



IL MINISTRO GENERALE
DELL'ORDINE DEI FRATI MINORI

Rome, Christmas 2021

Dear Sister, Dear Brother,

Christmas is approaching, and as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we Franciscan friars also think back to the origin of the crib and its meaning. This tradition was born in 1223 when St Francis wanted to represent the birth of Jesus in Greccio to see with his own eyes and show the men and women of his time the poverty that the Son of God chose for his coming among us.

St Francis's first biographer, Thomas of Celano, recounts that on that night, by candlelight, many of the friars and people in prayer miraculously saw the Child of Bethlehem appear in the hay of the manger and that *"the infant Jesus was raised in the hearts of many who had forgotten him"*, so that *"everyone returned home full of ineffable joy"*.

Even nowadays, Jesus is often forgotten, and it seems as if gifts have become the centre of Christmas. And yet, following the simple example of St Francis at Greccio and looking at the crib, we too can truly rediscover the mystery we are called to celebrate at Christmas: God being born for us, a helpless child, in the poverty of a cave in Bethlehem, addressing his call to us to meet him and serve him with mercy in our neediest brothers and sisters.

That is why, on the occasion of Christmas, I would like to ask you to look at one of the poorest countries in the world, ravaged over the years by continual natural disasters, now without even a political leadership working to help its exhausted and destitute population.

This is Haiti, which was hit by yet another violent earthquake in August.

My brothers Br Wilfrid and Br Noe Francisco described the situation to me. It is unfortunately identical to that experienced after the more famous earthquake in 2010. The images are also the same as any other natural disaster that has hit Haiti. Thousands of people have lost their lives or been injured. The material damage is immense, and those who have survived lack everything: food, water, a roof over their heads and even safety. In addition, due to the severe political crisis, the country has become the scene of violent clashes between rival gangs, and people cannot find a way to recover.

The poverty and need are enormous and cannot leave us indifferent.

This is the reason the young Franciscan presence in Haiti are requesting help. Once again, they are at the side of those who have lost everything.

After the earthquake of 2010, when there was a worldwide mobilisation for the relief

effort, my brothers worked hard to build simple, decent houses for those who had nothing left, but today everything has been destroyed again.

Relief work is difficult and risky because many people are in areas that are impossible to reach because of the blocked roads and the risk of attack by armed gangs. But my brothers are not stopping, and from their three houses in Port-au-Prince, they want to reach the most needy with basic necessities.

This is why today I ask you to support the fraternal commitment of the Franciscan friars in Haiti and to help us bring food, hygiene kits and emergency tents to our brothers and sisters who can only count on us. Your help, even the smallest, is vital because it can save the lives of those who today have nothing and bring a little peace to this island without peace.

With this letter, I am also sending you some cards that you can use for your Christmas greetings and share, with the people you care about, your commitment to support the charitable works of the Franciscan friars in the poorest countries of the world.

I wish you a peaceful Christmas.

Prot. MG 196/2021



Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM

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Minister General OFM

Founder OFM Fraternitas
Foundation Onlus

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HOW
TO SUPPORT
THE
FRANCISCAN
FRIARS
IN HAITI

 **BY BANK TRANSFER**
to a bank account in the name of
FONDAZIONE OFM FRATERNITAS ONLUS
BANK: Banca Intesa Sanpaolo
IBAN: IT15T0306909606100000168958
BIC-SWIFT: BCITITMM
REASON: HAITI 2021

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