**BRING PEACE**

*Excerpt from the Address of the Minister General, Friar Massimo Fusarelli OFM, to the General Chapter in 2021. Adapted to the Franciscan Family.*

The Second Vatican Council gave us the image of ourselves as a pilgrim people, disrupting our journey and reflecting. To do that, we need to go back to our roots in the spiritual family to which we belong, our Franciscan Family.

St Francis and St Clare of Assisi could grasp the essence of things and not let externals distract them. Francis exemplified this in the way he heard God’s call: “Francis, repair my Church.” So, he did it very simply, and we see the results in the little Porziuncola chapel.

The medieval Church, like our own today, suffered from the problem of externalism and the trappings of power and wealth. Francis had that disarming quality of just bypassing the problem, and at the same time insisting absolutely on going straight to the essence of things. He didn’t confront the institutional Church. He simply challenged it by the way that he lived and set for his brothers and sisters.

Francis had no problem understanding his own or his brothers’ brokenness and littleness, and it was the same for Clare with her sisters. He embraced brokenness because he recognized that God embraced it in the person of Jesus. He tended to take things literally. To follow Christ was to be Christ in the world and to live the good news. It was as simple as that for Francis.

So, Christ challenges us to become like him, bearers of the good news, which is about how we can free others as well as ourselves of the burden of our brokenness by embracing it and sharing it: how we can become one through a process of atonement or reconciliation. Luke 4:18-19 clearly spells out this mission, echoing the words of Isaiah: The Lord has given me his spirit for he has anointed me*...to proclaim* *a year of favour from the Lord.* (Isaiah 61; 1-2)

Today, we face a great challenge from the pressure of economic rationalism, which is the pressure to make a profit in the name of rationality. The bottom line is profit rather than human value. If something is not efficient, then discard it for something that is. We see it best exemplified in our banking institutions, in a continued decline of service with a smile for those who want to have human contact.

People no longer consider queuing for service something to avoid. Rather, they allow it to continue, to force them into wider use of impersonal means of communication, such as banking by telephone or computer. But the banks are only one example of the continued decline in the provision of personal service. Service stations and supermarkets deliver the promise of increased efficiency while in fact they create more of a dehumanising environment.

At the same time, we witness a rise in anger and violence. We are becoming increasingly familiar with terms such as 'road rage,' and ‘supermarket trolley rage'. We appeal to parents and schools to teach a return to the old-­fashioned value of courtesy, to deal with this growing escalation of anger.

We live in the age of the Internet. We have now the potential for greater connectivity than ever before, but ironically, we may never have been so distant from one another.

Because we are human, we are deeply divided people. For every one of our emotions, we can name an opposite: for peace, conflict; for sadness, joy; for envy, gratitude. The Peace Prayer of St. Francis is based on a recognition of this duality: 'Where there is hatred, let me bring love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is despair, hope; where there is doubt, faith; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.'

St Augustine says that our hearts never recover from our dividedness until we find our peace in union with God. Our hearts are forever restless until they rest in God.