



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER
OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM***

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 13 September 2013*

Video

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers,
Members of the Grand Magisterium and Lieutenants,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I extend my warm welcome to all of you, who represent the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. In particular I greet Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, Grand Master of the Order, and I thank him for the words that he addressed to me on behalf of you all. I greet the Grand Prior, H.B. Fouad Twal, Patriarch of Jerusalem for Latins.

You are gathered in Rome for the Order's World Consultation which takes place every five years to reflect on the situation of the Catholic Community in the Holy Land, to evaluate the achievements and determine directives for the future. At the same time the International Pilgrimage is taking place with more than 2,000 participants. I thank you for coming and wish to express my appreciation and my encouragement for the initiatives of solidarity that the Order fosters in the Holy Places and that in recent years have been further developed and broadened. In this Year of Faith, your pilgrimage to the Tomb of the Apostle Peter is marked by prayer and catecheses on the theme of faith. Starting with these elements, I would like to let my thoughts be guided by three words, that I already presented at the start of my ministry as Bishop of Rome, but that can also offer motives for reflection for your Order's activity. The three words are: to journey, to build and to confess.

1. *To journey*. You are living the experience of pilgrimage, which is a great symbol of human and Christian life. Each one of us can either be a “wanderer” or a “pilgrim”. The time in which we live sees so many people who are “wanderers”, because they lack an ideal life and often are unable to make sense of what is happening in the world. With the sign of pilgrimage, you show the will not to be “wanderers”. Your journey is through history, in a world whose confines are always broadening, barriers are being broken down and our journey is connected ever more closely to the journey of others. You are witnesses of the profound meaning, of the light that faith brings; may you preserve the great riches of values, of wisdom of the past, while living intensely in the present, committing yourselves to today with your gaze on the future, opening the horizons of hope through your work to give society a more human face.

2. And now the second word: *to build*. To journey in order to build a community, above all with love. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem has an almost thousand-year history: yours is one of the oldest charitable Orders that is still active. Established by the Custody of the Holy Sepulchre, it has enjoyed the special attention of the Bishop of Rome. To build with charity, with compassion, with love. In fact your pilgrimage has a charitable purpose, to benefit our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, especially those most in need, who are living through a time of suffering, tension and fear. With great affection I send them a greeting and an embrace, to all — Christian and non-Christian — assuring them of my daily prayer.

3. However your journey to build is born of *confessing* in an ever deeper way the faith; it grows from continued commitment to nourish your spiritual life, from permanent formation to an ever more authentic and consistent Christian life. This is an important point for each one of you and for the Order as a whole, so that each person is helped to deepen his adherence to Christ: the profession of faith and the testimony of charity are closely connected and are the strong key points that qualify your action. An ancient bond ties you to the Holy Sepulchre, the perennial memorial of Christ Crucified who was laid there and of the Risen Christ who conquered death. May Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen truly be the centre of your life and of each of your personal and group projects. To believe in the redemptive power of the Cross and the Resurrection to offer hope and peace. In a special way, the Land of Jesus needs it very much! The faith does not distance us from the responsibilities that we are all called to assume, but, on the contrary, it urges and impels us to concrete undertakings for a better society.

May the Lord help you always to be firm, sincere ambassadors of peace and love among brothers. It will be he who makes your work fruitful. May the Virgin of Nazareth help you in your mission to look after with love the Places where Christ lived, healing and blessing “all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). May you also be accompanied by my blessing, which I impart to you and to the entire Order.

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