burning coal of the Seraph, the cold fled altogether and the man felt great heat within and without, as if he had been hit by a fiery blast from the vent of a furnace” (*Major Legend* 13: 7, *FF* 1231). Remembering and celebrating Francis being touched by the Crucified One inspires us to come out of ourselves and go forth “touching Christ’s suffering flesh in others” (*Gaudete et exsultate* 37) at the same time, we allow ourselves to be touched and challenged by the dramatic instances of pain and suffering we see afflicting so many of our brothers and sisters around the world.

Our being in Christ

“I bear the marks of Jesus on my body” (Gal 6:17).

Objective

To renew the way we live our common Christian vocation, in order to achieve authentic conformation to the poor and crucified Christ, so as to bear the stigmata of his presence in ourselves.

Activities

- Revitalize the time we reserve for encountering the Lord, those moments already present in our personal lives.
- Realize the value of silence as a fundamental condition for listening to God, ourselves and others.
- Use the ascetic paths that the Church and our Franciscan tradition offer us, so that our desires, purified of any form of selfishness, may be centered solely on God.

“Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give” (Mt 10:8).

Objective

To deepen the culture of generosity and giving freely, so that it characterizes our life together in a meaningful way.

Our being brothers and sisters





Celebrating the Gift of the Stigmata (1224-2024)

Our being in communion

Activities

- Foster an attitude of true dialogue in our families and fraternities, which allows listening, understanding, knowledge and mutual acceptance.
- Encourage concrete gestures of selfless service, which express and realize the gift of ourselves.
- Be prudent with our words and judgments, so that they always “touch” others with mercy and compassion.

“By his wounds we were healed” (Is 53:5).

Objective

To dedicate our lives, as members of the Church, witnessing to the merciful love that flows from the Crucified One.

Activities

- Foster making time to listen to and welcome young people, those whom life has tossed aside, those who are excluded and minorities
- Collaborate with the local Church to make it an “outgoing Church” one that reaches out to all those who have strayed from the faith, the needy and the least among us.
- Support ecumenical and interreligious initiatives, trying to contribute to the “healing” of the wounds that hinder communion.

“The Lord Himself led me among [the lepers] and I showed mercy to them” (*Testament 2; FF 110*).

Objective

To allow ourselves to be touched and challenged by the many instances of pain and suffering we see in the places where we live and work.

Activities

- Practice the art of contemplating Christ in the sufferings and difficulties of the people we meet every day.
- Gently and devotedly tend to the wounded bodies and spirits of all those in our fraternities and neighborhoods who are afflicted and hopeless.
- Promote encounters with those who do not believe in God or who profess no religion, encouraging common initiatives aimed at helping the poor and the needy.

Our being in the world





Celebrating the Cantic of the Creatures 1225-2025

Texts

Cantic of the Creatures FF 263; *Assisi Compilation* 83, FF 1614; *Mirror of Perfection* 100-101 and 120, FF 1799-1800 and 1820; 2 *Celano* 165, FF 750; *Major Legend* 9: 1, FF 1162.

Francis of Assisi was almost completely blind by the time he composed the *Cantic of the Creatures*. Nevertheless, with the eyes of faith, and filled with gratitude, he contemplated the wonders of creation and perceived the presence of the Creator who gave them meaning. To him, all creatures, mirrors of the divine perfection, were brothers and sisters because they were the work and gift of the same Author. Together they constituted the chorus of creation, which contemplates, praises and thanks God the Creator, “the Great Almsgiver” who gives generously and with goodness (2 *Celano* 77, FF 665). *The Cantic* is the final expression and confession of the Poverello’s life. It summarizes his entire journey of conformation to Christ, the beloved Son. His faith in the fatherhood of God becomes a song of praise that proclaims the brotherhood and the beauty of all creatures. In fact, “In beautiful things he contemplated Beauty itself and through the footprints impressed in things he followed his Beloved everywhere, out of them all making for himself a ladder through which he could climb up to lay hold of Him who is utterly desirable” (*Major Legend* 9: 1, FF 1162).

Celebrating the Centenary of the *Cantic of the Creatures* as a Franciscan Family leads us to a radical change in our relationship with creation: we shift from possessing creation to caring for our common home. In fact, each one of us must respond sincerely to these questions: How do I want to live out my relationship with other creatures? As a ruler who claims the right to do what he wants with them? As a consumer of resources who sees them as an opportunity to be taken advantage of? Or as a brother who pauses before creation, who admires its beauty and safeguards its existence? We are faced with an anthropological and ecological challenge that will determine our future, because it is linked to the future of our Mother and Sister Earth. We are called to face contemporary society and reintroduce “the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world” (*Laudato si’* 11).



Celebrating the Canticle of the Creatures (1225-2025)

Our being in Christ

The current ecological crisis shows us that “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together” (*Laudato si’* 48). This realization also allows us to understand that the human environment and the natural environment can, in the same way, protect and enhance each other. However, taking care of our common home without taking care of our interior home – our heart – will not work. We need conversion that is both ecological and integral at the same time, because “the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion” (*Laudato si’* 217). In fact, the last verse of the *Canticle* reminds us that only those with open hearts, capable of disarming the mindset of hatred and revenge through forgiveness, can become instruments of reconciliation and harmony and offer a prophetic vision of fraternity, like Francis himself, who lived “in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself” (*Laudato si’* 10).

“Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day and through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.” (*Canticle of the Creatures* 3-4, FF 263).

Objective

To develop a contemplative outlook that is able to recognize the presence and beauty of the Creator, who reveals himself in all creatures.

Activities

- Frequently schedule adequate time to contemplate creation, to grasp its beauty and thank God for it.
- Use the *Canticle of the Creatures* as an inspiration for prayer and meditation, so that we may better understand the bonds that unite us to all creatures.
- Carefully examine, and responsibly implement, the practical proposals found in the encyclical *Laudato si’*, making use of the numerous aids that the various offices of the Franciscan Family have published.

“You are three and one... You are beauty” (*Praises of God* 3-4, FF 261)

Objective

To rediscover the importance of our calling to be in community, which stems from our being created in the image and likeness of the Triune God.

Activities

- Create opportunities to meet with other members of the Franciscan families and fraternities so that we can discover the beautiful and positive elements they contain and thank God for them.

Our being brothers and sisters





Our being in communion

- Identify the activities that deteriorate our bonds with creation, and aggravate the current ecological crisis, so that we might counter them responsibly.
- Undertake a decisive journey of integral ecological conversion, enabling us to care for our common home, promote and strengthen the practices of waste reduction, the reuse of materials, recycling, and the responsible use of water and other resources in our families and fraternities.

“Creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rm 8:21).

Objective

To become more aware of our ecclesial responsibility to foster healing in the relationship between the Creator and His creatures and to restore its original harmony.

Activities

- Deepen our awareness that we all share the same home and, therefore, we must all care for it.
- Promote initiatives aimed at achieving an inclusive economy, in line with the Church’s social teaching, as a concrete and alternative response to social structures that “discard” people who are not economically productive.
- Give more time and visibility to ecclesial groups promoting Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

Our being in the world

“God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good” (Gn 1:31).

Objective

To grow in the awareness that the human environment and the natural environment can protect and enhance each other.

Activities

- Collaborate with all people of goodwill to make our common home more habitable.
- Promote networking with the various social and religious organizations that share our concern to hear and respond to the cry of the earth and the poor.
- Foster a culture of dialogue and fraternity to overcome the culture of profit and waste, through initiatives that involve everyone, without distinction as to language, culture, ethnicity or religion.





Celebrating the Easter of Francis of Assisi 1226-2026

Texts

Testament: FF 110-131; *Testament of Siena*: FF 132-135 (cf. *Assisi Compilation* 59, FF 1587); *1 Celano* 109, FF 508-514; *Major Legend* 15, FF 1237-1245; *Canticle of the Creatures* (final verse) FF 263.

In contemporary society, we rarely think about death, not only because it reminds us that we are limited creatures, but also because it exposes the false security we get from believing that we are masters over time and life. Francis of Assisi, on the other hand, welcomed Sister Death with song, because he understood that death is not the termination of everything but the end that allows us to enter into full communion with God. Indeed, life is a gift that must be given back: “Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally!” (*Letter to the Entire Order* 29, FF 221).

At the end of his days, Francis contemplated his life and discovered the presence and action of the Lord everywhere. Thus, in his *Testament* he repeats, like a refrain: “The Lord gave me, Brother Francis... The Lord gave me such faith in churches... The Lord gave me, and gives me still, such faith... And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” (*Testament* 1-14, FF 110-116). This is the same attitude shown by Clare of Assisi when she wrote her *Testament*, in the last days of her life. In fact, she, too, recognized God as the Divine Giver, to whom thanks must be given for all the gifts he bestows, especially the gift of her vocation (cf. *Testament of St. Clare* 1-2, FF 2823).

The celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Easter of Francis of Assisi invites us to contemplate our life, both personally and as a Franciscan Family, with the eyes of faith, and by doing so, perceive the divine presence and action in everything, even in the difficult and dramatic situations we have experienced or are experiencing now.



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It is an opportunity to thank God for all the gifts he has bestowed on us, particularly for the gift of Francis of Assisi and his evangelical life, which has become our charism, articulated in different nuances of discipleship and apostolate, and which today still has the strength to call out to women and men of all cultures, both inside and outside the Catholic Church.

As his passing drew near, Francis said to his brothers: “Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up until now we have done little or nothing.’ He did not consider that he had already attained his goal, but tireless in pursuit of holy newness, he constantly hoped to begin again. He wanted to return to serving lepers” (*1 Celano* 103, *FF* 500). The Easter of Francis of Assisi reminds us that every day is an opportunity to start fresh, to renew our response to the call of the Lord. He sends us forth as brothers and sisters to the whole world, to bear witness to Him in word and deed, so as to draw everyone to the love of God (cf. *Prayer Inspired by the Our Father* 5, *FF* 270).

Finally, celebrating the passing of the Poverello is an occasion to remember that we are all called to holiness, and that like Francis, we are invited to reflect the beauty of the Gospel and of our Franciscan vocation, because “holiness is the most attractive face of the Church” (*Gaudete et exsultate* 9).

Our being in Christ

“Let us refer all good to the Lord, God Almighty and Most High, acknowledge that every good is His, and thank Him, “from Whom all good comes, for everything” (*Earlier Rule* 17: 17, *FF* 49).

Objective

To recognize God as the Divine Giver, whose many gifts we are to return with praise and gratitude.

Activities

- Maintain the awareness that our life is a gift to be given back.
- Enlightened by the *Testament of Francis of Assisi*, contemplate our personal history recognizing God’s action in our lives and thanking and glorifying Him for it.
- Renew our spirit of gratitude for the gift of our Christian vocation and for being members of the Franciscan Family.





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Our being brothers and sisters

“The Lord gave me some brothers”
(*Testament* 14, *FF* 116).

Objective

To celebrate the gift of Brother Francis and the gift of fraternity.

Activities

- Organize study days and reflections about Francis of Assisi and Franciscan spirituality in order to seek, as a fraternity, the most suitable ways to embody fraternity today.
- Encourage time for meetings and discussions within the various fraternities, where each person can share the way he or she lives the Franciscan charism, his or her dreams, difficulties, etc.
- Plan, with the other members of the Franciscan Family, liturgical events in which we can celebrate the gift of Brother Francis and the gift of fraternity.

Our being in communion

“The Lord gave me such faith in churches”
(*Testament* 4, *FF* 111).

Objective

To celebrate the gift of the charism of St. Francis in the Church.

Activities

- Promote awareness of our charism, not only in our communities, parishes, educational centers, etc., but also in places where the Franciscan Family is not present.
- Organize, collaborating with other members of our ecclesial communities, meetings, liturgies, etc., to celebrate the gift that St. Francis represents for the Church.
- Propose Francis of Assisi as a model of holiness and, therefore, of true humanity, as an aid to help us nurture and bring to bloom the seeds of humanity that we find in all cultures and in contemporary society.

Our being in the world

“For this reason He has sent you into the whole world: that you may bear witness to His voice in word and deed”
(*Letter to the Entire Order* 9, *FF* 216).

Objective

To support evangelization as an opportunity to generously return the gifts we have received.





Celebrating the Easter of Francis of Assisi (1226-2026)

Activities

- Encourage the fraternities to be witnesses of hope and joy through concrete initiatives of preaching and evangelization.
- Educate ourselves to read the signs of the times wisely, in order to quickly recognize what creative and novel work the Spirit is doing among the men and women of our day.
- Make the commitment to be present and to visit, frequently and willingly, those brothers and sisters who live in the most peripheral and marginalized places, in order to bring them the joy and salvation of the Gospel.
- Introduce Francis of Assisi and the history of our family to society by making use of the cultural and artistic heritage present in our fraternities, churches, museums, etc.





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