



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE**

Saturday, 17 October 1998

*Your Eminence,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I am pleased to extend a cordial greeting to you today at this meeting of the Grand Magisterium and Lieutenants of the ancient and illustrious Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

I thank Cardinal Carlo Furno, your Grand Master, for his noble address expressing the sentiments you share, and I am grateful for the gift he has offered me on behalf of you all.

Dear friends, your apostolic and charitable efforts are a work that is deeply motivated by faith: faith in Christ, the Son of God incarnate, true God and true man, whose lifeless body lay in the tomb from which he rose on Easter morning. The months between now and the Great Jubilee are a fitting occasion to reaffirm with conviction this faith in the Lord Jesus and to share it, by your convinced witness, with those who turn to you, looking for a word of hope and an act of charity that stem from total commitment to the Redeemer of man.

2. The distinctive sign of your order is the red cross of the Holy Land. It represents the Lord's wounds and his Blood which redeemed all humanity. May it be impressed upon your hearts, so that you will be Christ's witnesses in every situation, living and active members of your ecclesial communities. Deeply motivated by your devotion to the Cross of Christ, you will be able to spread among those around you a love for the Land traveled by the Redeemer during his earthly life, thus mobilizing the hearts of believers so that the Church which lives in the places sanctified by Christ's presence will not lack the help she needs to fulfil God's providential plan.

Your mission is therefore important and significant! Faithful to your particular charism, you are called in a way to imitate the loving zeal of the Apostle Paul, who went about seeking help for “the relief of the saints” in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Cor 8:4), urging the various Churches to offer generous alms for the brethren in Jerusalem, since “if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual blessings, they ought to contribute to their temporal needs in return” (Rom 15:27).

3. And what should we say, then, of your valuable service to Christian unity? Obedient to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and according to each one's opportunities, you must be convinced promoters of ecumenism by creating suitable forms of co-operation with the other Christian denominations, as well as by fostering careful, productive dialogue with the followers of the other religions, under the guidance of the Bishops, in order to strengthen peace in the Land of the Prince of Peace, in that Jerusalem which has become the symbol of eternal happiness.

There are various ways you can contribute to the fulfilment of the Holy City's distinctive vocation. The first and most effective is certainly prayer, because without constant prayer those who wish to build the city labour in vain. Therefore, be ardent apostles of prayer.

Secondly, make it your task to organize activities and to encourage projects that support peace and co-operation in order to make the Holy Land a place of meeting and dialogue, with mutual respect and honest collaboration.

With regard to the Christians who live there and are currently facing many difficulties, it will be your concern to let them sense your fraternal help, accompanied by that praiseworthy generosity which is the hallmark of your interventions. The Lord will reward you and bless all your efforts.

4. Dear friends, the objectives lying before you become all the more important as the Jubilee Year approaches. May the Holy City, which, like Rome, evokes the pilgrimage of faith, be the goal of your spiritual journey of penance and conversion. Go to the Holy Places in this spirit and promote pilgrimages to Jerusalem, while also suggesting the practice of the *Way of the Cross* to those who cannot go there in person.

Belonging to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre will thus become an incentive to personal asceticism centred on meditation upon the profound lessons which flow from the Cross. It will also encourage pastoral activity for the new evangelization. May you be sustained on this spiritual and apostolic journey by your heavenly patroness, Mary Queen of Palestine, who in her earthly life offered her whole self to the fulfilment of God's saving plan.

With these wishes I give each of you my Apostolic Blessing and willingly extend it to all the members of the order and their families.

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