Letter from Aparecida

"Hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. " Laudato Si, 49

The Conference of the
The Franciscan Family of Brazil, celebrating the National Chapter of Mats, aware of its mission to "bring the mercy of God to the world", sends this message to all people of good will: to those who continue to believe in a world of justice and fraternity and to those who, in the midst of the contradictions and cruelties of our time, live amidst the pain of disappointment and of hopelessness.

The sharing that has taken place among us these days leads us to affirm: “We are living a true Pentecost!” In this sense, this Chapter of Mats has called us to reinvigorate our charism and to remember our inheritance, the original inspiration that started the Franciscan movement. The experience of taking up our mats leads us to embrace our vocation as pilgrims and strangers.

The foundations upon which our history has been built are marked by the blood of the poor and the little ones, of indigenous peoples, women and young people of color. They have suffered as a result of excessive and devastating losses, an economy that excludes the majority of people, and the powerful forces that destroy peoples, cultures and nature. In the light of our charism, we understand that we need to contribute to the development of new utopian horizon. We must commit ourselves to participating in a common venture that will contribute to justice and peace and a deep respect for the integrity of creation.

We are attentive to the cries of the poor and of Mother Earth! We must act with mercy towards them and with indignation towards the system that excludes, impoverishes and mistreats them. We must summon everyone to join us in the struggle that we now undertake together: to participate in the rebuilding of the Church with Pope Francisco and the reconstruction of Brazil that is in ruins.

It is time for us to gather up our mats and spread them out on the ground of the peripheries of the world, by continually transforming our being, acting and consuming in ways that respond to the appeals of Pope Francis.

The ecological, socio-political and economic reality of our country requires of us prophetic acts of denunciation and proclamation. We have witnessed, with sacred anger, the violation of the rights that were gained through the many efforts, energies and expressions of the Brazilian people. This is why we cannot fail to join with social movements in the struggle to "not lose one more right.” We must stand against coups as well as retrograde and abusive reforms advanced by an illegitimate government, a parliament divorced from the interests of the people and a judiciary that has acted outside of the parameters of equity "that instead of strengthening the role of the State to meet the needs and the rights of the weakest, favors the interests of big capital.”

From this city of Aparecida, Our Lady, patroness of Brazil, was recovered from the waters of a river that is now polluted and degraded. Amidst countless other demands for action, this fact leads us to make a particular commitment to Sister Water. In this way, we will strive to bring about processes of reflection and action that will defend water as a common good, through the participation of the Franciscan family in meetings, forums and initiatives that will strengthen those works associated with the promotion of Justice and the Integrity of Creation.

All of this is happening, Brothers and Sisters, because St. Francis taught us that in the most difficult moments of our lives we must return to our “Mother’s house.” Francis and his brothers often returned to the little church of Saint Mary of the Angels, the Portiuncula. And so, we return to the Sanctuary of Our Lady Aparecida, during this anniversary of 300 years of walking with the little ones of this earth.

"O Black Mother, O Mariama, of course there are those who will say, Mariama, that this is political, that this is subversion, that this is communism. It is the Gospel of Christ, Mariama! " And so, we invoke your blessings on our whole Franciscan family and on Brazil that is thirsting for “Peace - the fruit of justice, goodness and the mercy of God.”

August 6, 2017

Conference of the Franciscan Family of Brazil