



## SACRO MILITARE ORDINE COSTANTINIANO DI SAN GIORGIO

IL GRAN PRIORE

Dear Knights and Dames,

We are approaching the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, that will be celebrated on September 14<sup>th</sup>. For each one of us it represents one of the most important feasts and we are asked to celebrate it with devotion and solemnity in our beloved Constantinian Order of Saint George.

I would like to recall Pope John Paul II's words regarding the Cross' salvation mystery: "*the Cross contains in itself the mystery of salvation, because, in the Cross, Love is lifted up. This is the lifting up of Love to the supreme point in the history of the world: in the Cross Love is lifted up and the Cross is at the same time lifted up through Love. And from the height of the Cross, love comes down to us. Yes: "The Cross is the most profound condescension of God to man . . . The Cross is like a touch of eternal love upon the most painful wounds of man's existence" (Dives in Misericordia, 8).*

God's love for mankind is the key to interpret *Mysterium Crucis*. The Cross does not make sense if it is considered outside the dimension of love: actually it would not save anyone in that case!

According to the Gospel, Jesus proposes a challenging itinerary to his disciples: "*Jesus said to his disciples: and he who does not take his cross and come after me is not good enough for me. He who has the desire to keep his life will have it taken from him, and he who gives up his life because of me will have it given back to him.* (Matthew 10,38ss).

Following Christ's examples means to embrace our sufferings and to undertake an awkward path. This path is not related to success or ephemeral glory, but it leads to true freedom with no sin nor selfishness. It is about denying the frivolous mentality according to which our "ego" and our material interests are the focus of our lives. So when we lose our life for Christ and his Gospel, we will get it renewed, fulfilled and authentic.

Pope Francis warned the faithful about "courteous demons" as he celebrated mass at Santa Marta on Friday 13 October. Such demons are well camouflaged and with impeccable manners they cunningly suggest temptations and seductions, resulting in "parlour possessions". The Pope advised the faithful to respond to them with "vigilance", through "prayer, examination of conscience and acts of charity", in order to avoid falling into "worldliness". Francis also extended the invitation to look towards the "crucified Christ" and give up the comfort of being "lukewarm Christians".

The Cross we show on our banners and cloaks is not just a simple and old decoration, but it severely recalls a more and more committed testimony of Christ and an invitation to Christian coherence, which is plausible, courageous and effective.

To testify charity is essential for Knights and Dames of the Constantinian Order! Charity pushes us to love God and the others as we love ourselves and becomes authentic through small and big supportive actions that must be increased in order to help more and more suffering brothers and sisters. This means defending his Cross!

I would like to conclude by recalling that we must not forget spiritual merciful actions. We should follow and carry out them (for example, to give advice to doubtful people, to give lessons to unaware people, to support the afflicted, to forgive the others, to pray God for the living and for the dead). Regarding these actions and in particular to the latter, I am recalling the application of the special Indulgence Pope Francis granted the Constantinian Order, with its spiritual benefits for the living's wellness and the dead's rest.

Let's embrace Apostle Paul's words: "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*" (Gal 2,20).

Cardinale Renato Raffaele Martino

Gran Priore del  
SMOCSG