

THE SIGN OF HOPE

» by Bro FRANCESCO DILEO OFMCap

As each year returns, the gentle gleam of flickering, multi-coloured lights has once more adorned balconies, nativity scenes, and Christmas trees, granting us a foretaste of that joy which, more than any other feast, gathers families around the hearth to savour the warmth of mutual affection and the sharing of cherished festive fare.

These sentiments—cheerful, consoling, and wholly fitting—are graces we should not allow to remain fleeting. We are called to lift them beyond passing sentimentality and the material comforts we hope to find beneath the tree or laid upon the festive table. For the happiness that awaits us can attain its fullness only when it opens itself to compassion and charity towards the many families who, because of war, will greet the coming days not with songs of gladness, but with tears. All too often, when these countless tragedies reach us through the news, we quiet our conscience with the paralysing thought: What can I, so small and ordinary, possibly do to

change or even lighten a burden which not even the leaders of powerful nations have been able to resolve?

Yet the truth is that we can do far more than our seeming lack of influence would suggest: by cultivating a spirit of dialogue and forgiveness, and above all, by lifting our hearts to God in earnest prayer for the gift of peace.

Let us therefore join together, particularly in the holy days before us, to beseech the Lord to ‘grant all leaders wisdom and perseverance, that they may advance in the search for a just and lasting peace’ (LEO XIV, *Homily*, 19 October 2025), and to implore Him ‘to heal every wound and, with His grace, to help us accomplish what now seems humanly impossible: to rediscover that the other is not an enemy, but a brother to whom we must look with mercy, forgiveness, and the hope of reconciliation’ (LEO XIV, *Angelus*, 12 October 2025). At the same time, let us be guided by the teaching and holy witness of our dear confrère, Pio of Pietrelcina, who fashioned his entire life upon the path of reconciliation—an essential foundation for preventing and healing conflicts within families, within society,

and among nations.

In this spirit, my Christmas wishes take the form of an invitation: that we may recognise, in the manger of Bethlehem—reproduced in the humble grottos and stables erected in churches and homes throughout the world—the Sign of hope that does not disappoint. A hope destined to shine beyond the close of the Jubilee. A hope to be cherished as a precious gift and carried into our daily apostolate of living and witnessing to the faith in the ordinary places of life, labouring to build a more fraternal world and to foster a culture of non-violence.

To sow hope in the hearts of those we encounter is, in our present age, the most essential act of charity—an offering that will assuredly be blessed by Him who, in taking flesh, embraced the depths of human suffering. And it is this very dedication to hope that will render complete and authentic the joy we shall taste when surrounded by those we love. My heartfelt and prayerful greetings to you all.

Wishing you all a Holy Christmas and a happy New Year full of every blessing. ▼

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