

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation: Love the Lord, Love His Kingdom The Crib, The Cup, The Cross, Creation

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the Lord Give You Peace. As Franciscans, all of our work for justice, peace, and integrity of creation begins on our knees, praying for God's guidance and seeking God's will for His world, and for our lives. As we end this year, and begin to ponder the new, I invite you, sisters and brothers, to reflect with me on the way the four key elements of Franciscan Spirituality, the crib, the cup, the cross, and creation, may help guide us as we make our individual promises to God for 2024.

The Crib: In December, our thoughts on the crib naturally flow to the manger. We experience deep and abiding awe and gratitude to our Lord, who incarnated because of His deep love for us and His desire to be with us. May we honor that truth all the days of our lives. As we continue our reflections, we cannot help but be moved to deep sorrow, for the empty cribs that will not be filled by the infant for which it was intended. Some of these infants did not reach the crib due to the insufficiency of health care for the poor. The majority, however, will not reach the crib because they were aborted. May our work for the unborn continue, undeterred by the popular culture that rejects the Divine knowledge that life begins at conception.

The Cup: How blessed we are to receive the Eucharist. As we bring our deepest intentionality to the altar, may we remember that the Lord takes us, blesses and breaks us, and sends us into His world for the sake of His Kingdom on earth. May we remember that in His Divine Kingdom He uses our hands, feet, and minds as His Holy instruments, so that all are fed, clothed, cared for, and welcomed. May our work for peace and justice continue to help bring the human family into peaceful harmony, without war and with peaceful ways to resolve conflicts.

The Cross: As we gaze on the Holy Cross, may we remember the depth and breadth of God's love for us, His powerful love that endures through the centuries. May we know His call to us to carry His love into the world, being His light to the wounds and wonders of the world.

Creation: Finally, may we honor the Franciscan intuition that God is alive in some way in all that lives. May we honor in thought, word, and deed that our being in universal kinship with all that lives calls us to care for all of creation, using our hearts, hands, minds, and skills to seek paths of unity and harmony with all that lives in God's world – all peoples, all animals, all plants, all earth – one world, God's world.

Blessings to you, dear sisters and brothers. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Peace and All Good,

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