



SACRO MILITARE ORDINE COSTANTINIANO DI SAN GIORGIO

IL GRAN PRIORE

## Message on the FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS – 14 September 2017

My dear Knights and Dames of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St. George,

the words of St. Andrew, Bishop of Crete, help us to understand the spiritual message of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross: *“We celebrate the Feast of the Holy Cross that drove away darkness and brought in the light. We celebrate the Feast of the Holy Cross and we too, together with the Crucifix, are lifted and exalted.”*

Constantine built two basilicas in Jerusalem, one on Mt. Calvary (Golgotha) and another on the Sepulcher of Christ Resurrected. These basilicas were dedicated on September 13, in the year 335. On the following day the people were enlightened regarding the profound meaning of the two churches by displaying remnants of the wood of the Cross of the Savior. This custom was the basis for the commemoration of September 14.

There is a profound connection between the Feast of the Exaltation and the celebration of Good Friday when we are invited to remember that the Cross is the supreme Christian symbol and the visible sign of our identity. It is in the Cross of Christ that we find our salvation: *“For you placed the salvation of man on the*

*wood of the Cross, so that where death arose life might again spring forth, and he who conquered on a tree might on a tree be conquered, through Christ our Lord” (Preface to the Exaltation).*

The Cross is the manifestation of God’s love, as stated in the Gospel: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (J 3:16). And Paul adds: “He loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). It is on Mt. Calvary that man can learn what Love is and who God is for “where there is love there is God”. At the conclusion of the Via Crucis at the Colosseum on Good Friday, April 22, 2011, Pope Benedict XVI said: “Let us contemplate this crucified man...we will discover that the Cross is the luminous sign of love; even more, of the immensity of God’s love, of something we could never have imagined...”. In fact: “Greater love has no man than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends...” (J 15:13). On Mt. Calvary it is clear that “God is Love” (J 4:16). Love forgets evil, forgives all. It simply loves.

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross is the greatest Feast of the Constantinian Order: as I have stated on other occasions, and I want to emphasize this, the Church expects a coherent proof of faith from you and tangible and courageous acts of charity toward the poor who, as stated by Pope Francis, are *the very flesh of God calling for our help*. If such were not so the symbols you wear not only would have no meaning but would be a scandal! Charity is the most beautiful name of God, the most elevated, sublime and at the same time the most immediate and reachable. Only Charity can allow us to see in the visage of the poor reaching out to us the

visage of that very crucifix we are sworn to protect and exalt. For such is the exaltation of the Cross of Christ!

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross must thus be celebrated by all the Knights and Dames of the Constantinian Order with special devotion and solemnity, and in this regard I invite the Priors, the Vice Priors and the Chaplains to encourage their Delegates and Delegations to celebrate this occasion in a solemn and sober manner: Do not limit yourselves to the exterior aspects but delve deeply into the mystery that is being celebrated to elicit new vigor and bear witness to the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

As we contemplate and celebrate the Holy Cross, let us also remember our many brothers and sisters who are hunted and killed because of their faith in Christ. Let us consider the ever increasing number of places in which Christians are marginalized, freedom of religion obstructed and the construction of places in which to pray hindered. Religious fanaticism and terrorism spares no one: adults, old people, the sick, women and children, all are subject to great sufferings simply because they are “of Christ”: let us pray for them and support every undertaking in their favor.

“The connection between God and the world is the Cross that lifts the earth, lowers the sky, brings together the four horizons and is the crossroad of hearts adrift” (Ermes Ronchi).

And finally a few words on Maria, Mother of Christ and, as defined by Blessed Paul VI at the conclusion of Vatican Council II, Mother of the Church. The mother of Jesus could not but be present, by her Son, at the foot of the Cross, silent, austere,

immobile, for the hour of her Son was also her hour. Maria's presence is fundamental in the Paschal Mystery, as it is for the Constantinian Order. And so we ask Maria to teach us to invoke and await the gift of the Holy Spirit to illuminate and convert our hearts and make of us credible and courageous witnesses of the glorious Cross of Christ.

My friends, in reminding you that the celebration of this important feast, one that for us is statutory, we apply the spiritual benefits for the dead and the living of the Plenary indulgence granted by the Holy Father Pope Francis to the Constantinian Order, I invite the Priors and Chaplains to assist the Knights and Dames in achieving an increasingly profound understanding and implementation of this important spiritual gift. May you never tire of repeating, daily, with your lips but especially with your heart and your life, the prayer of the liturgy: *We adore you oh Christ, and we bless you for with your Cross you have redeemed the world.*

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