

**SYNTHESIS OF THE WINNING PROJECT**  
**INTERNATIONAL AWARD “FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND CARLO ACUTIS**  
**FOR AN ECONOMY OF FRATERNITY”**

The winner of the 2024 III Edition of the international award “Francis of Assisi and Carlo Acutis for an Economy of Fraternity” comes from the Amazon (Brazil) with a project entitled “*A Graça do Trabalho*” (“The Grace of Work”). This year’s recognition goes to America, the fourth continent to receive it, after Europe (Italy) in 2021, Asia (Philippines) in 2022, and Africa (Chad) last year.

In total, the Award secretariat received 33 projects in five languages (English, Italian, French, Portuguese, and Spanish) from 24 nations and 5 continents (Africa – 17, America – 7, Asia – 5, Europe – 3, and Oceania – 1).

The winning project is born as a fraternal economic process “from below” with the vision to offer decent work to young indigenous people, and, at the same time, to feed children with healthier foods, coming from the local Amazonian culture: seasonal fruit and vegetables, chickens, and eggs. As of now, these foods largely arrive frozen after months of long journeys, using a lot of petrol for boats and trucks with the consequent pollution of the environment. In 2023, after participating in the event “The Economy of Francesco” in Assisi with other young change-makers, some leaders listened to the young people of the indigenous villages. From these “synodal” meetings of attentive listening, the dream was born of expanding the “Indigenous Poultry” project, already successfully started, not only with the breeding of free-range chickens, but also of birds that lay fresh eggs. In this way, young indigenous people, currently excluded from any productive activity due to their native language and ethnicity, will be involved in a fraternal and ecological project. Ecological because the breeding of chickens and egg laying birds is an urgent and necessary solution to preserve the fish that are being overly harvested. This allows aquatic fauna to repopulate the lakes, where there is a progressive and rapid disappearance of fish due to massive use, drought, and water pollution.

The young people – all under 35 years old – have come together with the accompaniment of the Capuchin Friars Minor on site – the village of Belém do Solimões at the center of the Eware I and Eware II indigenous reserves of the Brazilian Amazon on the borders between Brazil, Peru and Colombia – and with the formation support of an association of indigenous women – “*Mapana*”. In this region, one of the greatest challenges are young people who are increasingly at risk of alcoholism, drugs, suicide, and violence due to unemployment and a profound identity crisis, which are literally killing many indigenous youths, also victims of growing prejudice in a globalized and exclusionary society. Others are forced to leave their families and villages to look for work in big cities with all the risks that this involves.

The “*A Graça do Trabalho*” project aims to create dignified work to face these challenges with the young as the protagonists, committed to generating an income for the family and build self-esteem. The wooden chicken coops will also be built by young people, using local resources. The project intends to invest in excluded and discarded youngsters as the main protagonists of a self-sustainable future. The young people come from 30 poor families and will learn a trade through observation – a methodology characteristic of Brazilian indigenous culture – with fraternal and cooperative involvement (“*Fratelli tutti*”) between four villages, different ethnic groups (Ticuna, Kokama, Kanamari, and Kambeba), and different religious denominations in a true synergy of “walking together.” In this periphery of the world, respect and the exchange of knowledge between the elderly and the young happily still exist.

A very beautiful aspect of the project is the support of the “solidarity box,” which will be sustained each month through the commitment of the young people, who wish to concretely live the words of

Jesus, embodied in the lives of Saint Francis of Assisi and Blessed Carlo Acutis: “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20,35).

“*A Graça do Trabalho*” is the winner of the 2024 Award, because it is the expression of a project “from below,” carried out by excluded and discarded young people who can become protagonists of their own revival through fraternal labor, significant for the development and protection of the local community at various levels. Bringing these young people together and accompanying them means making them understand that by working in synergy, sharing their talents, and using local resources, it is possible to come out of poverty, cultural, social and economic exclusion, through the creation of an economy of fraternity, which can be an example for other young people and families and an encouragement for the whole territory. It is a small model to contribute to a different kind of economy “*one that brings life not death, one that is inclusive and not exclusive, humane and not dehumanizing, one that cares for the environment and does not despoil it*” (Letter of the Holy Father Francis for the event “Economy of Francesco”, 1 May 2019), reflecting the unique fatherhood of God and His love for all of His children.

During the Feast of the Sanctuary of Renunciation in Assisi (17-19 May 2024), the winner of the award will be given an economic contribution of 40 thousand euros, an icon with the image of Saint Francis of Assisi and Blessed Carlo Acutis, and a *foulard* of the stripping of Saint Francis, designed and produced by the entrepreneur Brunello Cucinelli. This year, the Evaluation Commission also wanted to recognize and encourage a second project from Madagascar (Africa) with financial support of 10 thousand euros. The project, entitled “*Mihavotras*” (“We save ourselves together”) and supported by the local Caritas, with the creation of cooperatives, aims to strengthen the activity of vulnerable women in the production and sale of ecological wood charcoal and eco-plastic pebbles, using waste and polluting waste. This activity is important not only for its ecological impact, but also as a source of income to pay for children’s schooling.