



CHRISTMAS 2022 NEW YEAR 2023

DEAR FRIARS, MAY THE LORD GIVE YOU PEACE!

We are about to embark on the four-year journey of the 2023-2026 Franciscan Centenary. This event commemorates the 800th anniversaries of the Later Rule and the Christmas at Greccio (2023), the Stigmata (2024), the Canticle of the Creatures (2025), and the Easter of Francis (2026).

This will be a rich and multifaceted experience that will involve the Franciscan Family, not only in celebrating the anniversaries just mentioned, but above all—and this is the main objective of the Centenary—in rediscovering the spirituality of communion that unites all those who recognize St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi as their spiritual father and mother. Indeed, the anniversary celebrations are aimed at all members and all levels of the Franciscan Family

This true jubilee journey will begin during the New Year and will help us to symbolically retrace some of the fundamental events that shaped our charism. More than that, however, as mentioned in the general guidelines of the Centenary, it will “offer us a valuable opportunity to invigorate the richness of our charism with a prophetic vision toward the future.”

Dear friars, in addressing my Christmas greetings to you, I earnestly ask you to take advantage of the five centenaries that are upon us, so they may do more than simply touch our lives—they may awaken in us a love for our charism.

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The proposals which we as the Franciscan Family have presented (thematic nuclei and their possible formative and celebratory development) have precisely the latter purpose at heart. In fact, quoting again from the general guidelines lines of the Centenary, "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" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* no. 264).

In order to encourage the widest participation possible, it was decided to propose certain objectives and activities for each stage of the Centenary, so that these events could be celebrated in every context of life. I invite you to read the guidelines. They can also be consulted on the website of the Order, in several languages.

The Centenary journey, starting with the commemoration of the Christmas at Greccio (1223), invites us 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."

I wanted to mention these guidelines in the hope that each of our communities will commit itself to lessening the distance between us and discovering a newfound capacity for fraternal life and sharing.

This year's Christmas is certainly different from previous ones because of all the turmoil and violence afflicting the world. It is precisely for this reason that we are asked to return with St. Francis to the authentic meaning of the nativity scene, which "shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life" (Pope Francis, *Admirabile signum* no. 8).

Dear friars, let me extend affectionate greetings to our sick and elderly friars, and those who are going through difficult times or facing difficult choices.

I offer my thanks and best wishes to the many friars who unsparingly spend their lives in the service of others, in the missions, parishes, shrines, and the poorest communities, likewise, the friars who evangelize and those who welcome refugees and migrants.

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In my heart, I carry the lived experience of each of you, placing you spiritually before that holy manger where, by a singular insight of St. Francis, we all find a place. To you, your communities, family members and all the friends of our Franciscan family, my best wishes for a holy and peaceful Christmas and for the New Year.

I bless you in the Lord. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Friar Carlos Alberto Trovarelli
Minister General

Prot. N. 0917/2022

To the friars of the Order
AT THEIR SEES

