



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Dear brothers and sisters of many different faiths,

The usual invitation from Assisi to pray together this month cannot fail to echo the joy we Christians are experiencing in celebrating **Easter** on the same day and in fraternity with the Christians of the East, just a few days after the Jewish Passover and the Buddhist feast of Vesak. Sadly, this joyful celebration has been disrupted by the death of Pope Francis. The Church is in mourning. But at Easter, when we Christians remember the death and resurrection of Jesus, everything speaks of peace. "Peace be with you" was the Risen One's first greeting to the disciples. "Peace" was also the last word, almost the testament, of Pope Francis.

Unfortunately, according to media reports, peace seems so distant. Isaiah's prophecy "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4) seems like just a nice dream. As men and women of faith, in the expressive richness of so many religions, we confidently pursue this very dream, joining spiritually together on the 27th of each month to pray for peace, as the leaders of all religions summoned to Assisi by John Paul II did some 30 years ago on October 27, 1986. They stood in the footsteps of St. Francis who, stripping himself of all earthly possessions to the point of nakedness, and became a "disarmed man" par excellence and a peacemaker. We are also inspired to dream of peace by the figure of the young Blessed **Carlo Acutis**, whom Pope Francis had decided to declare a saint precisely on April 27. It will now be up to the next pope. But it strikes me as interesting, and almost a sign from heaven, that the canonization will be made possible due to a miracle of healing that occurred to a young woman from Costa Rica, the only one, or one of the very few countries in the world, which, for the sake of peace, chose to give up even having an army.

Please accept the invitation to pray in a special way this month for **Myanmar**, a country experiencing, as in other heartbreaking scenarios - Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Gaza and many others - an immense tragedy due first to the war, then the earthquake that claimed thousands of victims, with so many people left homeless, and tested moreover by inclement weather. On April 27 we would like to be spiritually at their side.

In loving memory of our departed Pope, which I hope we all have in common, I thank you for your sharing.

May the Lord give you peace.

Assisi, April 2025

+ Domenico Sorrentino, Bishop