



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Fifth Gospel



We all greatly appreciated the proposals made by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem to the parishes, communities and all believers in the Holy Land, on the occasion of last Sunday 23rd January, consecrated by Pope Francis to the “Word of God” (in the motu proprio *Aperuit illis*).

Mgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Grand Prior of the Order, who suggested reading the New Testament in its entirety, pointed out the possibility of experiencing this moment as a family, by discussing certain texts with children. The importance of the event could be emphasised through a sign, such as positioning the New Testament in a suitable place, beginning and ending the reading with a prayer, a moment of silence or a song. These suggestions were intended to emphasise the importance of this initiative, but people were free to think of their own ideas.

I believe that, as Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, we could take up this idea of spending more time together with the Word of God, starting this month, February, in preparation for Lent which will begin next month, in spiritual connection with the Holy Land.

During the Synod on the Word of God, in 2008, the expression “the Fifth Gospel” had been used when speaking of the Holy Land, and Pope Benedict XVI had then popularised it, evoking the holy places that we can discover when we nourish ourselves with the Word, before being able to return there in person.

“To make known the Holy Land, means communicating the ‘Fifth Gospel’, that is, the historical and geographical environment in which the Word of God was revealed and incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth, for us and for our salvation” Pope Francis reminded a delegation of journalists from the Custos last January. “There ‘we can see, indeed, tangibly feel that reality of the history that God brought about with men and women; beginning with the places of Abraham’s life and including the places of Jesus’ life, from the incarnation to the empty tomb, the sign of his Resurrection”” he added,

speaking of this Fifth Gospel where “the history and geography of salvation meet and allow us to make a new reading of the biblical text, in particular the Gospel texts.”

As Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, we also know that the Fifth Gospel is the people who live in the Holy Land and who seek to build a fraternal society there, a society to which we contribute through our active solidarity, by our friendship and our prayer. Therefore, let us spend the coming weeks with the Word of God, in the light of the places and faces of the Holy Land that we keep in our hearts!

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

(February 2022)