



The Holy See

LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS FOR THE 70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WEeping MADONNA OF SYRACUSE

Dear brother

Francesco LOMANTO

Metropolitan Archbishop of Syracuse

Seventy years have passed since the tears of Our Lady were tenderly shed in the land of Syracuse: between 29 August and 1 September 1953, human tears flowed from the eyes of the Virgin, depicted with the Immaculate Heart in the painting placed at the head of a marriage bed. From then, the Church of Syracuse has carefully and devotedly preserved these tears, which often reach the sick, the elderly, the suffering, and ecclesial communities in various parts of the world, as a sign of the close and heartfelt presence of the Mother of God, and ours. Mary's weeping shows her sharing in the compassionate love of the Lord, who suffers for us his children; who ardently hopes for our conversion; who awaits us, as a merciful Father, to forgive us everything and always.

For us, however, the question of the Servant of God Pope Pius XII is repeated: "Will men understand the arcane language of those tears?" (Radio Message, 14 October 1954). To welcome this prophetic call, the Church in Syracuse is celebrating a Marian Year: I would like to express my closeness to the diocesan Community, uniting myself spiritually and addressing a cordial greeting to you, Your Excellency, to the priests, consecrated persons and all the faithful.

The tears were shed, in the precarious context of the aftermath of the Second World War, in a modest village house where the humble family of Angelo Iannuso and Antonina Giusto, expecting their first child, lived. The combination of these circumstances recalls the privileged love of the Lord, lover of life, for the poor and needy: the Church, His Bride, cannot but conform to this predilection. Moreover, the miraculous event, which occurred in the intimacy of a home, invites us to consider the extraordinary beauty of the domestic hearth, the centre of love and life, and to support the family founded on marriage, highlighting its intrinsic value as the fundamental cell of society and the Church.

But the tears of the Mother continue to be shed when the weakest are discriminated against and when violence and wars, which claim innocent victims, are rampant. In the face of the trials of life and history, especially in the face of today's troubling scenarios of war, let us not tire of invoking the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace and Mother of Consolation. May her motherly solicitude stir believers to build and tread paths of peace and forgiveness, and to be close to those who are sick in body and spirit, those who are alone and abandoned. We are comforted by the knowledge that the Mother of God, invoked with the title "Our Lady of Tears", has lavished so many graces on those who have turned to her.

May this meaningful anniversary foster in the entire Church of Syracuse the greatest grace, the desire to conform one's life more closely to he who Mary indicates to us, the Lord Jesus Christ, so that faith may be revived, charity practiced, and hope witnessed and inspired. May you be sustained by Our Lady, whom I implore with you:

O Virgin Mary,
 accompany the path of the Church
 with the gift of your holy tears,
 give peace to all the world,
 and keep your children
 with your maternal protection.
 Sustain us in fidelity to God,
 In service to the Church
 And in love towards all our brethren. Amen.

While I ask you to pray for me, I send you my heartfelt Blessing, which I extend to those who will take part in the solemn commemorative celebrations.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 7 December 2023, first Vespers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

FRANCIS

Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 7 December 2023