



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's Homily at the Basilica of St. John Lateran

Jubilee Pilgrimage, Rome, October 22, 2025



Dear Knights and Dames,

Here in the Basilica of St John Lateran is the Pope's ecclesiastical seat as Bishop of Rome and Successor of the Apostle Peter.

In this Archbasilica, every new Bishop of Rome proclaims his faith in Christ, the Son of the living God. Their proclamation is just as Peter's at Caesarea Philippi, when, as we have heard in the Gospel, Jesus asked the disciples: *"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"* To Peter's response, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* Jesus conferred upon him primacy among the disciples, making him the leader of the Church (Matthew 16:13–19).

Perhaps astonished by his own response, Peter must have realised—and Jesus confirms it—that the faith he expressed did not stem from human or earthly knowledge, nor from cultural understanding, he being a humble fisherman from the lake, but from the Father "who is in heaven." That is, it is a knowledge that comes "from above."

Yes, faith is always a gift from God that comes to us "from above."

A Knight and a Dame knows well that our Trinitarian faith is truly a gift from God, bestowed upon us through Grace and via the Church.

As Benedict XVI once said, anyone with a clear awareness of their own humanity realises that we are not speaking here of mere theories or empty sentiments. Faith, in fact, has its foundation, its roots, in the human dimension; I repeat: in the human dimension. Neither animals nor celestial beings

possess the gift of faith; therefore, the faith that comes to us from above, through the action of Grace, is intended solely for the human being who either accepts it, rejects it, or as is more often the case, due to their superficiality, ignores it. In assuming humanity, Jesus becomes within the context of our faith the icon, the image of the Father, so that if Christ is the icon of the Father, He is, consequently, the visible image of God made manifest to us.

At Caesarea, in Galilee, Peter understood that all that is entrusted to him in regard to his ministry is the work of Grace and, therefore, was to be carried by him not only to the Community of disciples, but also, and forever, to the Church. It is the very faith of Peter that the Church is called to live and safeguard, under the faithful guidance of the Gospel and under the leadership of the Fisherman of Galilee and His Successors, as they journey through the paths of history. We, as Knights and Dames, are doubly bound to the Church—both as baptised believers, becoming children of God, and as members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, which requires its members to profess the Catholic faith. We are therefore convinced that this Jubilee reaffirms these commitments within us and rekindles our faith.

As Members of the Church, we ask ourselves: what is the Church? It is a communion of people united in faith in Jesus and in His revelation, and at the same time, as Benedict XVI also said, it is the space in which the transcendent Mystery of God meets each one of us and enters into our world.

We thus come to understand the words of the First Letter of Saint Peter, when he wrote to his fellow Christians: *“You are the chosen people, called to proclaim the marvellous works of God”*; and he added: do not fail to draw close to Christ, *“the living stone... so that you too may be built as living stones into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:4–5, 9–10). This is our vocation!

Gathered in this historic Archbasilica of Rome, we feel both the honour and the responsibility, during this Holy Jubilee, to rekindle our faith, our hope, and our charity, and to give them substance in our daily lives. We also need to recognise, as Members of the Church and of our Order, the nobility of our vocation, rooted in Christ crucified and risen, who as our Statutes remind us, does not hesitate to point out certain paths for us to follow: through *personal renunciations*, detachment from the emptiness of many of our interests, generosity towards the Holy Land and our local Churches, and courage in promoting justice and peace. We are aware of how we participate in the *solicitude* of the Pope for the Christian presence in the Land of Jesus, while we foster mutual understanding among peoples, dialogue, forgiveness, and reconciliation as the foundations for peaceful coexistence among all peoples in the Holy Land.

With these sentiments, I wish each of you to experience this holy jubilee day in fullness and joy.

Amen.