

*Dear Archbishop William,  
Dear Father Minister General Massimo,  
Dear Franciscans, dear friends, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

At the beginning of this Holy Eucharist, I bring to you the warm greetings and Apostolic Blessing of our Holy Father, Pope Leon XIV. The Holy Father is close to you, dear sons of Saint Francis. He accompanies with prayer and affection your fidelity to the Gospel, your generous service to the poor, and your radiant witness of fraternity and peace. Today, in this holy place, gathered as brothers and sisters, we rejoice to welcome our Minister General, Father Massimo. Your presence among us, dear Father, reminds us that we belong to a great family — a worldwide fraternity of men who, in the footsteps of Saint Francis, desire nothing else than to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ *sine glossa* — without compromise, without fear, without delay.

### **“This Gospel is simply for us.”**

The passage we have just heard from Saint Luke (10:1–9) is, in a sense, written especially for us. It is the Gospel of mission, of simplicity, and of fraternity. It is the Gospel that shapes the heart of every disciple and every missionary. Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples, two by two — not as great strategists, not with resources or plans, but as poor pilgrims of peace. He gives them instructions that are at once disarming and liberating: “Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals... Greet no one on the road... Whatever house you enter, say first: Peace to this house.” In these few words, Jesus gives not only a method, but a spirit — the very heartbeat of the Gospel. It is the way of poverty — because the mission does not depend on what we possess, but on whom we trust. It is the way of trust — because God alone is our security. And it is the way of peace — because the disciple’s first word is always blessing, never condemnation.

### **Francis of Assisi: A Living Gospel**

When the Church began to forget this simplicity, when disciples began to carry too many things on the road — too many possessions, too many certainties, too many fears — God, in His mercy, raised up a little poor man from Assisi. Saint Francis, with his burning love for Christ, reminded the Church what it truly means to be sent. He stripped himself of everything so that the Gospel could shine through him in all its purity. He became the living icon of the missionary disciple: poor, joyful, and utterly free. Francis did not preach with words alone — his life itself became a homily, his smile a message, his peace a proclamation. And so, dear Franciscans, you are the heirs of this same mission. You are the ones whom the Lord still sends two by two — to bring peace, to heal the broken, to proclaim with your lives that “The Kingdom of God is nearby”.

### **“To Be Missionaries” — The Call of Pope Leon XIV**

Our Holy Father, Pope Leon XIV, continues this same Franciscan breath in the Church today. In his first address after his election, he said: “I wish to walk with you — as a Church united — ever pursuing peace and justice, ever seeking to act as men and women faithful to Jesus Christ, in order to proclaim the Gospel without fear, to be missionaries.” To be missionaries! These words are not a slogan — they are a summons. To be missionary means to live outwardly what we believe inwardly. It means to leave behind comfort for compassion, security for service, routine for renewal. The Pope’s words echo those of Christ and Saint Francis: Do not stay where it is safe — go out! Do not hoard — give! Do not fear — trust! For the missionary disciple is one who has discovered that the Gospel is not a possession, but a gift that grows only when it is shared.

### **The Jubilee Year: Pilgrims of Hope**

As we prepare to enter the Jubilee Year, we are reminded that we are pilgrims of hope. The Jubilee invites us to rediscover the joy of being forgiven, the wonder of being loved, and the freedom of being sent again and again. For Franciscans, this is a time to return to the spirit of the Portiuncula — that

tiny, sacred space of peace and simplicity where heaven touched earth, and where mercy overflowed like a river. In this Jubilee time, may the Lord renew in each of us the freshness of the Gospel — the joy of being forgiven, the courage to begin anew, the tenderness to see every person as brother and sister. May we go out once more, two by two, not with fear but with song, not with power but with peace.

### **Conclusion: Sent in Peace**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, The Lord Jesus continues to send us — today, here, and now — into a world thirsting for truth, confused by false lights, and longing for the radiance that only He can give. We do not go in our own name, but in the Name of Him who has conquered death. Not in our own strength, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. Not to proclaim ourselves, but to proclaim Jesus Christ — the one and only Savior of the world. He sends us forth to be witnesses of the Gospel: to bring His peace where hatred reigns, His mercy where sin abounds, and His light where darkness still holds samlet our lives become the proclamation of the Good News. Let our deeds confirm what our lips proclaim. Let our hearts be as transparent as the Gospel we are called to carry.

Brothers and sisters, may people see in our eyes the light of Christ, hear in our words His voice, and encounter in our actions His love. As Saint Francis of Assisi said: “Let us begin again, brothers, for up to now we have done little.” May this day mark a new beginning — a renewal of zeal, of missionary courage, of love for the Church. May the Holy Spirit enkindle in us the fire of divine charity, that we may go forth to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, who lives and reigns forever and ever.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of peace and the Lord of life, strengthen you in faith, inflame your hearts with love, and make you courageous witnesses of the Gospel. May Mary, the Mother of the Church, surround you with her maternal care and lead you always to the Heart of her Son. May the blessing of Almighty God, through the intercession of Saint Francis of Assisi, rest upon you all.  
*Peace and all good!*

Most Rev. Henryk M. Jagodziński  
*Apostolic Nuncio to South Africa*