



CONFERENZA FRANCESCANA INTERNAZIONALE-TOR

June 8, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Let the sisters and brothers always be mindful that they should desire one thing alone, namely, the Spirit of God at work within them. TORule #32

The Spirit of God...*ruah*...the breath of God...

“I can’t breathe...”

Three words that have stunned onlookers, near and far.

Three words that have echoed to every part of our world.

Three words that have cracked open a surging need, a lost hope.

“I can’t breathe...”

Words that stir our hearts, move us to our core, wrench our being.

We are Franciscan Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular who follow St. Francis, in whose unique way saw through everything false and divisive. He was a peacemaker who breathed the Spirit and dwelled in God. Our Rule inspires us in our times: *As they announce peace with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts. No one should be roused to wrath or insult on their account; rather, all should be moved to peace, goodwill and mercy because of their gentleness.* TORule #30

How do we as followers of Francis, walking in the footprints of Jesus, claim and live our charism today in this twenty-first century? In *Sacrum commercium* 37, we see that even the early followers of Francis grappled with questions about the charism. In allegory, Lady Poverty spoke to Francis: “After awhile, in fact, some began to breathe and willingly to walk the right path which for some time they had walked out of necessity. All those who came to me begged me sincerely with many prayers and tears to enter into a covenant of perpetual peace with them, ... My soul was bound to theirs and there was in us one spirit...”

Our times call us to a renewed covenant of peace in new relationships, new listening, new walking together. The blight of racism continues to divide our world. As Franciscans we vow to hear the call of the breathless and suffocating: *The sisters and brothers are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring. Wherever they are, they should recall that they have given themselves up completely and handed themselves over totally to our Lord Jesus Christ.* TORule #30

How are we renewed in our perpetual covenant of peace? Do we beg with many prayers and tears for a new prayer, a new listening, a new response to our brothers and sisters who are suffocating, who cannot breathe. May we inhale deeply and allow the breath of the Holy Spirit to work in us with deep wisdom, great courage and loving compassion, guiding us in efforts that heal our broken world and all its peoples.

May we be the heralds of God’s love and peace in word and deed,

Sr. Deborah LOCKWOOD, President IFC-TOR
Sr. M. Magdalena SCHMITZ, Vice-President
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