



SACRO MILITARE ORDINE COSTANTINIANO DI SAN GIORGIO

IL GRAN PRIORE

Dear Knights and Dames,

Holy Easter is not only the most important holiday for Christians, but the pivot of faith itself. The term etymologically means "passage". This is the mystery of the passage from death to life of Jesus Christ. The date is mobile because it depends on the full moon of spring, while its origin is related to the Jewish world, especially the Passover holiday, during which the passage of Israel was celebrated, across the Red Sea from the slavery of Egypt to freedom, an image from the Old Testament on the resurrection of Christ.

A surprising fact is that Mary Magdalene and some women who, according to Jewish law were unable to testify, testify the resurrection announced by the angels as announced in the Gospels; it is a sign of absolute novelty and the overcoming of old patterns and discriminations. The gospel is always and exactly that: a new and irrepressible force, capable of renewing and recapitulating in Christ the history of people and populations, in the succession of ages and times until parousia.

Therefore, a special thought goes to women, to our dear sisters, with the invitation to be, also in the Order, ever more protagonists of Christian witness and active charity.

I invite everyone to a careful and authentic preparation of Easter, participating, purified through the sacrament of reconciliation, in the rites of Holy Week and especially in the Easter Vigil.

According to St. Augustine, it is "the mother of all the holy vigils during which the whole world and the universe watch over". During this night, the Church celebrates

the resurrection of Christ by baptizing new children and asking those who have already received it to solemnly renew their commitments.

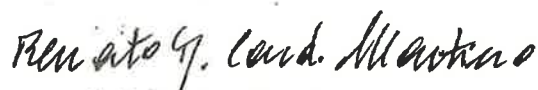
Four successive moments mark the rite of the sacred night: (1) the liturgy of the Light, which begins with the blessing of the new fire, the preparation and lighting of the Easter candle "light of Christ" and the procession with which it is introduced into the dark church, lit only by the candles of the faithful lit on the Easter candle. (2) The solemn announcement of Easter, also called *Exsultet*. The Liturgy of the Word with nine readings, seven from the Old Testament and the last two from the New, with the joyful hymn *Glory to God in the highest* and the sound of the bells, and before the Gospel, the chant *Hallelujah*, suspended at the time of Lent. (3) the baptismal liturgy; and (4) the Eucharistic liturgy.

The liturgy of Easter, in order to emphasize its importance, lasts eight days and on April 23rd, Tuesday of the eighth day of Easter, we will celebrate the feast of our patron Saint George: each saint is an icon of the commandment of love towards God and towards the others and the newness of life introduced by the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord. May the example of the holy martyr George, a courageous knight of Christ, inspire us and also help us to be joyous and credible witnesses of the Cross and of the resurrection of the Lord.

Dear Knights and Dames, even this year, on Easter Sunday I will have the joy and honor of being with our beloved Pope Francis to announce to the whole world, from the blessing box of St. Peter's Basilica, in my role of Protodeacon of the Holy Roman Church, the blessing *Urbi et Orbi*. You will be able to watch me through the media and I assure you that I will bring all your joys, your sorrows, your fatigues and your hopes in my heart and in my prayer by imploring serenity, peace and blessing on the whole church and on our Order.

Today we hear these words addressed to us, which were pronounced by the angel to reassure the tired and frightened hearts of women on Easter morning: "Do not be afraid! [...] He is risen" (Mt 28,5-6) and we are too messengers and witnesses of the Good News as they were.

Happy Easter!



Cardinale Renato Raffaele Martino
Gran Priore del SMOCSG