



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Grand Master made his solemn entrance into the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem



Tuesday, May 10, the Grand Master made his solemn entrance into the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The event had been postponed several times due to the global health crisis. We can read here the reflection he shared at this very important moment.

A pilgrimage to Jerusalem is always a gift from God. This is how it was for the Jewish faithful; it is how it was for Jesus. But how is it for us? Moreover, what is the meaning of this special place for us?

Let me borrow a biblical analogy, I would say a Christological one, from the book of Exodus (chapters 33-34) to answer that question.

The Book of Exodus narrates that Moses, who on Mount Tabor together with Elijah conversed with the Lord, one day said to the LORD: "Show me your glory!" (Ex 33:18). The Almighty then promised to make his goodness pass and show it, and he will be gracious to those to whom he will be gracious and show mercy on those on whom he will show mercy. Then he added: "But you cannot see my face" (Ex 33:20). Then he said again to Moses: "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen." (Ex 33:21-23)

These words depicted the mystery of the cross and death of Christ. He, too, will be placed on a rock and then placed in the cleft carved into the rock. A cavity will be covered, the tomb of Joseph of

Arimathea, and, like God's protective hand over Moses, a stone will be rolled away at dawn on the third day. The glory of God will then appear in the Risen Lord in the eyes of the unbelieving disciples.

Here, in this very place, the glory of the Risen Lord will reappear in the faith of the believer: Blessed are those who, without seeing, will believe!

This is today the meaning of making ourselves pilgrims.

Those who live in Jerusalem have the task, I would say the spiritual duty, of witnessing to and telling us about the mystery of God's glory manifested in Jesus.

But we, we come here, as Francis of Assisi used to say, to "see and touch" the Lord: to see his footsteps, to hear his words, to touch the place where he was laid, according to the same encouraging words of the angel: "come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell...: He has been raised from the dead!" (Mt 28:6-7). He is where God saved us!

You, dear brothers and sisters, children of this "Mother Church" of Jerusalem, have the mission of the angel who encourages us to see where the Lord had been placed.

Thank you for this service to our faithful brothers and sisters throughout the world and in particular to our brothers and sisters - Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre.

We come today in the silence of faith to draw from this well of living water, where we discover "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex 34:6-7)

We come as pilgrims to discover this mystery. Here is the whole meaning of our pilgrimage, of coming to this place.

Here every Knight and Dame who loves this place knows that they draw the meaning of their dignity and will carry with them for a lifetime the memory of their faith in the risen Christ.

Amen!

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

Grand Master

(May 10, 2022)

Meditation by the Grand Master on the occasion of the Holy Mass celebrated at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem



Dear Brothers and Sisters

What an emotion!

We are here in front of the site where human piety had laid the mangled and lifeless body of the Crucified One. Here every expectation and every hope of those who had followed and loved him seemed to come to an end. Every tomb, in fact, is the conclusion of human life.

Here at the site where we are now gathered, the remaining few disciples of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the women who had taken final care of his body exchanged their last glances, shed their last tears, and said their last anguished words to one another. The evangelist Matthew recalls that *"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb"* (Mt 27:61 NABRE). Then they rolled the stone and departed.

The Master's body had remained in the peace of death, in the darkness of the sepulcher and of the night's descent.

As they departed, each carried sad thoughts, not unlike those that accompany every burial; but here there was also the heartbreak of the unjust death of a good man, not a wrongdoer, and this made it even more atrocious.

The body of the *"Son of Man"* (Dn 7, 13), according to the word of the Creator, *"You are dust, and to dust you shall return!"* (Gen 3, 19), remained lifeless in the tomb. It was the conclusion of everything.

But the Eternal One, to whom Jesus had entrusted his life before breathing his last, wanted the trust placed in him not to be extinguished by death. In truth, Jesus had always proclaimed his hope in the Almighty, in his Father, and he had asked it of his disciples: *"Have faith in God; have faith also in me"* (Jn 14:1). He had also proclaimed: *"I am [...] the life"* (Jn 14:6). Now what was the meaning of his death, his end? Could it have all been a deception?

To think otherwise does not belong to human reasoning. In fact, Jesus, by assuming human nature, had accepted the path of his own existence till death, even if bitter and seemingly hopeless, all the way to the grave.

Yet, did Jesus' faith seem to be dead together with him in the tomb, in the silence related to human frailty that bears with it the death of the "*Son of Man*" (Dan 7:13)?

In front of this Sepulcher, we learn faith. The silence of faith. Here we do not discover the silence of God, but the silence of faith. We are, however, before the mystery that transforms a place of decay into a groove of life.

Three days of this!

Then "*after the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.*" (Mt 28:1) and we, existentially, with them! The tomb is empty.

This is where the first announcement was made: Who are you looking for? The Lord is risen!

Jesus meets his own, helps them to overcome the distress, pacifies them in spirit; he is with them, gives them peace; he is the Living One.

In front of this Place, Holy because the holiness of God was made manifest in an unprecedented way, we, I repeat, learn faith. We meet the living Jesus in the faith and in the sacramental grace of the Eucharist, where he has chosen to continue to be, in a mysterious way, among us and in history. "*I am [...] life*" (Jn 14:6), he said. Not many commentaries or reasonings are necessary to convince.

We are left, either like Mary of Magdala, to answer "*Rabbouni, [...] Teacher*" (Jn 20:16); or like Thomas: "*My Lord and my God!*" (Jn 20:28). Nothing else to say!

The Eucharist that we celebrate today in this Holy Sepulcher is not a rite for a deceased person, but the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord who is given to us as a living gift: "*I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.*" (Jn 6:51).

I would like these to be the sentiments that accompany us in this celebration, in which all our Knights and Dames, relatives and friends are spiritually present.

Jesus is risen, Jesus is the Living One in the Eucharist, and I have met the Risen One. Amen!

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

Grand Master

(May 11, 2022)