"The Church wants to be an instrument of peace and mutual understanding"

The words of the Grand Master of the Order at the end of the Solemn Liturgy in Jerusalem on the feast of Mary Mother of God

During his pilgrimage for peace in the Holy Land, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, concelebrated on January 1st a Mass presided over by Patriarch Pizzaballa in the Pro-Cathedral of the Patriarchate, in the presence of numerous faithful who had come to entrust the New Year to the Mother of God on her liturgical feast day. At the end of the celebration, on the day that also marks the 57th World Day of Peace, Cardinal Filoni gave a speech of thanks for the welcome extended to the Order's small delegation during their visit, and then read a prayer for peace addressed to Our Lady of Palestine he had written.

In today's solemn Liturgy, the Church invites us to reflect on the Mystery, so central to our faith: Mary, Mother of God, the incommensurable truth, through which She allowed the Son of God to become part of our humanity.

Furthermore, since the time of Paul VI, the World Day of Peace has been celebrated in the Church on January 1st of each year, marking today its 57th edition.

Peace, as a gift from God, is a fundamental good, the first of all, and for this reason today we are called to seek it and defend it courageously. We cannot resign ourselves to violence.

I am grateful to His Eminence the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, my brother Pierbattista Pizzaballa, for giving me the joy of celebrating these two events with you. I bring with me, on my pilgrimage for Peace, the solidarity and closeness of all our Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre; I am

accompanied by the Governor General of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, and by François Vayne, from our Communications Office.

In such difficult times for the Holy Land and for the whole Church, which has its "*Mother-House*" here, I would like to express to you the great affection and concern of all our Knights and Dames in the world, following the dramatic events that have affected the Israeli and the Palestinian people. The entire population carries unheard suffering.

The Church wants to be an instrument of peace and mutual understanding. For this reason, it invites everyone, through the heartfelt appeals of Pope Francis and the Bishops around the world, to desist from violence, to desire and seek the path of respectful coexistence for those who live in this biblical place, where the divine Revelation originated for Jews, Christians and Muslims. Hatred does not belong to God.

Taking inspiration from today's Solemn Liturgy (Mary's Divine Motherhood) we, Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, and all those who are animated by the same sentiments, would like to ask You, oh Mother!, after having held in your arms the newborn Child, to embrace and hold tightly on your knees the Holy Land, of which You were the chosen Daughter. Please give us peace!

To you, Mother, let us entrust this Land beloved by the Lord so that you may open the hearts and minds of those who are responsible for the peace and harmony of peoples. Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church, show us your benevolent and merciful face.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

(January 1, 2024)