

## **Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation: Love the Lord, Love His Kingdom**

November 1, 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ and in St. Francis,

On October 21 several of our Order met at Border Field, on the border between the United States and Mexico, to lift our Franciscan prayers for peace at this border and at all the borders in the world. Our Beloved Saint Francis calls us to build peace and since our foundation is always prayer, we raised our voices in the hopes that someday the human family will come to know and honor that we are all children of God, the Lord of Love.

The October prayer service was the third and final part of our Franciscan Pilgrimage in the St. Francis Region, based on the words of St. Clare: Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, Imitate. We began our pilgrimage in June in Santa Barbara, gazing with wonder at the Michelangelo Sistine Chapel exhibit, we journeyed to Homeboy Industries in June, where we spent several hours touring, talking, and witnessing to the wonderful works of redemption and love carried out daily in their ministries. We finalized our pilgrimage by “going out” in imitation of our Lord and Savior, and following His command to take His prayers and love to all the earth.

As we begin November, I reflect upon Thanksgiving Day, soon to be here, as well as the first Thanksgiving and the colonists’ encounters with the Native Americans, the indigenous already living on this soil when the colonists arrived. My reflections led me to Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, born in New York in 1656, converted to Christianity when she was nineteen, and became the first Native American saint. She was beatified in 1980 by Pope John Paul II and canonized by Pope Benedict XVI at Saint Peter’s Basilica on 21 October 2012. May we continue to pray and work for peace with our Native American sisters and brothers.

Finally, may we join our Franciscan prayers in gratitude for all the Lord has given us. In our increasingly polarized world, filled these days with turmoil, it is sometimes difficult to feel gratitude. St. Paul teaches us in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” I think St. Paul is calling us to a deep spiritual practice, that is not dependent on what is happening in our world or in our personal lives. Instead, the practice is grounded in our love of the Lord and our surrender to Him. Saint Francis called this “perfect joy!”

May we turn our hearts, minds, and strength to the Lord and hear His call to go out into the world and do His Holy Will. May we live in reverence, gratitude, and love.

Peace and All Good,  
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