



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Dear brothers and sisters of many different faiths,

In our monthly meeting in the footsteps of the "spirit of Assisi" we cannot neglect the dimension of peace that relates to the environment, the duty to care for it and the need to show solidarity, including prayer, with those who suffer from disasters related to the natural dynamics of the cosmos. We are touched deeply by the immense disaster that has devastated the city of Derna in Cyrenaica (**Libya**) and other towns and villages in the surrounding area. The yet uncertain number of casualties and missing people, the vast numbers of those who lost everything, and the risk of very serious epidemics, only remotely succeed in giving us a sense of the scale of the tragedy.

In the face of all this, we would feel totally helpless were it not for the fact that we trust in the one God who is rich in mercy and who comes to comfort and heal wounds by inspiring thoughts and gestures of concrete solidarity. At the same time, we must learn a lesson for the choices we are called to make in relation to the environment of which we are custodians and not masters. Nature demands to be respected and not exploited for the benefit of a few.

The climate changes that also give rise to such frequent disastrous weather events demand that all human beings acquire a new consciousness about caring for the environment. For us believers this consciousness is also deeply connected with our religious experience of the mystery that envelops the entire universe. We need to reconcile ourselves with creation to which we sometimes seem to have declared war. Therefore, in our prayer on September 27, I invite you, according to our different traditions, to pray in a special way for the brothers and sisters of Libya, addressing the God of life so that all life may be preserved and that our hearts be converted to care for what, in his Canticle of Brother Sun, Francis of Assisi called "our sister Mother Earth."

May the Lord give you peace

Assisi, September 2023

+ Domenico Sorrentino, Bishop