



Advent 2022.

+ My dear Relatives and Friends,

This year i flew to Argentina earlier than other years, so i will celebrate Christmas in the middle of summer. Like every year, i am deeply moved by the familiar Advent melodies in our monastic book of hours, but when i raise my eyes from the book, i see – instead of snow in the fir trees – the apricot tree in front of my window and am faced with the almost hopeless daily task of protecting the ripening harvest from flocks of parrots.

Missing the accustomed trappings of this festive season, i have to focus on essentials. To my surprise, i notice something essential this year, that never struck me before: how important it is for us to celebrate together with friends, yes, how intimately community and celebration belong together.

Even when we celebrate alone, we feel at heart connected with our friends. Nobody can celebrate in isolation. Only through a celebrating community do table and altar become sacred. Since this became clear to me, community has become the key word, this year, for understanding the celebration of this festive season.

Nothing is more urgently necessary in our time than that we rebuild the lost sense of community in all areas. Only united as a community can we solve the major tasks before us: overpopulation, environmental destruction, climate change, social divisions, corruption ... But how can we as individuals start finding community? Precisely by celebrating together.

That's why i urge you, my friends, when we sit at our festive table, let's keep in our hearts sensitive topics – migrant workers, victims of war, hungry children – and perhaps even dare to mention them. To speak of them in the midst of your celebrations requires great sensitivity and won't always be appropriate; only you can judge whether it is right to do so. But whenever possible, let's ask each other, what can i personally do to bridge one social gap somewhere. Unless we are willing to do this, how shall the promise of Christmas – "Peace on earth!" – come true?

Mother and child are the archetype of community and remain its model. A mother sees all that's bad in her child as the not-yet-good. And all of us can learn to look at the world through the eyes of a mother. Then – without glossing over its horror – we will be able to deal with the not-yet-good creatively. Maybe those parrots, flocking together, can teach us about community. Maybe we can learn from bees and ants, without losing what's good about individual freedom.

So urgent is all this that i must risk seeming obsessed with it. Please forgive me. After all, the message is a happy one. Ultimately, it's about the joy of celebrating life – not superficially, but genuinely, and that means in community. You to whom i'm sending this message belong to my heart-community. I wish you this joy for every day of 2023 and far into the future.

Your brother David

