



## SACRO MILITARE ORDINE COSTANTINIANO DI SAN GIORGIO

### IL GRAN PRIORE

Vatican City, September 14 2024

Dear Knights and Dames, this year I would like to introduce the message for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross with some historical notes that, by taking us back to the origins of today's celebration, can help us grasp its value and relevance.

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, celebrated on September 14, commemorates two major events that occurred in the 4th century: the finding of the True Cross by Saint Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, and the consecration of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, built on the site of its discovery. However, without forgetting the additional Basilica desired in Rome by Saint Helena herself, the current Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, which the Holy Empress wanted to be built by transforming part of her imperial palace, the Sessorium, into a place of worship. The basilica was dedicated to the Cross of Christ, and the name "in Jerusalem" reflects the fact that the floor of the original church had been covered with earth from Golgotha. This earth, together with the notable relics of the Passion, including the Cross of Christ itself, was brought by Saint Helena on her return from her pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

These facts, certainly also linked to the ancient origins of the Constantinian Order, inspired me to choose the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome) as the most appropriate and natural location for the investitures and future celebrations of the Order, and it is in their light that I would like to draw and offer you some food for spiritual reflection.

The Cross, originally an instrument of torture and death, has become the central symbol of the Christian Faith, representing Christ's victory over sin and death. In this context, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is an invitation to contemplate the Christian paradox: what seemed like a defeat, the ignominious Death of Jesus, has become the source of salvation and hope for humanity.

The Cross is not only a symbol of suffering, but above all of unconditional love. In the liturgy of this feast, the Gospel of John (3:13-17) is proclaimed, in which Jesus Himself states: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself". The Cross, therefore, is the meeting point between Heaven and earth, between God and man, and becomes the place where God's love manifests itself in its most sublime form. Reflecting on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross means recognizing that all suffering, if united with that of Christ, can become a means of redemption. The exalted Cross reminds us that we are never alone in the trials of life, but that we can find strength and comfort in the Passion of Christ. Furthermore, it invites us to follow the example of Jesus, who accepted the Cross with love and obedience, thus transforming pain into glory.

On this feast that ideally brings us back to Jerusalem, we must feel the urgency of prayer for peace in the Holy Land and throughout the world. Pope Francis never tires of calling all believers and all people of good will to pray so that the Crucified and Risen Lord may give His Peace to the world: “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them: ‘Peace be with you!’” (John 20:19).

At a recent meeting to pray for peace in the Holy Land, Pope Francis addressed those present with these words: “Brothers and sisters, we are here today in order to pray for peace. Let us ask God for this, as a gift of his mercy. Indeed, peace is not made only by written agreements or by human and political compromises. It is born from transformed hearts, and arises when each of us has encountered and been touched by God’s love, which dissolves our selfishness, shatters our prejudices and grants us the taste and joy of friendship, fraternity and mutual solidarity. There can be no peace if we do not let God himself first disarm our hearts, making them hospitable, compassionate and merciful. These are the attributes of God: hospitable closeness, compassion and mercy. God is near, compassionate and merciful. (June 7, 2024)

Inspired by these words of the Pope, I invite all the Knights and Dames of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order to become builders of peace, giving the insignia they wear the only true value and meaning that they must have; no one should feel powerless or excluded from this process of peacemaking, that begins with the Prince of Peace, truly transforming the world and the hearts of those who welcome Him. After all, the Risen One did not deliver His message to the powerful but to the poor and the humble, to the least ones, to a handful of frightened and timid apostles who nevertheless, with Grace and the gift of the Spirit, have become witnesses of hope and builders of a new humanity. That of the civilization of love.

Finally, I ask that in all the Delegations of our Constantinian Order, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross be solemnly celebrated, and that these celebrations be accompanied by works of charity and mercy, while for my part I implore the Lord's blessing upon the Grand Master, upon all of you and your loved ones.

Marcello Cardinal Semeraro

La Croce esaltata ci ricorda che non siamo mai soli nelle prove della vita, ma che possiamo trovare forza e conforto nella passione di Cristo. Inoltre, ci invita a seguire l'esempio di Gesù, che ha accettato la Croce con amore e obbedienza, trasformando così il dolore in gloria.

In questa festa che idealmente ci riporta a Gerusalemme, dobbiamo sentire l'urgenza della preghiera per la pace in Terra Santa e in tutto il mondo. Papa Francesco non si stanca di richiamare tutti i credenti e tutte le persone di buona volontà ad elevare preghiere perché il Signore crocifisso e risorto doni al mondo la sua Pace: - *La sera di quello stesso giorno, il primo dopo il sabato, mentre erano chiuse le porte del luogo dove si trovavano i discepoli per timore dei Giudei, venne Gesù, si fermò in mezzo a loro e disse: «Pace a voi!»* - (Gv. 20,19).

In un recente incontro di preghiera per la pace in Terra Santa Papa Francesco si rivolgeva ai presenti con queste parole: *Fratelli e sorelle, oggi siamo qui per invocare la pace. La chiediamo a Dio come dono della sua misericordia. La pace, infatti, non si fa soltanto sugli accordi di carta o sui tavoli dei compromessi umani e politici. Essa nasce da cuori trasformati, sorge quando ciascuno di noi viene raggiunto e toccato dall'amore di Dio, che scioglie i nostri egoismi, frantuma i nostri pregiudizi e ci dona il gusto e la gioia dell'amicizia, della fraternità, della solidarietà reciproca. Non ci può essere pace se prima non lasciamo che Dio stesso disarmi il nostro cuore, per renderlo ospitale, compassionevole e misericordioso.* (7 giugno 2024).

Appellandomi alle parole del Papa, invito tutti i Cavalieri e le Dame del Sacro Militare Ordine Costantiniano a farsi costruttori di pace, dando alle insegne che indossano l'unico vero valore e significato che queste devono avere; nessuno si deve sentire impotente o escluso da questo processo di pacificazione che parte dal Principe della Pace per trasformare davvero il mondo e il cuore di chi lo accoglie. Del resto il Risorto non ha consegnato il Suo messaggio ai potenti ma ai poveri e agli umili, agli ultimi, ad un manipolo di apostoli impauriti e pavidetti che tuttavia, con Grazia e il dono dello Spirito, sono diventati testimoni di speranza e costruttori di un nuovo umanesimo. Quello della civiltà dell'amore.

Raccomando infine che in tutte le Delegazioni del nostro Ordine Costantiniano, venga solennizzata la festa della Esaltazione della Santa Croce e che le celebrazioni siano accompagnate da opere di carità e di misericordia, mentre da parte mia imploro sul Gran Maestro, su tutti voi e i vostri cari la benedizione del Signore.

Marcello Card. Semeraro