



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Way of the Cross of the members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

Good Friday, April 10, 2020



Introduction

In this spring 2020, fear of a deadly virus reigns throughout the earth and thousands of families are in mourning. More than ever we find ourselves at the foot of the Cross of Christ and, as Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, we want to join in prayer this Good Friday, convinced that this terrible ordeal we are facing is an opportunity to deepen our faith and concretely witness to it. In our prayers we also remember the other situations of suffering related to the ongoing conflicts which affect us less directly perhaps, and we ask God to grant the world healing and peace.

I Station

Jesus is condemned to death

"Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin" From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."(John 19:9-12)

Have I not often found myself in this crowd crying out its submission to established power, at the expense of my conscience? Now that death comes among us, as I observe it closer at hand, I wish to confess in front of my brothers and sisters all my betrayals towards the Lord, for which I feel guilty. A

friend of power and honours, I have often delivered Christ myself, out of cowardice or pride! Forgive me, Lord, make of me, a member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, a true disciple of your crownless royalty, a true witness of your Kingdom of love and brotherhood.

Our Father ...

II Station

Jesus takes up his Cross

“‘Here is your king,’ Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, ‘Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!’ ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ Pilate asked. ‘We have no king but Caesar,’ the chief priests answered. Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).” (John 19:14-17)

I look at you Jesus, burdened with your cross, you, the Word of God made flesh, the living Word of the Father of Heaven who gives life to all Creation. You have chosen to reach the most afflicted men by sharing the fate of the condemned. Today, in this tragic situation that traverses the world, you are next to us. Your Presence draws closer along the Way of the Cross of humanity. As a member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, may I also be willing to carry the cross that is presented to me with courage, following in your steps and without seeking a good reason to flee from reality. I know, deep down in my heart, that it is you who bears this burden, that we are not alone, and that all this suffering, united with yours, becomes a source of new life.

Our Father ...

III Station

Jesus falls for the first time

*“We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6)*

As a pilgrim of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, in my mind's eye I retrace the path of the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem on this Good Friday. Your passion, Lord, is not an old story. It continues in our world. Jesus, I see you fall under the cross, your bleeding body after being scourged, your head with the crown of thorns. You lack the strength. How many people no longer have the strength to go on in hospitals, destroyed by suffering, intubated, struggling for breath with oxygen ... Forgive us for the negligence in the prevention of this disease. With all those sick and seriously affected by the Coronavirus and for them, we pray. For your sufferings, O Christ, that all humanity can be freed from the evil that oppresses it.

Our Father ...

IV Station

Jesus meets his mother

“Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end»». (Luke 1:30-33).

On the Way of the Cross, you are also there, Mother of Christ. You remember the Angel's words on the day of the Annunciation and renew your unconditional "yes", despite the tragedy that is unfolding before your eyes. The Son of the Lord meets your gaze full of tears and tenderness. Lend us your gaze Mary, so that we too can be witnesses of hope in situations that seem hopeless to us. Our Lady of Palestine, Patroness of our Order, we entrust to you the most disadvantaged people in the Holy Land, especially during these days of pandemic. Knights and Dames, we want to increasingly become men and women of your "yes", Blessed Virgin, always ready to serve and offer comfort to the people who are in need and in whom we recognize your Son, the suffering Christ.

Our Father ...

V Station

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

“As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.”(Luke 23:26-27)

We were chosen as members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, not to be showered with decorations but to help you carry the cross, Lord Jesus. Sometimes we forget it but the embossed cross that adorns our cloaks is there to remind us of this vocation. Support all members of the Order and our leaders in this mission. Like Simon of Cyrene, also a foreigner in the Holy Land, we want to continue taking care of the people who suffer in the land where you lived and where you gave your life for us. We also pray to you, widening our gaze, for those next to us who need help, in our cities, on our streets, in our parishes; for the sick, the elderly, people who are alone and made even more vulnerable in this situation. Open our eyes and make us receptive to requests for solidarity. Carrying each other's burdens (*Galatians 6:2*), we will fulfil your law, O Christ, our Brother!

Our Father ...

VI Station

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew 25:40)

Lord, sustain all of the members of the Order who work in the healthcare. May these Dames and Knights, engaged in the medical field, be, like Veronica, real "icons" of God's tenderness. May our prayers encompass nurses, doctors, hospital staff and all those who act courageously to protect and take care of our sick brothers and sisters. What they do, they do it to you! We give thanks for their heroic testimony during the Coronavirus epidemic. Allow us to always privilege service to people over profit, to consider our work - whatever it may be - as a mission. Allow this crisis to restore a sense of the essential to our materialistic society.

Our Father ...

VII Station

Jesus falls for the second time

"Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,

and he will divide the spoils with the strong,

because he poured out his life unto death,

and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,

and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12)

Each of your falls, Lord, is an invitation to rise again with you, to never allow ourselves to be discouraged, even when situations seem desperate. In this time of crisis, after weeks of confinement, many in the world have lost their jobs and no longer have a salary. We ask you to help us see what we can actually do for these people. Many risk losing their dignity due to the economic crisis that will come. Be beside them with your loving presence in this "fall" and inspire all the members of the Order so that we are tools to help many people to rise again, especially in the Holy Land, where whole families depend on our help. You, Christ, have stripped yourself of everything to save us. Encourage us to "strip" ourselves a little so we can be craftsmen of Salvation in this world where everything changes but where your cross remains firm as a sign of love and peace.

Our Father...

VIII Station

Jesus meets the women

"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children!" (Luke 23:28)

What kind of world are our children growing up in Lord! This moment in time that we are experiencing helps us to better understand why you weep over all the women in the world and their children. We wholeheartedly pray to you especially for parents, fathers and mothers, of the Holy Land and also for parents of all continents who are aware of the difficulties of future generations. Knights and Dames

of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, we want to support love everywhere within the home, as the source of humanity's profound equilibrium, and first of all to realize within our families the universal vocation that you have entrusted to us. We teach our children respect for nature and life, we are like the pioneers of a new humanity that will take shape after this universal war against a virus in which we all, in one way or another, are committed.

Our Father...

IX Station

Jesus falls the third time

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mind set as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:5-8)

Teach us to follow and imitate you, Jesus. When you fall for the third time, you reach the lowest depths of our human condition. How many people can no longer withstand life's difficulties! Thank you Lord because you are with us every day, "until the end of the world" (*Matthew 28:20*). This pandemic is killing thousands of humans, often the most fragile, in dire conditions. It is time for the Dames and the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre to believe in all your love power, to manifest it, to bring light where there is darkness. We want to make the flame of faith shine in this tried world, to be humble servants of your Presence among the men and women of this time together.

Our Father ...

X Station

Jesus is stripped of his garments

"And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." (Matthew 27:35)

Jesus, your tunic sewn in one piece has not been torn, the soldiers have drawn lots on it. This has been interpreted as a sign of the unity of the Church, this unity to which we want to contribute. As Knights and Dames, when the time of great celebrations returns in our parishes, inspire us gestures that promote unity and, while we wait, help us to strip ourselves of our self-love and our desire for power. Make this period of isolation to which many of us are forced, serve our spiritual growth so that with a "naked" soul we can enter into relationship with your Father, our Father, in a growing awareness that together we all – in an invisible way - form your mystical Body, the only Church of earth and heaven. Many of us cannot communicate in your sacramental body but, despite this, we are united. Teach us Lord spiritual communion.

Our Father...

XI Station

Jesus is nailed to the cross

“One of the criminals who hung their hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise’.” (Luke 23:39-43)

When we go on pilgrimage to the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, at the foot of Golgotha - next to the empty sepulchre - we relive your Passion for us, Lord. During those hours in which you suffer on the cross, we are with the women and the apostle John. We look at you; we listen to your last words. Knights and Dames, our mission is to keep this treasure in our hearts to make it a gift to those around us. You show us that it is not the virtuous efforts that save us but the faith in your infinite Mercy, that tireless forgiveness that you offer to saint Dismas, the good thief, in whom we would like to recognize ourselves one day. We thank you for the shepherds of the people of God who continue to manifest your Mercy today. We pray for Pope Francis who ceaselessly appeals to pastoral creativity in this period in which we no longer have access to the sacraments. Protect our Grand Priors, our Priors, our priests and give them the inspiration of your Holy Spirit to guide us in this twilight darkness that we are passing through.

Our Father ...

XII Station

Jesus dies on the cross

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (John 19:30)

You deliver the Spirit. From your pierced heart, blood and water poured forth, source of life for me, for us. I bear the sign of your five wounds on my cloak, I remember this sign commemorates Your Passion. How do I witness the immense fruitfulness of your wounds? As Knights and Dames, are we truly lucid regarding the commitment we have made? Do we live this great mystery of love consistently? As Easter approaches, we want to receive your Holy Spirit in prayer, this Spirit who urges us to love and serve, not only our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land but all our brothers and sisters in humanity. Lord Jesus, we pray to you: give us your Spirit of light so that, with our acts of love, we can from now participate in the Trinitarian life towards which you draw us in eternity, with the Father. In your presence, our night knows no darkness.

Our Father...

XIII Station

Jesus is taken down from the cross

“It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.” (Mark 15:42-43.46a)

The example of Joseph of Arimathea, influential man of his time, can inspire us as members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. We admire his courage and generosity. It is he who buys that precious sheet, the Holy Shroud, which to this day bears witness to your Passion, Lord Jesus. Let us pray for the same audacity as Joseph and to contribute to honouring, still today, your Body in all the people who suffer in the Holy Land, in the territories of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, especially during this pandemic. We think of all the elderly who, everywhere in the world, die without the deeply human accompaniment of a Christian funeral because of the Coronavirus. We entrust their souls to you, Jesus, welcome them to Heaven. We also pray for their families who could not be by their side. Thank you Lord for revealing to us the fatherhood of God and His infinite love for each of us, living and dead, all members of the Communion of Saints.

Our Father...

XIV Station

Jesus is placed in the tomb

"It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment." (Luke 23:54-56)

Time seems to stand still when the Lord is placed in the sepulchre. Time is suspended, nothing really matters. This is what we are experiencing in this Lent, a lot of us being confined to our homes, without the possibility of making plans, waiting. However, seeing the reaction of the women who followed you, we understand that even now actions of solidarity are possible. They prepared aromas and perfumes and we ... what do we prepare? Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, we do not want to remain with our arms folded before the drama that humanity is experiencing. Let us find, wherever we may be, gestures of hope that we can make. Help us believe that there is always a new morning. During the Vigil of Arms, when we entered the Order, we symbolically received the sword for combat. Let us remember that it is the "sword of the Spirit", that is, the Word of God (*Ephesians 6:17*). Help us Lord to put your Gospel into practice, your living Word.

Our Father...