ASSISI · ITALY

Upper Church of the Basilica San Francesco

In Cammino verso Assisi – Pax Mundi

A PEACE CONCERT FOR OUR FELLOW CREATURES

Peace must be rethought anew

7 November 2026 · 9:00 pm
Upper Church
Basilica San Francesco
Assisi, Italy

On the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi



Organizer
Sacro Convento di San Francesco, Assisi

Initiated by
PRO ANIMALE für Tiere in Not e. V.

A MANIFESTO OF EMPATHY

For a peaceableness yet to be found anew toward our fellow creatures

Empathy means opening oneself up — to another life, to its joys and its sorrows. It means summoning the wholehearted courage to let the fate of another living being become fundamentally meaningful to us.
This project arose from the conviction that peace cannot be thought of in fragments. It cannot exist among human beings while countless other living beings remain outside our moral consideration.
The way we treat animals has long ceased to be a marginal question of ethics. It touches one of the fundamental questions of our civilization:

Who are we?

What are we willing to recognize as worthy of protection?

And is our compassion capable of crossing the boundaries that, over generations, we have drawn between ourselves and the living world?

Perhaps a new peaceableness begins exactly where we sense and recognize that we ourselves are part of a greater community of life.

INVITATION

In the 800th year since the death of Saint Francis of Assisi, an unprecedented spiritual initiative is taking shape in the Upper Church of the Basilica San Francesco in Assisi:
We warmly invite you to a peace concert for our fellow creatures.

At its heart stand simple yet far-reaching questions:
To whom, really, does “our” peace apply?
To whom do we grant peace?
Can peace arise where other life is not thought along with it?

For our fellow creatures, peace first means something very elemental: the absence of human violence. Peace begins where violence ends.
If we take peace seriously, our moral responsibility must be thought universally. We believe that a peaceableness toward our animal kin and toward nature is needed — a peaceableness that does not end merely with the absence of violence, but begins with a changed attitude toward life itself.

Francis of Assisi taught us to see the boundaries between ourselves and creation differently. The place itself also carries a special history. The Basilica San Francesco was built on a site that had previously been associated with death and punishment. In this, a profound symbol of transformation can be recognized: the transformation of a place of violence into a place of faith, hope, and peace.
Perhaps it is precisely in this that a message lies which still holds true today:
that even places and relationships marked by violence can be transformed.

The Basilica San Francesco has, in Assisi, the **city of peace**, the potential — like scarcely any other place — to set in motion a **manifesto for peaceableness, empathy** and a new responsibility toward our fellow creatures and and to carry into society the torch of empowered, empathetic, responsible action.

INVITATION

This is not about renunciation, but rather about an enrichment of our humanity within the sibling-like connectedness and the already evolutionarily-biologically shared bodily vulnerability of humans and animals.

“Of course, this also means grasping that we do not merely consist of flesh the way a hammer consists of wood and iron. Rather, we are, in a radical sense, flesh: vulnerable, sensuous, touching, and self-aware flesh. The very same special substance that animals are made of”
(Volker Demuth: Unser heiliges Fleisch [“Our Sacred Flesh”], in ZEIT Online, 17 August 2019).

“And whoever denies the significance of animal bodiliness behaves just as ignorantly as one who would deny the bodiliness of other human beings … The perception of bodiliness therefore always also entails a claim and an appeal: bodiliness at once points to dignity. Bodily beings articulate, in their very being, the claim to their own dignity”
(Andreas Brenner: “Leib und Leid. Was Menschen mit Tieren verbindet” [“Body and Suffering: What Connects Humans and Animals”], in TIERethik, 4th year, 2012, issue 4, pp. 65–66).

With warm regards



NATASCHA WOTHKE
President PRO ANIMALE für Tiere in Not e. V.

THE MUSICAL PROGRAMME

ALON SARIEL • mandolin and lute
IGOR COGNOLATO • piano

Ernest Bloch
Prayer

Johann S. Bach
Concerto in D minor, BWV 974, II. Adagio

Wolfgang A. Mozart
Requiem, Lacrimosa

Tomaso Albinoni
Adagio in G minor

Ludovico Einaudi
Elegy for the Artic

John Williams
Theme from Schindler's Liste

SHORT PRESENTATIONS

PROF. DR. ROBERTO MARCHESINI
Cultivating empathy, fostering peace:
From the Wolf of Gubbio to our relationship with other animals

PROF. DR. KURT REMELE
Only one heart:
Cruelty to animals – cruelty to people

PROF. DR. THOMAS RUSTER
Francis, Nathan and the Lamb of God:
Stories of lambs that are not led to the slaughter

THE ARTISTS

ALON SARIEL

Mandolinist · Conductor · Lutenist · Ambassador for PRO ANIMALE

The internationally renowned Israeli mandolinist and conductor Alon Sariel combines outstanding musical ability with a deep commitment to animal protection.

As an ambassador for PRO ANIMALE, his artistic commitment is closely tied to the vision behind the peace concert for our fellow creatures. His music becomes part of a larger dialogue — between cultures, between traditions, and between humanity and the living world.

IGOR COGNOLATO

Pianist · Professor at the Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello, Venice

The Italian concert pianist and renowned pedagogue Igor Cognolato is Professor of Piano Interpretation at the Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello in Venice. His artistic work combines musical excellence with a deep understanding of the expressive power and the transformative force of music.

Together, Alon Sariel and Igor Cognolato will shape a musical evening dedicated to a new peaceableness and a new self-understanding toward our fellow creatures.



ALON SARIEL



IGOR COGNOLATO

THE SPEAKERS

PROFESSOR DR ROBERTO MARCHESINI



Ethologist · Philosopher · Zooanthropologist

Prof. Dr Roberto Marchesini, is director of the Centro Studi Filosofia Postumanista and the SIUA (School for Human-Animal Interaction) in Italy. He is regarded as one of the leading thinkers in posthumanism and contemporary animal philosophy. With more than 100 publications to his name, he teaches as an internationally renowned scholar in Italy and abroad.

PROFESSOR DR KURT REMELE



Catholic Theologian · Social ethicist · Animal Philosopher at the University of Graz

Prof. Dr Kurt Remele is regarded as one of the pioneering thinkers in the field of contemporary Christian animal ethics and is considered one of its most prominent advocates. In his seminal work “The Dignity of Animals is Inviolable: A New Christian Animal Ethics”, he calls for a radical departure from traditional anthropocentric thinking, which places humans at the centre in isolation. He is a Fellow of the renowned Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics.

PROFESSOR DR THOMAS RUSTER



Catholic Theologian · former Professor of Dogmatics and Systematic Theology at TU Dortmund

The German theologian Prof. Dr Thomas Ruster is one of the most influential voices in Christian-based animal ethics.
As co-author of the book “Everything that breathes. A Theology of Animals”, he denounces a historical ‘neglect of animals’ within the Church and calls for a fundamental reorientation of our relationship with animals. Through his ideas, Thomas Ruster invites us to understand peace not merely as a state amongst human beings, but also to include animals, as our fellow creatures, within this circle of peace.

THE INITIATOR

PRO ANIMALE für Tiere in Not e.V.

40 Years of Responsibility for Animals in Need
PRO ANIMALE für Tiere in Not e. V. has been working internationally since 1985 as a nonprofit organization for the rescue of animals in need, offering them a life of safety and care.
Today, across 30 animal welfare facilities and shelters in six European countries, including Turkey, we take on full responsibility for more than 3,700 fellow creatures.

In Assisi, we run the animal shelter “Il sorriso di San Francesco”
https://pro-animale.de/pro-animale-international/italien/sorriso-di-san-francesco/

Since the beginning of the devastating war of aggression against Ukraine, we have also rescued more than 470 dogs directly from the war zone in Kherson and taken them fully into our care. This is just one of many current examples of our work.

More information about our work: **https://pro-animale.de/**

BEYOND RESCUE

But our responsibility does not end with life-saving aid for the individual animal. We also fight for their rights.
Advocating for animal rights is not a matter of personal preference or hobbyism. It is a moral and social responsibility — our shared responsibility in a society shaped by exploitation.

THE INITIATOR

The Sibling-Like Connectedness of All Living Beings

Beyond their unconditional intrinsic worth, the cause of animals carries a holistic significance. And this is not a matter of renunciation, but rather an enrichment of our humanity:

- **The Common Root:** We all descend from a shared root of all living things and share with animals the same bodily vulnerability on an evolutionary-biological level.
- **The Highest Good:** We know that for this creature, its endangered life is its highest and most irretrievable good —
- **The Significance of Being:** We sense that its life is just as meaningful to it, in every respect, as our life is meaningful to us.
- **A Shared Fate:** And we sense that the fate of this animal, in its very claim upon us, is at the same time our own fate and concerns us.

1985
Founded

3,700+
Animals under our protection

30
Animal shelters

6
European countries including Turkey