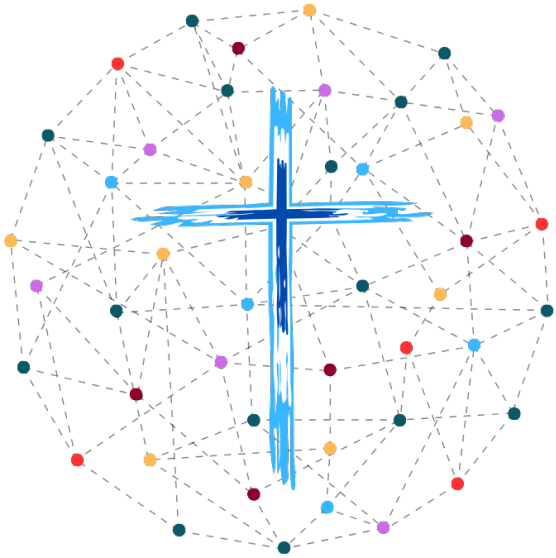
16 OCTOBER 2026

PRAYER FOR PEACE WITH SAINT FRANCIS

Led by **Sr Raffaella Petrini FSE**,
President of the Governorate of Vatican City State.
With testimonies from representatives
of countries in situations of conflict



CATHOLIC ACTION
SYNODALITY AND MISSION
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Rome, Italy | 15 - 18 October 2026

INTRODUCTION

This evening we pause in the presence of the Lord, letting ourselves be accompanied by Saint Francis of Assisi, to pray for peace.

The Poverello was not only a man who spoke of peace; he himself became a peacemaker. He chose to live according to the peace of Christ, the true peace, the peace the world cannot give.

He learned to look at every creature with new eyes, reconciled with God and with himself. For him, peace was not just a word, but a way of life.

This evening, we too want to let Francis question us.

> *In which setting are we called to bring peace?*
> *Which brother or sister needs our welcome, our listening, our forgiveness?*
> *What word of reconciliation is the Lord inviting us to speak?*

In a world marked by war, death and destruction, we ask the Lord to make us instruments of his peace. Francis, too, knew war, suffering, illness, rejection and misunderstanding.

Like Francis, let us learn not to answer violence with more violence, resentment with resentment, indifference with more indifference.

Let us now begin our prayer with a simple heart, open to listening.

SISTER RAFFAELLA

In this Year dedicated to the Transitus of Francis, we cannot fail to see in his renunciations a path of peace, a concrete sign, a conscious choice of obedience to the Gospel. This is why his greeting always echoed the greeting that Jesus entrusted to his disciples when he sent them out on mission, and which the Risen Lord repeated:

READER

> *"In every sermon, before presenting the word of God to the people, he wished them peace, saying: 'May the Lord give you peace!' He always sincerely announced this peace to men and women, to all he met or who came to him. In this way, by the grace of the Lord, he often led the enemies of peace and of their own salvation to become themselves children of peace and eager for eternal salvation.*
>
> *The first of those who followed the man of God was a man of Assisi, devout and simple in spirit. After him, Brother Bernard, embracing this message of peace, ran swiftly after the Saint of God to gain the kingdom of Heaven."*
>
> From the First Life by Thomas of Celano (FF 359-360)

SISTER RAFFAELLA

And yet Francis was not born a man of peace, a reconciled man. His first dream was of war and worldly glory.

READER

> *"In a vision there appears to him a splendid palace, in which he sees weapons of every kind and a most beautiful bride. In his sleep Francis hears himself called by name and enticed with the promise of all these goods. So he tries to enlist for Apulia and makes lavish preparations, hoping soon to be made a knight. His worldly spirit suggested a worldly interpretation of the vision, while a far nobler one lay hidden in the treasures of God's wisdom."*
>
> 2 Cel (FF 586-587)

SISTER RAFFAELLA

To become a peaceful man, a man at peace, he needs to... strip himself.

1 THE FIRST RENUNCIATION

SISTER RAFFAELLA

The first renunciation, recounted by Thomas of Celano (in the *Vita beati patris nostri Francisci*), takes place in Rome, when Francis, still a wealthy merchant, goes there on pilgrimage.

Faced with the multitude of the poor and the impoverished, he exchanges his clothes for those of a beggar in front of Saint Peter's.

To meet the other, we must put ourselves in their shoes, leave behind our own securities, and try to understand our brother's reasons and the hardship of his life.

READER

> *"These praiseworthy beginnings foretold what he would become once he had reached perfection. He often stripped himself to clothe the poor, whom he sought to resemble, if not yet in deeds, at least with his whole soul. Once he went on pilgrimage to Rome and, out of love for poverty, laid aside his fine clothes and covered himself with a poor man's rags. Then, full of joy, he sat among the poor who gathered in great numbers in the atrium in front of the church of Saint Peter and, considering himself one of them, he ate eagerly with them."*
>
> 2 Celano (FF 589.8)

SISTER RAFFAELLA

For Francis, peace is born first of all from the desire for relationships that can be renewed in the mutual gaze of forgiveness and truth.

From this perspective it becomes possible to see the other not as my enemy, but as a man or a woman trying to fill an emptiness, to soothe their pain, to solve their problems.

This is why Francis would later write to a Minister:

> *"Let there be no brother in the world who has sinned as much as he could sin who, after looking into your eyes, goes away without your merciful forgiveness."* (Letter to a Minister)

> *"Gospel forgiveness is not a gesture done once and for all. It is a daily grammar, demanding and fragile. Francis knew this. We too, today, need to learn it again."* (Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General OFM)

Francis can then turn the same gaze towards those who at the time were considered the enemies par excellence, the infidels, the Saracens: a dialogue that does not merely endure difference, but welcomes it as an opportunity to bear witness to a new way of life, recognising a shared fraternity that overcomes every barrier.

LET US PRAY

READER

✦ *Blessed is the servant who does not pride himself on the good the Lord says and does through him any more than on what he says and does through others.*

— Uphold, Lord, all of humanity. May the world, which today knows tools of unprecedented power, use them with the wisdom of the Spirit to make the world a garden, respecting the dignity of every people and culture.

✦ *Blessed is the servant who loves his brother when he is sick and cannot repay him as much as when he is well and can repay him.*

— Uphold, Lord, all who suffer from lack of care, from violence, war and injustice. Be their strength, and open our hearts to hear their cry, so that we may stand by their side.

HYMN

2 THE SECOND RENUNCIATION

SISTER RAFFAELLA

The second renunciation is the best known, which took place before the Bishop of Assisi. Francis's gesture is meant as the sign of his definitive conversion: Francis strips himself of all his defences. By presenting himself naked, Francis shows himself defenceless, without weapons, without protection; and it is this condition that disarms his father.

When the Bishop of Assisi pointed out to Francis that his life and that of his brothers was too harsh because they owned nothing, Francis answered with these very words:

> *"My lord, if we had possessions, we would also need weapons to defend ourselves. For from property arise quarrels and disputes, and the love of God and of neighbour is often hindered by it. That is why we do not want to own any temporal goods in this world."* (Legend of the Three Companions)

A radical choice that places peace at the centre through the choice of poverty, because:

- those who possess many goods live in constant fear of losing them or having them stolen;
- to defend what we possess we are driven to take up arms, creating barriers and conflicts with others;
- for Francis, renouncing every material good was the only way to be truly free, at peace with his neighbour and entirely entrusted to God.

LET US CALL UPON THE LORD

READER

To the Lord God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, let us say with confidence:

- For those who trust in the power of weapons and violence
- For those who place their trust in money and material goods
- For our faith, which does not yet believe in the unarmed power of the Gospel
- For every attempt to live our lives as if we did not need others and were without sin
- For those who are prophets of death
- For those with responsibility in government who choose the path of war and conflict

KYRIE ELEISON

HYMN

3 THE THIRD RENUNCIATION

SISTER RAFFAELLA

The third renunciation takes place at the Portiuncula, when "he had himself laid naked on the naked ground, to be prepared for that final hour" (Thomas of Celano): the hour of his death, of his Transitus, of his Passover. Why does Francis strip himself once again? Here Francis strips himself of his tunic, the habit in which he had lived his whole life as a penitent and religious. It is the final renunciation of himself, in order to recognise that he is the object of a special love, and this love received is the fulfilment of his entire life.

This is the moment when Francis fully reveals his life at peace with all creation.

Shortly before, he had written the Canticle of the Creatures.

Reconciled with the earth, he sees the world not as property to be exploited, but as a great community of brothers and sisters.

His not possessing allows him to recognise in everything, in every reality, a gift from God.

Through his renunciations, Francis gives back to God in praise the gifts he has received, and gives back to his brothers and sisters the goods he holds as a steward of God's gifts, which are not for himself but for the good of all. Only this choice makes it possible to live and bear witness to a true peace, unarmed and disarming.

LET US PRAY

READER

✦ *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. True peacemakers are those who, in all that they endure in this world for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, preserve peace in soul and body.*

— Uphold, Lord, all peacemakers, that they may find in you the strength and courage to make grow the gift of peace you have given us.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

Myanmar **Ukraine** **Mexico** **Cameroon** **Holy Land**

HYMN

CLOSING WORDS

SISTER RAFFAELLA

As this prayer comes to an end, let us gather in our hearts what we have lived and heard. Let us make our own the cry of the victims of conflict, of those who have lost family, friends and acquaintances, of those who no longer have a home, a job, a future.

As true brothers and sisters, let us share the suffering of those who mourn their loved ones, of those who are persecuted, of children forced to fight in wars.

Matthew, in his Gospel, reports the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Francis took these words seriously.

His peace was born from a constant search for a path of encounter and reconciliation.

Francis teaches us that true peace begins within us and cannot be imposed by force.

How often do we carry in our hearts unspoken words, wounds, resentments, judgements?

How often do we long for peace in the world, yet fail to build it in our families, our communities, our workplaces?

This evening we ask the Lord to grant that we return to our daily lives transformed into instruments of his peace.

We entrust this intention to the intercession of Saint Francis, peacemaker, and together we call upon him:

OUR PATRON, PRAY FOR US

PRAYER OF POPE LEO XIV

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago
went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace,
intercede for us with the Lord.

In the Crucifix of San Damiano you recognised true peace;
teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation
that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war
and of misunderstanding,
give us the courage to build bridges
where the world raises borders.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division,
intercede that we may become peacemakers:
unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ.
Amen.

From the Letter of the Holy Father Leo XIV to the Ministers General of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the opening of the 8th Centenary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi

HYMN

NOTES



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