



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER
OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM**

Clementine Hall

Friday, 5 December 2008

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Members of the Grand Magisterium and Lieutenants,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am pleased to greet and give my cordial welcome to the Knights, to the Ladies and to the Ecclesiastics who represent the [Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem](#). In particular I greet Cardinal John Patrick Foley, Grand Master of the Order, and I thank him for the kind words that, also in the name of all of you, he has just addressed to me. I also greet the Great Prior, His Beatitude Fouad Twal, Patriarch of Jerusalem for Latins. Through each one of you I wish, moreover, that the expression of my esteem and recognition arrives to all who comprise your worthy Sodality, spread in many parts of the world.

The reason you have gathered here in Rome is the "world consultation", which every five years provides for the meeting of the Lieutenants, the magisterial delegates and the members of the grand magisterium to evaluate the situation of the Catholic community in the Holy Land, the activity underway by the Order and to establish directives for the future. In thanking you for your visit I wish to manifest my lively appreciation especially for the initiatives of fraternal solidarity that the [Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem](#) for many years continues to promote in favour of the Holy Places. Thus the "Honour Guard" came into being for the custody of the Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord. Your Equestrian Order has enjoyed a singular attention on the part of the Roman Pontiffs, who have given it the spiritual and juridical instruments necessary to fulfil your own specific service. Bl. Pius IX in 1847 re-established it to favour the recomposition of a Catholic faith community in the Holy Land, no longer entrusting the custody on Christ's Tomb to the force of

arms, but to the authority of a constant witness of faith and charity toward Christians resident in those lands. More recently, the Servant of God Pius XII, of happy memory, conferred to your Sodality juridical personhood, thus making its presence and work, within the Church and in regard to nations, more official and solid.

Dear brothers and sisters, an ancient and glorious bond links your knightly Sodality to the Holy Sepulchre of Christ, where in a completely singular way the glory of his death and Resurrection is celebrated. Precisely this constitutes the pivotal centre of your spirituality. Jesus Christ crucified and Risen is therefore the centre of your existence and of your every project and programme, personal or collective. Let yourselves be guided and sustained by his redeeming power to live deeply the mission that you are called to carry out, to offer an eloquent Gospel witness, to be builders, in our time, of a solid hope founded on the Risen Lord's presence, who, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, guides and sustains the efforts of those who dedicate themselves to the edification of a new humanity inspired by the Gospel values of justice, love and peace.

What need the Land of Jesus has for justice and peace! Continue to work for this and do not tire in asking, with the *Prayer of the Knights and the Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre*, that as soon as possible these aspirations may come to completion. Ask the Lord to make you "convinced and sincere ambassadors of peace and love among your brethren", ask him to make fruitful, with the power of his love, your constant work to support the ardent desire for peace in those communities weighed down by a climate of uncertainty and danger in the last years. To that dear Christian population, who continue to suffer due to the political, economic and social crisis in the Middle East, made even worse with the escalating world situation, I address an affectionate thought, bearing a special testimony of my spiritual closeness to so many of our brothers in the faith who are forced to emigrate. How can one fail to share the sorrow of that sorely tried community? How can one not thank, at the same time, you who have worked so generously to come to their aid? In these days of Advent, while we prepare for the Christmas festivities, the gaze of our faith is directed toward Bethlehem, where the Son of God is born in a poor grotto. Next the heart's eye is directed to all the other places sanctified by our Redeemer's passing. We ask Mary, who has given the world the Saviour, to make her maternal protection felt by our brothers and sisters who live there and who daily face many difficulties. We also ask her to encourage you and those, who with God's help, want to and can contribute to build of a world of justice and peace.

Dear Knights and dear Ladies, nurture within yourselves the atmosphere of Advent, keeping your hearts alert in waiting for the Lord who comes, so that you can encounter him in the events of each day and recognize and serve him especially in the poor and suffering. May the Virgin of Nazareth, who in a few days time we will invoke with the title of the Immaculate Conception, assist you in your mission of watching over with love upon the places that saw the Divine Redeemer pass "doing good works and healing all who were in the grip of the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10: 38).

With these sentiments I gladly impart to all my Blessing.

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