



Metropolitan Archbishop of Izmir

MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT FRANCIS

To the Brothers and Sisters who follow the charism of St Francis And to all our Church

Dear brothers and sisters,

As we celebrate the feast of St Francis of Assisi, I address you with this message at such a crucial time in the life of the Church as the Synod. As it unfolds, the Church asks fundamental questions about its future, and especially about fidelity to Christ her Spouse.

Francis, in the face of the contradictions of society and the difficult situation of the Church, profoundly renews the life of the ecclesial community, remaining devoted to the essential elements of the faith: the Gospel, the sacraments and especially love for the poor.

His order became an important part not only of medieval history, but also of the entire history of the Church. This is testified by the 800 years of the Rule of the Franciscan Order, the strict rule that is the map for a missionary journey to be accomplished through the proclamation of the Gospel and the 'sequela Christi'. The Franciscan charism is a leaven of restlessness, a good leaven in spite of the increase in wealth, the growing seduction of money, the heresies of the time of Francis and the world today.

Christ remained at the centre of St Francis' human and Christian experience throughout his life. The humility of God who created everything never ceases to amaze him. Through the abundance of God's Love, revealed on the cross, Francis allowed himself to be completely changed, begging the Lord to die for him. Francis was convinced that it is Christ Himself who allowed him to live the Gospel. Francis' fundamental choice is the primacy of Christ in everything, because he discovered in him the immense and incalculable love of God for us. His passion and resurrection redeem and create a new world.

In the life of St Francis everything is transformed by the presence of the dead and risen Christ. In contemplation he does not cease to seek Christ, to draw close to Him and to love Him. Francis calls us to do the same, to be close to Jesus, to expose ourselves to his gaze of love and compassion that shows the presence of God in our lives.

For the love of Christ, the essence of Francis' life becomes following Christ. Francis is devoted to following Christ to the extreme. The rule he writes for himself and his brothers is "to live the Gospel". But this means to follow Christ, to be like Him who, having emerged from His divine glory, lived completely poor. He was a man without the power to impose himself on this world. We too accept Christ who is presented to us in the Gospels as a sublime example of personal behaviour. At the end of his life, Francis said: "Yes, I have done my part, but let Christ teach you". We too take the Lord's words seriously. Let his words be a true teaching for us today and always.

What does Francis teach us today? True change, of any kind, can only come about in a relationship with Christ. Francis teaches us to wholeheartedly accept Christ's gift of redemption



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and mercy. Let us accept his love. Let us confidently take Christ as the absolute shepherd of our lives. And this we must do today, in our concrete lives, in our time. The only place where

two married people can love each other is today, the only time we can realise our true response to the Lord is today, the only time we can fix what is broken is today. May St Francis help us to discover the riches of Jesus Christ and give us the grace to follow him personally. Let it be so!

Izmir 2nd October 2023

+ Martin Kmetec

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