

REFLECTIONS ON

THE HOUSE WAS FILLED
WITH THE FRAGRANCE
OF THE PERFUME

*A Spirituality of the
Order of the Holy Sepulchre*

By

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Equestrian Order *of the* Holy Sepulchre *of* Jerusalem

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The Spirituality of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

The spirituality of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is centered on an individual commitment to personal spiritual development and a collective endeavor supporting the Church and Christian people in the Holy Land and across the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem — a jurisdiction which includes Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Cyprus.

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem is now the diocesan archbishop of Latin Catholics of the *Catholic Archdiocese of Jerusalem* and has jurisdiction for all Latin Church Catholics in Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Cyprus.

The EOHSJ is a lay association of men and women within the Catholic Church. Its members are dedicated to:

- Personal sanctification: Members are called to live their vocation daily, and to increase their personal sanctification.
- Supporting the Christian community: Members support the Christian community in the Holy Land and across the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which includes Cyprus, Jordan, and the Holy Land.
- Fidelity to the Catholic Church: Members are faithful to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Mission of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

The Order's aim's are:

- To strengthen in its members the practice of Christian life, in absolute fidelity to the Supreme Pontiff and according to the teachings of the Church, observing as its foundation the principles of charity which make the Order a fundamental means of assistance to the Holy Land;

- To sustain and aid the charitable, cultural and social works and institutions of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, particularly those of and in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, with which the Order maintains traditional ties;
- To support the preservation and propagation of the Faith in those lands, and promote interest in this work not only among Catholics scattered throughout the world, who are united in charity by the symbol of the Order, but also among all other Christians; and
- To uphold the rights of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is the only lay institution of the Vatican State charged with the task of providing for the needs of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and of all the activities and initiatives to support the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

What it means to be a Member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

Joining the Order means taking on a commitment for life. The commitment to be a Witness to the Faith, to lead an exemplary Christian life of continuing charity in support of the Christian communities in the Holy Land, to practice the true charitable commitment of a Christian.

The purpose of joining the Order is to serve the Catholic Church and to carry out acts of charity to make the operations to maintain the Christian presence in the Holy Land possible. The purpose of joining the Order is not to become a member of a prestigious organization in order to boast of one's status or acquire personal benefits and advantages.

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Knights and Dames
Equestrian Order for the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem
Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF

Her Excellency Valencia Yvonne Camp, DGCHS
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Author's Note

The following represents the content of a series of presentations given to Knights and Dames of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem of the Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy during the spring of 2024. The series was the idea of Her Excellency Valencia Yvonne Camp, DGCHS as part of her ongoing formation initiative for the Knights and Dames, and I am grateful to her for inviting me to be involved. The text is based on audio transcripts that were made of the sessions. A few corrections have been made and a few repetitions left out. As these were conversations and not lectures, the occasional grammatical irregularity has been retained. Each session ended with the recitation of the Daily Prayer of the Order, reproduced here but not at the end of each chapter. Sessions also included time for questions and answers, and these, too, have been left out of the present booklet.

This commentary is not a replacement for reading and reflecting on the Cardinal's book. Rather it is a companion piece to deepen the experience.

Daily Prayer of the Order



Lord Jesus,
Who has willed to call me to the Ranks of the
Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem,
I humbly ask You, by the intercession of the most
Blessed Virgin Mary,
of St. Joseph, St. Peter, St. Paul and all the Saints,
to help me to remain faithful to the traditions of our Order,
in practicing and defending the Catholic,
Apostolic and Roman Religion
against impiety and in exercising charity to my Neighbor
and above all to the poor and sick in the Holy Land.
Grant to me and my confreres the grace to support by prayer and
sacrifice the maintenance of the Holy Places and the work of
His Beatitude the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.
Give me the strength to be able to execute these desires
with a truly Christian spirit, for The Glory of God,
the peace of the world, and the good of the
Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Amen.

Deus Lo Vult!

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*The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume:
A Spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre
Fernando Cardinal Filoni*

Session One:

24 February 2024: Saturday of the First Week of Lent

Introduction (*pp. 3-14*)



As with all good things, we begin with a prayer:

Merciful Father, we beg Your grace upon us this morning.

Keep our hearts open, our ears alert, our souls lifted up to You.

We ask that You bless our time together and help us to unpack the wealth of treasures and graces that Cardinal Filoni has put into this book and help us to grow in our vocation as members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

All this we ask through Christ our Lord.

You're all familiar with this wonderful book that Cardinal Filoni has given to us: *The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume*. It's subtitled *The Spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre*. The title and the subtitle are important, as our membership is truly a membership in a religious order, and, as such, has a distinct spirituality. As our Lieutenant, Her Excellency Valencia, has reminded us many times, that we're not a club, we're not an association. We're an order. And that means something important and specific in the Church. So, what I want to do today is talk about what Cardinal Filoni gives us in the introduction to the book, up to page 14.

I want to start with something he says on page 3. The Cardinal writes, "The Order is a vital and active body with responsibilities and commitments that have been gradually entrusted to it by the pontiffs who reorganized it."

We've all been through our initial formation. When we entered the Order, we learned some of its history, and we know that we're under the protection of the Holy See. We also know that over the course of

history, various Roman pontiffs have clarified what they expect of us. Cardinal Filoni starts with that, and what he's going to do is lead us up to what Pope Francis is expecting of us, since he's the current pontiff and has approved the latest constitution.

On page 4, Cardinal Filoni notes, "The constitution requires that members practice the gospel virtues." Of course, all Christians are called to practice the gospel virtues, but in a special way, you and I are called to this. And so, it's important to ask, "what are the gospel virtues?" And it's really a more complicated question than it sounds like because in our church's history and practice we refer to three different sets of virtues, all of which sound like gospel virtues.

First, there are the *theological* virtues. This, I think, is what many people think of when they hear "gospel virtues." They think of faith, hope, and charity. Of course, we're all supposed to practice those. We are women and men of the gospel, and so these are important parts of our lives. Then there are the *cardinal* virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and

temperance. But when we get to the gospel virtues, they are most frequently understood to mean the *evangelical* virtues; “*evangelos*” is the Greek word for “gospel.” The evangelical virtues are poverty, chastity, and obedience. And you might say, “Well I’m not a monk. I’m not a nun. How do poverty, chastity, and obedience apply to me?” But, in fact, they apply to all Christians. And for us as members of the Order, it’s important to understand how they play out in our lives.

Cardinal Filoni notes that, traditionally, members of the Order actually took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (p. 12). As time has gone on, over the grand history of our Order, how those virtues and vows were lived out has been adapted somewhat to the times in which we live. So, I think an important question for us to ask is “how do poverty, chastity, and obedience play into the way I live out my Christianity, my Catholicism, my membership as a member of the Order?” Now, poverty is not going to be the same for us as it is for a monk or a nun. Poverty for us, I think, has to mean a couple things: first, recognizing that all is gift, that nothing that we

have is ours solely because of ourselves and our own goodness or our talents. And none of it exists simply for us alone. If we're trying to live by the gospel virtue of poverty, we have to consider what we do with our resources. Are we hoarding them so that we can have as much as we can whenever we want it? Or are we using them to the extent that we can for the good of the Body of Christ? And specifically, we're also going to be looking at the question of whether or not we're using them for the good of the Church in the Holy Land because that's part of our identity, to support the church in the Holy Land.

Similarly, chastity is something to which all Christians are called. Chastity means that we use our affection and our sexuality in the manner appropriate to our state of life. What it means for me as a priest is first of all that I am celibate and that in addition, I must not treat any one person as though they were more important than any other member of the Body of Christ. (Now, of course, we all have our natural affections. We all have our natural friendships. And there's nothing wrong with that.) For the married person, chastity means fidelity to one spouse and

using one's sexuality in accord with its God-given purpose. For the single person, it means temperance in our sexuality, controlling our passions so that we're not ruled by them, that we're not engaging in sinful activity as the Church understands it.

Obedience, as it has come to be understood in religious orders, by and large, means honoring the decision of our superiors and trying to carry out as best we can what our superiors are trying to get us to do. So, for me, it means, that if my bishop wants to pick me up and move me, he can move me. I'm not going to fight over it. For most people, for the laity, obedience is going to mean fidelity to the authentic teaching of the Church, the Magisterium, and respect for the Holy Father. If we're going to live gospel obedience, one of the things we need to do is recognize that the Holy Father, at any given time, whether we're happy or not with his pronouncements, has been given to us as the Vicar of Christ. And we're to give him a filial obedience, the kind of obedience that a son or a daughter would want to give their loving parents.

Who are the members of the Order? The Cardinal notes that we are under the protection of the Holy See and that we have a juridical status. Membership is not simply honorific. All of us are very proud to be members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. But it's important to know that our membership is not just an honor. We are a group of lay men and lay women, bishops, priests, and deacons. And what the Lord is calling us to do through this holy Order is to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Cardinal Filoni reminds us that a cleric should only be involved in the Order if he is committed to fostering the spiritual growth and progress of all the members. That's the mission of the priest or the deacon or the bishop who's invited to become a Knight Chaplain.

The specific mission to the entire Order given by the Holy Father is "to have the ecclesial community at heart and to nourish zeal toward the land of Christ in Order to support the Catholic Church and the Christian presence there." The Constitution of the Order says it slightly differently: "The specific mission assigned by the Holy Father to the Equestrian

Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is that of animating zeal in the ecclesial community towards the Land of Jesus and sustaining the Catholic Church and the Christian presence there.” We’re called to “animate zeal in the ecclesial community.” The ecclesial community is the local church. We could say that our parish is our local ecclesial community. In one sense, the ecclesial community is the entire Church. But we belong to various dioceses, and within those dioceses, we belong to various parishes, our local ecclesial communities. Part of the specific mission given by the Holy Father to us is to animate zeal in our own ecclesial community toward the land of Jesus.

How are we doing with that? What am I doing to animate zeal in *my* ecclesial community toward the land of Jesus? That’s going to be different for every one of us. As a priest, I have a pulpit. So, it’s a little bit easier for me to bring in this desire for the good of the Holy Land, for instance, into a sermon or into the universal prayers at Mass. But it’s a mission that you share also. It’s not just the mission of the clergy. It’s the mission of the Order. So, to ask the question

again: what am I doing to animate zeal in the ecclesial community toward the land of Jesus?

And then the second part of that section of the Constitution says, “sustaining the Catholic Church and the Christian presence there.” Now, that’s a little bit different. Animating zeal can be done in speech, in writing in social settings. There are many ways we can do that. Sustaining the Catholic Church and the Christian presence in the land of Jesus is a practical thing. To put it in vulgar terms, it involves money. Part of the specific mission assigned by the Holy Father to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is to sustain the Catholic Church and the Christian presence there.

Our efforts are directed not just to the Catholic Church, but also to those other brothers and sisters in Christ who are not in full communion with the Church. You know, it’s so important that we remember this, especially these days. We have a major war going on over there. Israel was horribly attacked and needs to be able to defend itself from that kind of attack. I think one of the issues that complicates

things is that when we think of the Middle East, we think of the fighting between Jews and Muslims, and that's really not a complete description. It's a conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians, and some of those Palestinians are Christians and Catholics. So, it's not just Jew versus Muslim. It's much more complicated than that. I think it's appropriate for us to wish for any group of people to be able to defend themselves against those who would like to wipe them out. And it's also excruciatingly appropriate for us to want to do something to sustain the Catholic Church and the Christian presence there.

Cardinal Filoni writes, "The Order itself gives primary importance to the vocation of holiness of its members" (p. 6). So, we know what the Holy Father has asked us to do. Now, the Order is telling us what to do, in a sense, by saying we need to work on our holiness. This is of primary importance. In 2018, at the Consulta, His Holiness Pope Francis said this (and Cardinal Filoni quotes it on page 7): "The principal aim of your Order lies in the spiritual growth of its members. Any success of your initiatives cannot be separate from appropriate religious formation."

So even if you animate zeal in the ecclesial community, even if you sustain the Catholic Church and the Christian presence there, it cannot be separated from appropriate religious formation. And that's why Dame Valencia has reinvigorated us with a regular program of spiritual formation. No matter what success we might achieve in supporting the Christian Community in the Holy Land, if it's not connected to the spiritual growth that we're undergoing, it's not going to be completely what we're supposed to be doing. We're called to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ, our relationship with the Church, our relationship with the Order, our relationship with the Body of Christ throughout the world.

Cardinal Filoni notes that, in that program of spiritual formation, there are three things that are most important: prayer, meditation on the Sacred Scriptures, and knowledge of the doctrine of the Church (p. 7). Now, this should be an important part of the life of every Christian. For us, it has to be part of our program of formation: prayer, meditation on the sacred scriptures, knowledge of the doctrine of the church. And so, we're starting this

program now with a discussion of Cardinal Filoni's book because he's reminding us of the big picture. But when we're done with the book, we're going to continue to provide formation: formation on how we can pray better, on how we can engage God's Word better, on how we can understand and appreciate better what the Holy Spirit has revealed through the Church. These are the three pillars, if you will, on which Christian formation should always rest. For us, there is a fourth pillar: more specific conversation about the Order itself – our history, our great saints, etc. But prayer, scripture, the doctrine of the Church, Cardinal Filoni says, has to be the groundwork of our ongoing formation.

His Eminence writes "If there were no sharing of love for the Holy Land, together with a spirituality founded on the mystery of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, the root of belonging and service to the Order would disappear." Here's a great question any of us can ask ourselves: "Do I love the Holy Land? Does the identity of the Holy Land, the existence of the Holy Land, the people of the Holy Land, does that stir up something in me?" I would

dare say that if it doesn't, the Order might not be the best fit for us. There has to be a love for the Holy Land. If there was no sharing of love for the Holy Land, together with a spirituality founded on the mystery of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, then our belonging to the Order, our service to the Order, wouldn't make any sense. Both of those things are crucial.

If we find that, recently, in our prayer, we haven't been focusing on the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, we have the opportunity to refocus, especially during this holy season of Lent. We also have the opportunity to do a self-examination: What is my affective relationship to the Holy Land? On pages 8 and 9, Cardinal Filoni repeats something I mentioned earlier: "Admission of bishops, priests, and deacons is not *entirely* an honor." Now, that's interesting. It's not *entirely* an honor. So there, there *is* an *element* of honor. But, more importantly, clerics are invested in the Order to provide pastoral service – to members at large and specifically to those in the Order who have roles of responsibility. Clerics do this "by providing opportunities for

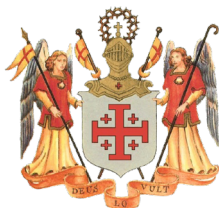
community and liturgical prayer at every level, continuous spiritual opportunities, and catechesis for ongoing formation.”

The Cardinal goes on to write about Vatican II urging union with Christ, liturgical sacramental life, exercise in faith, hope, and charity (p. 9). Again, we see faith, hope, and charity, the theological virtues. And then he does a beautiful thing: he draws on history to discuss the qualities of the chivalric lifestyle. After all, we are a chivalric Order, even though such terminology is not common in today’s secular culture.

He points to the first characteristic of a chivalric Order: “supreme reference to God” (p. 10). That means that everything we do revolves around our relationship with God. God is not Santa Claus; He’s not simply Someone we call upon when we need something; He’s not something that we pay attention to on Sunday or only when we go for our specific time of prayer. God must be the animating force behind everything we do. Then His Eminence mentions other qualities that were characteristic

of the members of chivalric orders: prudence, loyalty, faithfulness, solidarity among members, honor and nobility of mind, irreproachable civic conduct, self-abnegation and prowess, gratitude and dedication to loved ones. These are things that are good for any Christian to aspire to, but, historically, they were the hallmarks of chivalric orders.

Traditionally, some of these members also took formal vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Cardinal Filoni speaks about St. Ignatius Loyola, whose life gives evidence of all these graces and qualities, even though he himself was not a member of the Order. On that note, I recommend to you *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola*; while he was not a member, he remains a great example to us and to all Christians of how God infuses nature and personal circumstances with grace.



*The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume:
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Fernando Cardinal Filoni*

Session Two:

16 March 2024: Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent

The Biblical Dimension of Spirituality

*(Jerusalem: The Mystery, Places, & People)
Part 1 (pp. 15-32)*



Today we will use as our opening prayer the Collect from today's Mass:

May the working of Your mercy, O Lord, we pray,
direct our hearts aright, for without Your grace,
we cannot find favor in Your sight. Through our Lord
Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the
Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

In Bethany: A Gesture for Always (pp. 15-18)

The first section of Cardinal Filoni's book is called *The Biblical Dimensions of Spirituality*. Today I'd like to reflect with you on the first part of that, pages 15 to 32.

Cardinal Filoni begins with a reflection on what happened in Bethany, and he calls it "a gesture for always." And, you know, there are very few gestures "for always" that we can imagine. Certainly, the Lord giving Himself at the Last Supper and on the Cross at Calvary, those are things that happened "for always". But this is something that *someone else* did, a mere human being, Mary of Bethany. Cardinal Filoni reminds us that when "she anointed the feet of Jesus . . . the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment."

Judas, as we know, was upset that she spent money on the aromatic nard, this special ointment. And he begins to reprimand her. But Jesus tells Judas, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial." Now, there's a lot in there that needs to be unpacked. Mary had been anointing His feet, and

Jesus says, “Let her keep it for the day of my burial.” That means, though it’s not explicitly stated, that there’s some of this ointment left over. Otherwise, there’d be no reason for Him to say, “Let her keep it.” At this time, she anoints only His feet. She would anoint the rest of His body at the time of His burial.

Did Judas want to take the rest of that away from her? He must have! That’s why Jesus says, “Let her keep it.” What’s going to happen to the body of Jesus after His death? Well, it would be Mary’s intention to anoint it. Jesus knows this. It’s Judas’ intention that she does not do so. And that gives us a little pause for reflection. Mary of Bethany would no longer be able to show her affection for Jesus. Judas didn’t want to keep the ointment so that he could show *his* affection for Jesus. He would have sold it and put the money in the purse, and the money in the purse



would have gone into his pocket, of course. Mary would no longer be able to show her affection for Jesus through the act of anointing His dead body.

Cardinal Filoni writes “Adherence to the Order allows us to continue to anoint the body of Christ.” He’s reminding us that part of our vocation as people who have been called to the Order is to continue the anointing of the Body of Christ. I say “called to the Order” intentionally. We might think we chose the Order; we might think we liked the Order, and the Order accepted us. But ultimately, we know how God works. We’ve been *called* to the Order. And so, if we’ve been called to the Order, part of what that entails is this continuous anointing of the body of Christ, which, Cardinal Filoni adds, “is the Church” (p. 16). In saying that being part of the Order entails continuing that anointing, he implies that we’re not finished, that the action of the anointing of the Body of Christ is not complete. Now, this should not be for us a cause for shame or guilt; rather, it should spur us on. Just as Jesus told us that the poor would be with us always, so, too, this call to anointing the Body of Christ, the Church, is going to continue

throughout history, until the day comes when Christ returns in glory, and we enter into that beautiful, wonderful, indescribable day of Resurrection.

And so, we're called to continue to anoint the Body of Christ, which is the Church. For us, this applies in a special way to the Mother Church, the Church of Jerusalem. Cardinal Filoni reminds us that we're called to contribute in a practical way to the good of the Holy Land and to the religious and social peace that is so necessary in that part of the world. He writes "Every Dame and Knight, therefore, continues the same work of Mary of Bethany." Now, you might not have thought of that before. It's a wonderful way of looking at our vocation. You know, we're asked to support the Holy Land and the religious and social peace that it needs. Part of that is always going to involve our annual contributions. It's easy sometimes to look at that as a donation to a social or maybe religious project. But what the Cardinal is saying here is that this is part of the anointing of the Body of Christ, the Church, specifically as she exists in Jerusalem. That's a high privilege.

Cardinal Filoni writes “The sacramentality of the church touches its most intimate and profound nature. That is the awareness that it has of itself infused by Christ, which makes it not a mere human organization, but a gift of God for mankind with a spiritual and moral mission” (p. 18).

What is a sacrament? The traditional definition still holds: a sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace. So, the Church has a “sacramentality” about herself. That doesn’t only mean that she dispenses the sacraments, but it certainly includes that. In a broader sense, it means that, as she exists, she is herself a sacrament. In 1974, the late Cardinal Avery Dulles, a brilliant theologian, wrote what one could call a groundbreaking book: *Models of the Church*. Dulles proposed five ways of understanding the Church based on different parts of the revelation given in Sacred Scripture. Those models were Church as Institution, Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, Church as Herald of the Gospel, Church as Servant, and Church as Sacrament. Insofar as the Church is understood as “sacrament,” she exists as a visible tangible sign instituted by Christ to give grace.

Understanding our mission as a continuation of the anointing begun by Mary of Bethany coupled with our working within the Order for the good of the Holy Land, for the life of the Church in the Holy Land, and for the promotion of peace in the Holy Land – that’s all part of the “sacramentality” of the church.

And it’s this awareness that the Church has of herself, Cardinal Filoni says, that makes her not just a human organization, but a gift of God for mankind: not just for herself, not just for all the Catholics, not just for all the Christians, not just for all the people of God in the Holy Land, but for all mankind. And the Church in that role has a spiritual and moral mission. If the Church’s role is spiritual and moral, that implies that it involves prayer and action, because morality is the realm of action in life. So, if it’s spiritual and moral, it has to be spiritual and active. At the same time, so that the Church can remain an instrument of peace and grace among all peoples, it has to be, he says, devoid of ideological, political, or military calculations.

Now, we are human beings, and so we fall into these things still. Many fall into ideological thinking.

Sometimes we see it even in Church leadership. We need to move away from that as much as we can in our desire for the good, the religious, and the social peace that we're working for in the Holy Land.

The Cross and Death of Christ (pp. 18-24)

Cardinal Filoni says that in the Cross “one can see the atrocious mystery of the death of Jesus with His wounds never healed and yet glorious” (pp. 18-19). “Never healed and yet glorious” – it’s a great reminder that the wounds on the body of Christ are never healed. They’re visible in His resurrected body.

That’s why when He appears in the Upper Room to his disciples – the second time, when Thomas is there – He can say to the doubter “Here, put your fingers in my wounds.” The wounds are still there! Jesus’ body is glorious, and there’s glory even in the wounds. And that should give us consolation because, not just as members of the Order, but as part of the Church, we *are* the wounds. Often, we don’t like to think that of ourselves – we’d prefer to

think of ourselves as *healers* of wounds, but often we ourselves are the wounds. The wounds were visible even on His risen body, never healed and yet glorious. You know, it reminds me of a statement from the Jesuits in their 32nd General Congregation (1974-1975). One of the key documents began “What is it to be a Jesuit? It is to know that one is a sinner, yet called to be a companion of Jesus.” In a similar way, we can say “What is it to be a Christian? It is to know that one is a sinner, yet knowing at the same time that one is redeemed and called to be a companion of Jesus.” That has to be true for anyone who is seriously trying to live the life of Christ. We know that we’re sinners, yet we also know that we’ve been redeemed by Christ. We are wounds in the process of being healed by grace. And there’s glory within us because of what God is doing in us, in redeeming us, and in calling us to participate in the ministry of Christ, even though we ourselves are part of the wounds.

Cardinal Filoni goes on to say, “The death sentence for blasphemy decided by the Sanhedrin did not call for crucifixion but for stoning” (pp. 19-20). Stoning

is the worst that should have happened under the religious law. Crucifixion was not a Jewish penalty; it was a Roman penalty. It was considered a punishment for slaves and only for the most serious of crimes, certainly not for any kind of blasphemy. The Jewish leadership pushed for crucifixion, though, asking the Roman procurator to crucify Jesus for having proclaimed Himself to be King of the Jews. By claiming that He called Himself “King of the Jews,” they could make Him appear to be guilty of sedition or treason, because the Jewish king, even though he was separate from the Roman Emperor, held his place at the pleasure of the Roman Emperor. Because of this, we can see that even though it was the Jewish religious leaders who were making the request, they were doing it with a political tinge.

Perhaps religious leaders in many eras have been tempted to become political. There’s much discussion as to whether or not that is good and appropriate, with people on both sides of the issue giving evidence of serious thought and good rationale. But we can’t confuse the injunction to stay out of the realm of politics with those times when political

leaders attempt to seize control over moral issues and religious leaders are obliged to speak in what appears to be the political realm. I want to speak specifically for just a moment about abortion.

Some will say – from the pro-abortion side – “the Church should keep its nose out of this. It’s a political issue.” And that’s just not true. It’s a moral issue that the politicians have tried to steal from those who have the authority to speak on moral issues. They attempt to frame it as a political issue. And that’s why it’s never wrong for a Christian, for a Catholic, for a priest, to speak loudly and publicly about that issue. And not only that issue; there are other issues that are important also. Examples would include the fantasy that one can decide one’s gender or the hubris involved with trying to transform marriage from a covenant instituted by God into something that could cover any kind of contract between two people. But abortion is of primary concern because if someone doesn’t make it out of the womb, it makes no sense to talk about his or her rights. So, it is proper for us to speak about these issues because they’re not political – they’re moral issues. And if the politicians

want to say that they can be the ultimate arbiters within these realms, they're simply not correct.

The state can only declare what is legal or illegal; it cannot say what is right or wrong. And so, it's proper for us to do everything we can to prevent the legalization of that which is immoral.



But let's return to the Crucifixion. Cardinal Filoni points out that this punishment contains in itself two complementary

aspects. First, there's the condemnation. That's the work of the Sanhedrin; it falls within the Jewish religious sphere. But then comes death by crucifixion, something that's inflicted by the pagans. So, punishment of crucifixion is the result of something in the religious sphere (the clamoring of the Jewish leaders) and something in the secular pagan sphere (the sentencing by the Roman authorities). This reminds us that salvation, since it flows from the Crucifixion, is

not just for the Jews, but for all mankind. Salvation is offered to Gentiles and Jews, to the formally religious and the formally secular. Thank God.

His Eminence notes that the Crucifixion took place outside the walls (p. 21). And then he makes an interesting and important point: the sites of the crucifixion and burial of our Lord were very close to each other. Now, it should be obvious to us. In a culture in which a dead body would be transported to its burial site either by being carried by the mourners or by being placed in a cart, it would be important that the place of burial not be too far from the place of death. In the fourth century, these two sites (the site of the crucifixion and the site of the Sepulchre) were enclosed within the Constantinian Basilica.

The Characters (pp. 24-29)

Cardinal Filoni now turns to some of the characters involved in this part of the great story of our salvation: “In the drama of Jesus’ passion and death, we encounter in the crowd a multitude of faces that give

us a glimpse into a society actively against Christ” (p. 24). That must touch each of our hearts because we know we live in such a society, a society actively against Christ.

His Eminence continues: “Yet, there is also a pious humanity that follows in the footsteps of the Lord.” And then he names several of them. Some are very close to Jesus; some don’t know Him at all. That’s a reminder to us that the invitation to be part of the journey of Christ is open to everyone. There’s no one left out, even if they haven’t yet heard of Jesus.

When we support good works in the Holy Land – hospitals, schools, et al – there’s a possibility that non-Christians will find their path toward the one true God. So, the invitation is open to all, just as that crowd of people involved in the way of the Cross, the procession toward Golgotha, was made up of people that knew Jesus well and people who didn’t know Him at all.

His Eminence points out the anonymous daughters of Jerusalem; these are women not mentioned by name in the Scriptures. Some of them are expecting

that Jesus is the Messiah. Some of them are not, but maybe they heard about Him and they're curious. We meet Simon of Cyrene, who wouldn't have known Jesus from Judas; he just happens to be walking along when the procession passes by, and he gets grabbed by one of the Romans and told to help Jesus carry the cross. He doesn't carry the cross because he likes Jesus or because he wants to follow Jesus. He's conscripted. Then you have a mother, His own mother, deeply tested, heartbroken by watching what's going on with her Son. You have John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, another one who knew Him intimately. Next, we see some courageous women who've been following Him despite the fact that they know that the Jewish religious leadership are trying to capture and kill Him. We know their names: Mary, the wife of Clopas; Mary Magdalene; Mary the mother of James the Lesser; Salome. So, we have people who are involved in Jesus' life to different degrees, all of them making up part of this "community" that is being affected by either participating in or by watching this first "way of the cross."

“The condemnation of a just man,” writes Cardinal Filoni, “questions all humanity yesterday and today” (p. 26). It made me think of what we hear and think often when we think of the Shoah. We say, “How did Auschwitz happen? How did *any of this* happen?” That condemnation of an entire race of people would have contained unjust people *and* just people, like any other large group. Add to that the fact that this was the people through whom God had chosen to reveal Himself, especially in Jesus Christ! How that could happen questions all humanity – yesterday and today. We can look at any condemnation of any just person and ask that same question. What does it say about the human experience? What does it say about human existence?

Cardinal Filoni talks about “bookends” in the life of Jesus. He says, “In the last cry he utters in His life, what comes to mind is not the joyful and surprising first wail of a newborn” (p. 26). That “wail” is the cry He made in the manger in Bethlehem. And now we have this final cry, “it is finished.” His Eminence continues: “Those two sounds that enclose life, they’re not joyful, but they show drama, pain, and

spasmodic agony” (p. 26). I recommend that when you contemplate Jesus on the Cross on Good Friday – and at any time, for that matter – you dwell on this notion of “spasmodic agony.” I think if we contemplate the cross of Christ without considering spasmodic agony, we’re missing something. One of the problems we have created in Catholicism, certainly not an irredeemable problem, but it is a problem to some extent, is that the crucifix for us has become a piece of art and a piece of jewelry. And when we allow that to happen, it’s so easy to forget how graphically horrible and painful this event was. Never imagine that He just laid there with his head on his shoulder saying, “Okay, Father, I’m doing it. I’m getting through this.” Don’t imagine that, because He was fully human as well as fully divine. If you’ve ever watched somebody die, especially if they’re dying painfully, you know this: death is rarely peaceful and beautiful.

Years ago, I was asked by a priest to visit a seminarian who was living in his rectory to make an informal evaluation of the young man. One of the issues with this seminarian was that he was overly fixated

on the bloodiness of the crucifixion to the extent that almost every inch of his wall space was covered with the most graphic crucifixes I had ever seen. Honestly, there were 50 or 60 crucifixes. And they were all the bloodiest crucifixes you can imagine. This young man was fixated on the horror of the pain. We can go too far. But just as troublesome is the idea that we can forget how gruesome this death was. So let me encourage you: when you look at the cross, whether you have a beautiful, sanitized crucifix in your church or whether you have one that seems more realistic, remember that you're not looking at a piece of art.

Remember that you're not looking at a piece of jewelry. Remember that you're looking at something that's supposed to bring to mind how far Jesus went to redeem us, to show God's love for us. How far He went is encapsulated by that phrase "spasmodic agony." Cardinal Filoni writes "Who will ever be able to avoid confronting that event?" (p. 27). Well, we can answer that. Many avoid confronting it. But for us, it can't be that way. We need to carry the death of Christ within us; as St. Paul writes

to the Galatians “I bear the marks of Jesus on my body” (6:17).

His Eminence quotes the late Pope Benedict XVI, who wrote “Jesus’ death is . . . differentiated from the kind of death resulting from man’s original sin as a consequence of his presumption in seeking to be like God. It is of another kind. It is occasioned by the humility of God. It is a death in the context of His service of expiation, a death that achieves reconciliation and becomes a light for the nations” (*Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 252-253).

Now, we always have to “unpack” Benedict because he doesn’t write a sentence that’s not profound. “Jesus’ death is differentiated from the kind of death resulting from man’s original sin as a consequence of his presumption in seeking to be like God.” So, we have a reference to original sin. The serpent says to Adam and Eve, “Why can’t you eat from that one tree?” “We can’t eat it because God told us we’ll die,” they respond. He says, “You don’t really believe that do you? God doesn’t want you to be like Him. If you eat that, you’re not going to die. You’re going

to be like Him.” And they want to be like God, in an inappropriate manner. They’re not after holiness; they want to be the Creator instead of the creature. And thus, follows original sin. Because of that original sin, every human being dies. This is something we forget, I think.

In the Garden of Eden, death was not part of the picture. We were going to live forever. We were made for life. Death enters as part of the punishment for sin. This is Scripture. God says to both of them “By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground from which you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). Death enters the world through sin. St. Paul says that in his letter to the Romans: “sin entered the world, and through sin, death” (5:12). Pope Benedict reminds us of that. We die because of original sin. But Jesus did *not* die because of original sin. Jesus’ death is occasioned by the humility of God. It is a death in the context of His service of expiation. Service is the mark of humility.

Expiation means that He does it to redeem us. So, it’s a death that achieves reconciliation and becomes

a light for the nations. It achieves reconciliation. In other words, it enables the gates of paradise to be open; it enables us to go to Heaven. But it also serves as a light for the nations. In St. John's gospel, Jesus says "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (12:32). The crucifixion becomes a light to the nations and attracts people to God because it shows just how far God will go to save us.

The Empty Tomb (pp. 30-32)

Next, Cardinal Filoni writes about the empty tomb (pp. 30-32): "Together with the cross, another powerful symbol and shrine that draws devotion in Jerusalem is the place of Jesus' burial (i.e., the Holy Sepulchre.) The Sepulchre represents the site where the body of the Lord found a home, where the power of God transformed a place of putrefaction into a source of life and grace" (p. 30). Normally, the tomb is a place where a body rots; that's putrefaction. But God transforms the tomb into a place of life and grace, a *source* of life and grace. It reminds

me of a promise from the beginning of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: "Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they may become white as wool" (1:18). God takes what is dead and brings it to life. It reminds me too of the vision of the dry bones being restored to life in Ezekiel 37.

His Eminence returns to Pope Benedict, who, in the same work cited earlier, writes that in the drama that Christ experienced, He traveled the path of death right to the bitter and seemingly hopeless end in the tomb. There was never a point where He said, "Okay, I've done enough now." After being scourged, He could have said, "That's enough. I bore the scars the people should have borne." But He *doesn't* say "that's enough." He dies. Still, His soul doesn't say to the Father, "Okay, I died. *Now* that's enough." He goes all the way to the tomb, to the very final experience of the human body. Cardinal Filoni continues, "With the closure of the tomb completed and the entrance blocked with the large stone, the passage was sealed while Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the Sepulchre"

(p. 32). Now, this “other Mary” is Mary of Bethany, she who had anointed the feet of Jesus. Why is she there? To anoint the rest of the body.



In addition to keeping watch over those busy with sealing the tomb, the women were unable to detach themselves from their beloved Master. That's a display of affection. Even though He's dead, even though He's entombed, even though the tomb is closed off, they stay there still because they don't want to leave Him. So, it's administrative (they're keeping watch over what's happening) and at the same time it's affectionate (they don't want to leave their Lord). It's reminiscent of when Peter and John rush to the empty tomb (John 20: 3-8). John arrives at the tomb first, but he waits for Peter. Peter goes into the tomb first, and John follows. Love (John, the beloved disciple) finds where Jesus is supposed to be first; but true love respects God's Order (Peter, to whom the keys have been entrusted). Love and Order, affection and administration. Both are needed, both are vehicles

of grace. In our lives as Christians, as Catholics, as members of the Order, it can never be just one or the other.

Cardinal Filoni closes this section with a wonderful line, “In the Sepulchre was the silence of many questions and of the many expectations of those who wanted an explanation of the many whys” (p. 32). Why did this happen? At first, the answer was silence; in time, all would be revealed.

*The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume:
A Spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre
Fernando Cardinal Filoni*

Session Three:

6 April 2024: Saturday in the Octave of Easter

The Biblical Dimension of Spirituality

*(Jerusalem: The Mystery, Places, and People)
Part 2 (pp. 33-55)*



Today we will use as our opening prayer the Collect
from today's Mass:

O God, who by the abundance of Your grace give
increase to the peoples who believe in You, look with
favor on those You have chosen
and clothe with blessed immortality
those reborn through the sacrament of baptism.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the
Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

We're picking up this morning with the second half of the section that's entitled *The Biblical Dimension of Spirituality*. Cardinal Filoni is writing, of course, about the biblical dimension of our spirituality as an Order.

The Resurrection (pp. 33-40)

Mary Magdalene hears a voice, and that voice poses a question from which we ourselves cannot flee: "Whom do you seek?" It's the question posed by the man whom the women thought was the gardener, but it's a real question for us, too, and that's why Cardinal Filoni brings it up.

"Whom do you seek?": Am I looking to meet God the way I think He should be? Or am I willing to enter into the presence of God who is totally other? God's radical otherness is important. In 1917, theologian Rudolf Otto wrote a book called *The Idea of the Holy*. His thesis is that while the concept of "the holy" is often used to convey moral perfection, which it does entail, it contains another distinct

element: holiness refers to something being “wholly other” or “completely other.” There’s nothing that we can compare God to. Now, we get some great help, because in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, we can know things about Jesus, and there were people who were able to see Jesus and touch Jesus. But prior to God coming in flesh and blood, He is “totally Other.” What that means is that this God who created us, Whom we wish to be with, is totally unpredictable, totally beyond our control; there’s nothing else in our experience about which we can say, “Oh, He must be like this.” In Jesus Christ, we learn that He’s all loving. He’s forgiving. He’s merciful. This is not something that we can easily wrap our heads around.

This “Otherness” of God, this unpredictability, is made clear in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. God chooses to go totally beyond anything we’ve ever seen. The Resurrection of Jesus, as His Eminence will remind us, is not the resuscitation of a corpse (p. 37), as was the case with Lazarus. Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead, but that was the resuscitation of a dead person. In Jesus Christ we see something totally beyond anything ever experienced

before. And that's a reminder that this God of ours is an unpredictable God. Whom do you seek? The God of your expectations? Or this God, Whom we cannot "put in a box"? Cardinal Filoni poses the question to us, the Dames and Knights and Chaplains of the Holy Sepulchre. Whom do you seek?

A parallel question is "What do you seek from the Order? Why did we accept the invitation to the Order? Cardinal Filoni says this question arises at least once for all of us, and so it's worthwhile to place ourselves mentally in front of the empty tomb and have that same experience that Mary Magdalene and the other women had. He suggests that maybe we could do that on a pilgrimage when we actually go to the Holy Sepulchre. We're encouraged to do so at least once in our lives. It's good to imagine oneself there. Here are the questions we might ask: Why am I here? Why am I standing at the Holy Sepulchre?

What did I come here to do? Whom am I looking for? But again, the Person whom I'm looking for is not going to be what I expect. He's beyond my expectations. His Eminence says that the resurrection of

Christ, for us, “represents the most ontologically extraordinary event” (p. 37). “Ontology” is the study of being in itself, the study, one could say, of reality in itself. He’s saying that the Resurrection of Jesus is ontologically extraordinary – there’s no other event in our experience where life dies and is resurrected. We don’t see that except in Jesus Christ. He says this resurrection “belongs to the DNA of our faith.” That’s another way of saying that there’s no Christianity without belief in the resurrection of Christ. St. Paul tells us that “if Christ has not been raised, then empty is our preaching; empty, too, your faith” (I Cor 15:14). Why would we live the way we try to live if this world was all there was?



The Resurrection is “the paradigmatic reversal of our arduous human destiny.” Our arduous human destiny is the realization that we’re all going to die; that’s why it’s arduous. It’s painful. This is post-Eden, of course. We were not created for death. God created the world for us to have eternal life. Death enters the world through sin. And then that becomes the expectation: we’re born and we die. The resurrection is the paradigmatic reversal of that.

Paradigmatic means that it is the prime and basic reality of what God has done in reversing our human destiny. We didn’t merit it. There’s nothing we did to have that destiny reversed. It’s all done through the free action of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, second Person of the Blessed Trinity, obeying the will of the Father. So, it’s something completely new.

“If in Jesus’ resurrection we were dealing simply with the miracle of a resuscitated corpse, it would ultimately be of no concern to us, for it would be no more important than the resuscitation of a clinically dead person through the art of doctors” (pp. 37-38). Again, Jesus is not brought back to life the

way Lazarus was. In Jesus is the reality of a totally new kind of life, almost unrecognizable. We know this because the disciples, when they encounter Him over the course of those early appearances, don't recognize Him. The two on the road to Emmaus don't know Who is walking with them until He breaks the bread. When He appears to them while they're fishing, they scream, "It's a ghost!" The women at the tomb think He's the gardener, and they ask him, "What happened to the body? Where'd they take the body?" So, there's something about this new life that's different enough from the old life that it takes a while before they get it that it's Him.

Not only is He unrecognizable, He's also unbound. He's able to meet with the disciples in the upper room where they're hiding, where we are told the doors were locked for fear of the Jews. The disciples were afraid they were going to be next for crucifixion. Doors are locked and yet Jesus suddenly is with them. He's able to get through the locked doors. He's able to be with them on the water while they're in the boat, walking toward them. So, it's a totally new kind of life. And I think that's so important for

us to remember. It's not as though we're going to die, and when Christ returns, we're just going to wake up the way we were. We're destined for a totally new life, unrecognizable almost, and unbound.

Cardinal Filoni returns to Pope Benedict: "The resurrection of the Son of Man is utterly different from other forms of life or revitalization. It was an entirely new form of life" (*Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 244). And it opens up a new dimension of human existence. Cardinal Filoni adds that note. And so, the Sepulchre, so important to us, doesn't represent just a burial place. It's evidence of a drama. It's evidence of this conclusion of life, Cardinal Filoni says, that began in a manger and ended with a burial. But then it opens up into a new life. Cardinal Filoni says "one can believe or one can choose not to believe. That's the human dilemma." And without the gift of faith, one really doesn't have the option. You really can't believe what God does in Christ in the resurrection without the gift of faith.

Peace Be With You! A Message for Always (pp. 41-45)

Now Cardinal Filoni reflects on what happens when the risen Jesus appears to His disciples, focusing on the night when Thomas was with them. The doubter believes after touching the wounds of the Risen Lord. It's a different kind of faith. And Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and still believe."

Now, why is this important to us? We start with what it means to "believe." The Latin word for "I believe" is "credo". It comes from two Latin words: core (objective form of "cor", or "heart") and "do" (first person singular of the verb "to give"). Core + do = coredo, which elides into "credo" and means "I give my heart." And that's how the church understands belief. For us to believe in God, to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, to believe in any of the articles of our faith, doesn't mean, "Oh, I understand that intellectually." It means "I'm giving myself over to it. I'm putting myself in it and behind it." And so, when Jesus says, "Blessed are those who haven't seen yet still believe," it's not just a matter of the "believer" saying "Okay, you rose from the dead. Fine." It means "Yes, I'm part of this. I put my life, I

put my heart, I put everything that is of me in there with that which is of You.” And so “belief” in a sense almost becomes a conjugal act between Christ the Bridegroom and His bride the Church.

Emmaus: From the Side of the Disciples (pp. 45-49)

Cardinal Filoni notes how the eyes of the disciples kept being blocked from recognizing Jesus. He writes “[This] applies to every Dame and Knight who, in the journey of faith in Jesus, sometimes suffers moments of crisis and spiritual winter.” We all have times like this. The person who never has any kind of doubt, who never experiences a kind of silence in prayer, is most likely at least sometimes talking to themselves and not praying. God is not Santa Claus. God is not a babysitter. St. Mother Teresa herself writes in her journals that she experienced a dryness, a silence, in her prayer for 50 years! Now, this was a woman of incredible holiness. If in her life this experience of feeling unheard, of not being spoken to, was there – it should at least call us to the kind of humility it takes to admit that we’ve been there

also. But it should also lead us to great consolation because we know that God was with her. We know that God worked through her, even though she was not always able to hear what she might have wanted to hear.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus reprimands those two disciples. They ask Him (not knowing Who it is to Whom they are speaking) “Haven’t you heard what happened in Jerusalem, how Jesus, who we thought was a great leader, we had hope for Him and He was crucified?” And Jesus says, “How slow of heart you are to believe!” And again, I would say take that etymological basic meaning of “believe.” “How slow of heart you are to give your heart over to me!” Because that’s what He’s asking for.

Cardinal Filoni points out that “the empty Sepulchre is the void of our human expectations.” Many of us have had the privilege of visiting there. Every Dame and Knight aspires to stand in that sacred place. But remember: the Sepulchre is not holy because Christ is more present there than He is here. He’s with you right now. It’s not as though the Spirit of Christ



is stuck in the places where He physically walked during those 33 years. The Sepulchre is holy because it held Him. It's empty now. It's void now. The women had to leave. They had to let go. And, so too, our human expectations have to give way. We have to let go. God is calling us to something new, always, until the day when He will come and call us into the new creation. So, the Sepulchre is holy, but we don't need to go there to find Jesus. If we're not finding Jesus here, we're not going to find Him there. We might get a psychological boost that helps us to learn to listen for Him better. Maybe we'll find Him there for the first time. But if our experience is "Well, I was there and I found him, and now I'm back home, I

don't find Him anymore," then we might have been talking to ourselves while we were there.

In the Boat with Peter (pp. 49-52)

Why did Jesus send the disciples back to Galilee? He did it because that's where it all began. It would have been, says Cardinal Filoni, the least traumatic place for the disciples to be after the trauma of the crucifixion because it was a return to the freshness of their first call from Jesus (p. 49). And how important that is for all of us! If we're married, if we're ordained, if we're in religious life, if we're a member of the Order, how easy it is to lose touch with our original enthusiasm, our original response! So, it's important for us to go back every once in a while, to our own "Galilee." When were we invited? It's important to go back to that first excitement. That's why Investiture Weekend is so important, even – maybe especially – when we're not the ones being invested or promoted. It should be like a little Christmas or a family reunion.

This is why Jesus has the disciples come back to Galilee. He wants them to get in touch with that original excitement, that original grace of the call. And look at how marvelously it works! They go out to the four corners of the world. They all wind up being martyred except St. John, who winds up dying an old man after attempts at killing him have failed.

Cardinal Filoni writes that “there will never be an expression of love simpler and more beautiful than that of Peter” (p. 50). He’s talking about the saint’s response to Jesus’ triple question: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? . . . Simon, son of John, do you love me? . . . Simon, son of John, do you love me?” And Peter’s responses: “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. . . Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. . . Lord, you know *everything*; you know that I love you!” It’s a simple and beautiful profession “because it presupposes the sincerity of heart of the one who pronounces it,” that is, Peter, but it also presupposes “the recognition of one’s weakness and the appeal to Christ” (p.50).

Now, Dames and Knights, this is so important for us this weekend, as we celebrate the Sunday of Divine

Mercy. This is what divine mercy is about: the recognition of one's weakness, the conscious experience of needing mercy, and the appeal to Christ, the fact that we trust Jesus to provide mercy. We recognize that, in Jesus Christ, our weakness can be strengthened, our weakness can be turned into zeal; and we want to get back to the zeal that we had when we first realized our vocations, including our vocation to the Order.

The Cardinal goes on to say that being with Peter, to whom Jesus entrusts his flock, is for us of the Order a principle of identity. Again, it's this idea that we're weak and we need mercy, the idea that we trust in Jesus and He gives us mercy. But then, added into this, Jesus entrusts to Peter (and to us) His flock: "Feed my lambs . . . tend my sheep. . . feed my sheep." Cardinal Filoni reminds us that this, too, is part of our identity. In other words, it's not about what we *want* to do; it's about what we're *called* to do. That's what vocation means: it's something to which we are called. Our "vocation" to the Order means that there are things that God wants of us. It's not just an honorific. Certainly, it's an honor to be

invited, but we don't accept the invitation so that we can announce ourselves as "Sir" or "Dame." There's a duty involved.

At Jacob's Well: Water to Quench Our Thirst (pp. 52-55)

Cardinal Filoni concludes this section of the book with a reflection on Jacob's well. Of course, this is where the brothers of Joseph threw him in and left him for dead. He gets taken out and sold into slavery, and he winds up in Egypt with a totally different kind of life. Cardinal Filoni uses this as a metaphor for what happens to Jesus. He's betrayed by one of his "brothers" – Judas – for money; He's put into the Sepulchre, which is prefigured by the well, and then He's given new life, a completely different life – as we said earlier, a "paradigmatically different" life. It's not just a continuation of this life. It's not even a phenomenal improvement on this life. It's a totally different kind of life. And the great news is that it's a life that you and I are going to experience also. On that great day of resurrection, when the Lord returns and comes in glory to judge the

living and the dead, we get divided into two groups, as Jesus Himself teaches us (Matthew 25: 31-46). The wicked are raised to the resurrection of the damned, and righteous are raised to the resurrection of the blessed. We pray that we hang on to Jesus Christ strongly enough, that we give Him our heart strongly enough, so that when that day comes, we're on the side of the resurrection of the blessed.

*The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume:
A Spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre
Fernando Cardinal Filoni*

Session Four:

18 May 2024: Saturday of the Seventh Week of Easter

**The Ecclesiological Dimension
of Spirituality**
Part 1 (57-75)



As with all good things, we begin with a prayer:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that we, who have celebrated the paschal festivities
may by your gift hold fast to them
in the way that we live our lives.
Through our lord Jesus Christ, your son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the holy
spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Baptismal Grace (pp. 57-61)

We begin today the first half of the section of Cardinal Filoni's book that's called "The Ecclesiological Dimension of Spirituality." In the last few sessions, we were looking at the biblical dimension of our spirituality; now we look at how it's related to the life of the Church. That's what it means to look at the ecclesiological dimensions.

The first section of that chapter is called *Baptismal Grace*. Cardinal Filoni writes that "in life, we are not immune from the risk of losing or rejecting the mystery of the Risen Lord's grace" (p. 57). We've received a tremendous gift in our baptism: we've been given God's own life. We've been given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And at the same time, it's possible for us to reject the grace that comes along with that. We might not consciously and intentionally reject our baptism, but it's possible for us to lose sight of what that baptism has done for us and in the course of day-to-day actions to reject the graces that come along with that. So, we know what God has revealed, and yet sometimes we find ourselves wanting something contrary to that revelation.

St. Paul says, “I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate” (Romans 7:15).

St. Augustine speaks about this phenomenon in terms of concupiscence. In 21st century western cultures we tend to think of concupiscence as having to do with the temptations of the flesh. But concupiscence means much more than that.

The great example Saint Augustine gives is the story about how, as a schoolboy, he and his confreres stole pears from a tree that belonged to none of their families. They did not want the pears; they did not find them attractive, and they did not eat them. They took them because it was forbidden. “It was foul, and I loved it,” he writes in the second book of his *Confessions*. “I loved my own undoing. I loved my error – not that for which I erred – but the error itself.” Concupiscence, then, is the desire for something that I have no right to and the use of that thing in a way that is ultimately not good for me. That’s the nature of sin, isn’t it? And so, you can see how the sexual sins fit into that. When we’re sinning sexually, we’re engaging in activities that are not licit for

us and are also not good for us. And so, over time, sexual sin became the great example of concupiscence. But concupiscence goes far beyond the sins of the flesh. It's basically the rejection or the avoidance of something that God is putting in front of us for our good in favor of something to which we have no right, and which is not going to do us any good. When we move in those directions, we run the risk of losing or rejecting the mystery of the Risen Lord's grace. Thank God for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation! In Reconciliation, we get a renewal of baptismal grace.

Cardinal Filoni notes that when people confronted the empty tomb, the Sepulchre, at the time of Jesus' Resurrection, not everyone behaved in the same way. Not everyone took advantage of the graces that were there. The guards who were positioned to prevent the expected corpse of Christ from being stolen – they ran away frightened, and some of them “allowed themselves to be bribed to affirm a falsehood,” that is, that the body had been stolen (p. 58). The religious leaders of Jerusalem knew that some people thought Jesus could be the Messiah; to accept the

fact that He had been raised would have convinced the people that Jesus was, in fact, that Messiah. And so, they worked to contain any evidence of a possible resurrection (even though Pharisees, in general, *did* believe in resurrection and afterlife, unlike the Sadducees, who believed in neither).

The disciples, Cardinal Filoni says, were “wrought by a psychological fragility” (p. 58). That’s the space between excitement and joy on the one hand and doubt and disbelief on the other. We see it in Thomas certainly, but we also see it in terms of the disciples having a hard time recognizing the Risen Jesus when He does appear to them.

Cardinal Filoni next points to Mary Magdalene and the women who accompanied her. Even they are initially surprised, but Scripture says they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy. So, it’s this combination of mixed emotions and perceptions. Even in the direct presence of the grace of the resurrection, it’s possible to miss what is actually happening. And because you and I live lives fractured by original sin, it becomes very easy for us to miss what’s going on.

His Eminence writes that “We need to stay there in front of the Sepulchre” (p. 58). Why? Because you and I, in the day-to-day engagement of our faith, are constantly confronted by a resurrection that we did not see happen with our own eyes. Our faith tells us it’s true, but we take it on the testimony of others. We take it on the testimony of the evangelists. We take it on the testimony of the early church who grew in excitement and grace because of that resurrection. And so, because we’re constantly confronted by a resurrection that we did not actually see, we need to stay close to that Sepulchre where it happened. Now, for you and me, this means something more than it does for the average Christian because we have a particular devotion to the Holy Sepulchre by virtue of the vocation we have been called to in our Order.

Cardinal Filoni refers to “perceiving in my spirit that Jesus calls me by name” (p. 59). To Jesus, we are not anonymous. He doesn’t just call me as part of a group; He calls me by name, He calls me as an individual, He calls me for who I am. I’m not just one among many. I’m not part of a creation that God

made and then just tossed out to see what would happen. I am known by God -- personally. And I'm not just known as "one of the Christians." I'm not just known as "one of the members of the Order." I'm known for who I am. I 'm known personally. I'm known individually.

His Eminence continues: "It would be fascinating for us to think of belonging to that group of Mary Magdalene and the other women . . . where true fidelity to God is found in righteousness of heart" (p. 61). This is something really important for us as Knights and Dames. It would be fascinating to think of being like Peter, when the Lord asks him three times, "Do you love me?" and he has to answer three times because he's denied OR WILL DENY Jesus three times. Peter, mindful of his fragility, is still able to say "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love You." That's where we would like to be.

Jesus, the Word of God (pp. 61-64)

One thing that always strikes me when I spend time with the Sacred Scriptures is that there's a shared "identity" between Jesus Himself and revelation. It's not just that the Scriptures *contain* the words of Jesus; it's that the Scriptures exist in a very real way as the *presence* of Jesus, as the *reality* of Jesus. It's no accident that we refer to the Sacred Scriptures as the Word of God. And at the same time, St. John reveals in his gospel that Jesus is the Word of God. This is why Vatican II can say when the Scriptures are proclaimed at Mass, Christ is actually speaking to His people. Christ is speaking because the Scriptures themselves share an identity with Jesus.

Cardinal Filoni writes "The gospels reveal, first of all, the mystery of the person of Jesus together with His teaching" (pp. 61-61). This is important.

We're not just getting Jesus' teachings; we're getting Jesus Himself. And it points to that difference that we speak about so often: the difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus.

His Eminence writes “This is why we approach the Word of God, as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council write in *Dei Verbum*, with a sense of ‘reverence’, since it is precisely the Person of Jesus.” It’s hard for us to wrap our heads around this, and it’s something we’re asked to take on faith, that the Scriptures themselves share an identity with the person of Jesus.

Cardinal Filoni quotes Pope Benedict XVI (from his 2010 exhortation *Verbum Domini*): “The novelty of biblical revelation consists in the fact that God became known to us through the dialogue which He desires to have with us.” So, the Logos, the Word of God, entered the world and took on human nature so that that dialogue could take place in a way that we could actually understand it. Without the person of Jesus approaching us as the Word of God, and at the same time, as a flesh and blood truly man (so “true God” and “true man”) we would never have been able to understand this Word that God speaks to us in the way that we can after and because of the Incarnation.

“In the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, listening to the Word of God as a Trinitarian gift of salvation remains fundamental in the context of our spirituality” (p. 64). So here is a beautiful insight: the Sacred Scriptures are Trinitarian. As a whole, it’s the Word of God, the word spoken by God, beginning with His revelation to His chosen people. So, we have the Father.

Jesus Himself is the Word of God, so we have the Son. And these Scriptures are composed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And so, we have the third Person of the blessed Trinity. When we encounter the Sacred Scriptures, we’re actually engaging the Trinity.



Commitment: Prayer and Eucharist (pp. 64-68)

This section begins with a bold statement, even though it's something we should already know: Prayer should never be missing from our lives. If we were a social club, if we were a philanthropic entity, then one could say, "Well, you know, does it matter how I spend my days as long as I'm doing the things that the group wants to do?" You could help the Holy Land, certainly. You could support the Holy Land without ever saying a prayer. And, you know, maybe there are some pious pagans that do just that, people who go there to visit as tourists, perhaps, and who support the businesses that support the local economy there. But that's not who we are. Our life has to have prayer as a substantial component. Why? Because prayer belongs to the life of Jesus, Cardinal Filoni says (p. 65). And He not only recommended it to us, but He told us how to do it in the giving of what we call "the Lord's Prayer." Cardinal Filoni calls it the "prayer par excellence." And he says that "along with that prayer, without any hypocrisy and without wasting words, we need to keep vigil" (p. 65). We keep vigil at the Sepulchre.

Now, when I read that, what came to mind was the antiphon we pray at the Liturgy of the Hours' Night Prayer. Now, technically, it's not a requirement for most people, but in my heart, I believe that a vocation to the Order implies a call to praying the Liturgy of the Hours. The Liturgy of the Hours is given as an obligation to members of any official religious order. And I think we need to always remember we *are* a religious order. And so even though we're not commanded to pray the Hours, I think it's something that helps us grow in our identity as an Order.

But back to Night Prayer. In the Liturgy of the Hours, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer each contains a "cantic," a hymn or a chant, typically with a biblical text, that forms a regular part of the liturgy. In Morning Prayer, the cantic is the *Benedictus* ("Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel . . ."). In Evening Prayer, the cantic is the *Magnificat* ("My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. . ."). The cantic for Night Prayer is known as the *Nunc Dimittis* ("Lord, now you let your servant go in peace. . ."). It's what Simeon says after he sees the infant Jesus. Now each of these canticles is

opened and closed with an antiphon. At Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, the antiphon changes day to day, season to season. But in Night Prayer, the antiphon is always the same: “Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake, watch over us as we sleep, that, awake, we may keep watch with Christ, and, asleep, rest in His peace.” Keeping watch with Christ! You and I are called to keep vigil at the Sepulchre. Why? Because this is where this tremendous event happens, the event of the Resurrection. And we’re called to keep watch there the way the guards kept watch, although we’re not called to have the same response. We’re called to keep watch the way the women kept watch. Of course, we have the benefit of knowing that when Mary Magdalene saw “the gardener” she was really seeing Christ; she was confused at first. We don’t have to be confused. We have the benefit of her experience and the recording of that experience by the evangelists. So, we’re called to keep vigil.

How do we keep vigil? In prayer. We can’t go sit at the Sepulchre because we don’t live near it. If we lived in Jerusalem, maybe we would go there every day and spend some time keeping vigil there. We

can't do that, but we *can* pray every day. Again, I recommend the Hours to you. I think it's a good way to keep vigil throughout the day.

Cardinal Filoni continues: "Praying per se belongs to the style and nature of our Order. Therefore, every Dame or Knight is well advised to learn to pray and to do so constantly" (p. 65). Now, what does it mean "to do so constantly"? It means to remain in the awareness of God throughout the day, not just at Mass, not just when we're saying our prayers, but throughout the day.

One of the things that always surprises me as a confessor is how freely people can take the name of the Lord in vain and think nothing of it. A piece of advice that I often give is this: "Try to remember at different points throughout the day that you're in the presence of the Lord." Because if we're aware that we're in His presence, we're not going to take His name in vain. And for a penance in those situations, I'll often give a series of "Our Fathers." If we keep saying "hallowed be Thy Name", eventually it will sink in, that His name is blessed and is not to be taken in vain.

But, to return to the Liturgy of the Hours: it's a great way to learn to pray and to do so constantly. Because when we pray all of the Hours, we're praying early morning, morning, afternoon, evening, and night-time. It sounds like a whole lot, but in reality, it's not. And it helps me to recall the presence of God and to speak to God and to listen for Him at those different times of the day.

Prayer belongs to the nature and style of our Order. In other words, we need to be a people of prayer. And then His Eminence says, "But there is yet another commitment that must be dear to the members of our order, the Eucharist, the ecclesial prayer par excellence" (p. 66). So, this is "the fount and apex" of our prayer, to take a phrase from the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium*, 11), that supreme prayer that we offer when coming together as church. He describes the Eucharist as that "in which the sacrifice of the Cross is sacramentally perpetuated" (p. 66). Now, what does "sacramentally perpetuated" mean? Being "perpetuated" is not the same as being "repeated." The gift of Christ Himself on the cross is never repeated. It doesn't need to be

repeated. If we were repeating it, that would mean it didn't do what it was supposed to do the first time. Rather than think of it as being repeated, understand instead that this sacrifice exists through all eternity because the One who offers it is God. So it happened on Calvary, but it continues cosmically. And what happens on the altar is that we get to tap into it. We get to engage it. It's already happening. Whether we're celebrating Mass or not, the sacrifice of Christ is eternally being offered to the Father by Christ Himself. And you and I at Mass get to engage it. So, we're not repeating it.

Because of what happens at Mass, and because of what we're left with – this once-bread which is now the body of Christ – we have the opportunity and the privilege to be able to reserve the Eucharistic species in our tabernacle, which gives us another great opportunity and privilege, the opportunity and privilege to come before the sacramental Presence of the Lord and to adore Him in Exposition. And Cardinal Filoni addresses this beautifully: “In the adoration of the Eucharist, the gesture of Mary of Bethany, who in humility and great affection anointed the feet of the Lord, is prolonged, so to speak” (p. 67).

Let's unpack that. Mary anointed Jesus' feet with aromatic nard, a costly ointment. In doing that, she was adoring the body of Christ. Cardinal Filoni reminds us that when we have the opportunity to adore the body of Christ, which we do at Mass, but we also do in Exposition, we are prolonging that act of Mary anointing the feet of Christ. And so, you know, it comes full circle.

The fragrance continues to fill the house. It was filled when Mary did that for Jesus, and it's filled when we come and adore the Body of the Lord in our prayer, in our service, in our commitment to the Order.

The Mystery of Charity (pp. 68-75)

Cardinal Filoni returns to Pope Benedict: "The principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity" is charity "to which Jesus Christ bore witness by His earthly life and especially by His death and resurrection" (*Caritas in Veritatis*, #1). In other words, charity is essential for us as human beings; for the human person to be fully developed, there has to

be the infusion of charity, which, thank God, is one of the virtues we receive in its seedling form at our baptism. “The root of charity,” the Cardinal says, “is Christ” (p. 68). So, charity is not a lofty ideal. It’s a response to the living person of Jesus Christ, just as our Order is not just a good thing for people to consider joining; rather, it’s a response to Christ and His call to us.

His Eminence notes that when Christ welcomes the repentance of the thief next to Him and asks the Father not to impute guilt to those who are crucifying Him, He’s revealing an act of sacramental charity (p. 70). It’s the same charity that the priest exercises in the sacrament of confession.

His Eminence reminds us that, as members of the Order, we are involved with charity for two reasons. First, “because we are children of the Church.” Secondly, because “we are bound to a noble, pastoral-charitable institution, that is the Order, that shows specific attention to the needs of the Holy Land” (p. 71). And those needs, he spells out, address many groups: the Christian families residing there, those non-Catholic religious communities which

coexist there, children and young people (without distinction of creed) who need and deserve education, and the pilgrims who intend to travel there and relive the most important words and moments in the life of Jesus.



Membership in the Order, says the Cardinal, is not membership in “a philanthropic entity committed to promoting the material and social improvement of the recipients” (pp. 74-75). There are lots of groups that do that. Rather, he says, “it means having the conviction of the spiritual value of one’s membership, and, at the same time, the very high value of charity” (p.75). We’re not just do-gooders. There are

lots of do-gooders out there. We're members of an order that is a spiritual reality. That is, our membership is the result not of our saying, "Oh, they look like a good bunch of people. I should join them," but rather of Christ calling each one of us to membership in the Order. We refer to that every time we pray the Daily Prayer of the Order: "Lord Jesus, *who has willed to call me* to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem . . ." We don't say "Lord Jesus, *who allowed me to join* the Order" or "Lord Jesus, *who blessed me for wanting to be* part of this." We say "Lord Jesus, *who has willed to call me.*" That's something everyone needs to think about: Am I part of this because I believe God wants me to do it, and so I participate in it the best I can? Or do I just enjoy getting together once a year for a couple of banquets and a retreat? Or do I just like the people that are in it, and I want to be around them?

In a footnote on page 74, Cardinal Filoni notes that "our institution is not always well understood." Sometimes it's judged unnecessary, "almost as if it is a reserve for a caste of vain and anachronistic people." This can happen if we do not stay aware of the fact

that ours is “a vocation with a high ethical, spiritual, and humanitarian purpose.” So those goals that we talked about earlier – a secular philanthropic group could achieve some of them. Certainly, nobody’s going to stop them. But we’re approaching them in response to a calling that carries with it a high ethical, spiritual, and humanitarian purpose.

“Being a Knight or Dame of the Order implies developing the double profile”: on the one hand, the spiritual value of membership; on the other, the high value of charity. He says, “Part of being a Knight or Dame implies developing that double profile rooted in faith in Christ, Who died and rose again, without making membership depend on occasional events, personal aspects, or crises, present in every organization” (p. 75). In other words, we can’t think that our vocation here is just to “go to” events. That’s part of the vocation, but that’s not all there is. And we can’t let ourselves be discouraged by personal aspects or crises, which every organization has.

Perhaps something happens in or around the Order that you don’t like. It happens. Everybody in their

own place has to make certain kinds of decisions, and sometimes we make decisions that do not please everyone else. We can't say, "Well, I don't want to do this because I don't like this decision." The question is "Am I called or am I not called?" If you're called and you don't like something that's happening, well, sometimes we just need to get over it.

You're still called. In the end, Cardinal Filoni reminds us (and this cannot be overemphasized) that membership in the Order is a response to a vocation, and we need to be aware of that every day in our prayer and in our activities within the Order.

*The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume:
A Spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre
Fernando Cardinal Filoni*

Session Five:

15 June 2024: Saturday of the Tenth Week
in Ordinary Time

**The Ecclesiological Dimension
of Spirituality *Part 2 (pp. 75-102)***



Let us recite together The Memorare, Prayer of the Order:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known
that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession, was left unaided.
Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To you I come; before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me.

Amen.

An Ecclesial Reality (pp. 75-84)

It can be tempting sometimes to skip footnotes when we're reading, but I want to encourage you to pay attention to those footnotes in Cardinal Filoni's book that are more than simple citations. For instance, the footnote on page 75 reminds us that "the first pastoral reference for each member of the Order is his or her parish and the diocese." This is so important to remember. You know, often, you find religious groups that focus so much on their individual specific identity that they forget the big picture a little bit. Cardinal Filoni reminds us that our first pastoral reference – our major point of contact with the faith – is not the Order. It's our parish. And it's our diocese. And so, nurturing the relationship with the parish and the diocese is of great importance.

Because our identity as an Order is that we are an ecclesial reality, the Order itself has a special mission within the larger church. Cardinal Filoni writes that "the Order has a mission entrusted to it by the Supreme Pontiffs." It's a tri-fold mission, if you will: 1) to support the Church of Jerusalem; 2) to take on initiatives that help the social, educational, and

relational coexistence of the groups in the Holy Land; and 3) to favor dialogue among Christians, Jews, and Muslims. These are major components of the mission given to our Order as an ecclesial reality by the Supreme Pontiff.

Therefore, it would make no sense for someone to be a member of the Order if they were not interested in supporting the Church in the Holy Land, or if they were not interested in fostering dialogue among Judaism, Christianity and Islam. If someone was inimical to that sort of thing, that would be a problem. We have to fall in love with the mission of the Order.

His Eminence makes reference to the Latin phrase “sentire cum ecclesia” (p. 77). In a nutshell, this means to take on the mind of the Church as our own mind, to internalize what the Church believes and how she conducts herself. Cardinal Filoni says that this will always be the guiding principle for a Dame or a Knight of the Order. And, with that in mind, he re-presents to us what the most recent Pontiffs have said specifically about who we are as members of this ecclesial reality.

The Magisterium of the Church and the Order (pp. 84-93)



Pope (now Saint) John XXIII (upon approving the updating of our Constitution in 1962): “Members of the Order increasingly feed their souls in the Christian spirit, defend and spread the faith in the homeland of the Divine Redeemer and inflame men to love the Savior.” These are three very important parts of our identity. What does it mean to “feed the soul”? That refers to continuing formation, ongoing formation. I think we do a decent job with that right now. Defending and spreading the faith in the homeland of Jesus: that has to do with giving public witness. We do that by supporting the initiatives of the Church in the Holy Land; we’re not able to be there physically to do it ourselves, so we support the Church in her efforts to do it. We inflame people to love the Savior by the example of our own Christian lives, by always letting the reference point be our love of Jesus Christ.

Pope (now Saint) Paul VI (addressing the Order in 1964): “An institution like yours attracts the public’s gaze and esteem” in two ways: “the exterior, your uniforms, your insignia, your meetings.” The other is interior: “your adhesion to the Faith and to Catholic life, indeed to the militia and service of the church and the cause of Jesus Christ [especially in the Holy Land] [your efforts related to] the “spiritual and corporal beneficence for [the people that live in the Holy Land].” “Adhesion to the faith and to Catholic life”: I don’t think anyone would ever be invited to the Order or would even be interested in it if he or she did not have a strong sense of Catholic identity. As an order, we see each other most visibly at events like Investiture Weekend or perhaps a Good Friday procession or ordinations or installations of bishops. We stand out clearly in our attire. But what we really want to be seen for is the service we provide, not just our presence. And so, it’s important for each one of us to ask ourselves the questions “What am I doing to actively serve the Church? How do I serve my parish, my diocese?” When we’re younger, some kinds of service are easier. As we get older, sometimes the only way we can serve is through prayer

and financial support, neither of which should be discounted. We support the Holy Land in a similar way; we might not be able to go there to perform a particular service, but we can provide for someone else to be able to do it sometimes.

Pope (now Saint) John Paul II (speaking to the Order in the Holy Year 2000 and marking the Order's Jubilee): The Holy Father reminded us that the place of the Holy Sepulchre is important to us not only because we were founded to protect the holy sites and to provide for them, but because the Sepulchre is the site of the Resurrection. We could say to ourselves "Well, duh, obviously." But it's an important reminder. How often do we think about the Resurrection? How often does the fact of the Resurrection come into our prayer? We always want to start our prayer with praise and thanksgiving, and then we usually move into petition, because we all need things and have friends who need things. But it's also important for us, in our prayer, to dwell on some of the teachings of our Faith, those things that God has revealed, especially what He has revealed in Jesus Christ. And the revelation of the Resurrection

is most important. Christ's Resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection if we hang on to Him. My personal experience is that when I remind Catholics of the Resurrection, they're sometimes very surprised when they remember it because we tend to think of our Faith in terms of how it guides our actions, our morality. And, of course, our Faith gives us the hope of Heaven. But what Christ has promised is not an afterlife of happy little spirits floating around the kingdom. It's not nirvana. It's not "becoming one" with nature. We're promised the *resurrection of the body*. And I think we lose sight of that sometimes. When we gaze upon the Sepulchre, either in person or with the eyes of our hearts in prayer, we need to be confronted with the fact of resurrection, not only of Jesus, but also the resurrection to come for us. When Christ comes in glory on that Day of Judgment, the dead will be raised; the just will go to the resurrection of the blessed and the wicked to the resurrection of the damned. The Holy Father said "There is an ancient and glorious bond between your chivalrous confraternity and the place of Christ's Sepulchre, where the glory of the Resurrection is celebrated in a most particular way.

This is the very focal point of your spirituality.” He goes on to say, “For you, as for every Christian, a fresh appreciation of baptism . . . is crucial.” Why?

Because it’s baptism that gives us the opportunity to enter into the Resurrection.

Pope Benedict XVI (writing in 2008): Having grown up watching Europe – and especially his beloved homeland of Germany – be destroyed in World War II, the Holy Father casts his gaze upon the Holy Land. “What need the land of Jesus has for justice and peace! Continue to work for this, and do not tire of asking . . . that, as soon as possible, these aspirations may come to completion.” He takes the focus off us and puts it on the Holy Land to which we are called to be so devoted.

Pope Francis (in a 2013 speech to Members of the Order on pilgrimage in Rome): “Your journey . . . grows from continued commitment to nourish your spiritual life.” The goal of this, he says, is to stay grounded in “the redemptive power of the Cross and the Resurrection to offer hope and peace.”

So, as an ecclesial reality, thinking with the mind of the church, listening to the Holy Fathers, we get a wealth of insight and grace. This encouragement to keep our prayer going, to nourish our spiritual life, to use our outward symbols to bring other people to love Jesus more, to focus on the Resurrection and to work for peace in the Holy Land: all of these many facets form a kind of mosaic that reminds us of what we're all about as members of the Order.

Cardinal Filoni ends this section by going back to Pope John Paul in 2003 when he met with the Consulta that year. He encouraged the Order to take Mary as a model and to kindle, and maybe rekindle, a love for the Holy Rosary.

Her Name Was Mary (pp. 93 to 99)

His Eminence quotes a wonderful catechesis by Pope Benedict (from *Jesus of Nazareth*): “The Church’s juridical structure is founded on Peter and the Eleven, but in the day-to-day life of the Church, it’s the women who are constantly opening the door

to the Lord.” Pope Benedict reminds us that Peter might have been put in charge, but it’s the women that really do an awful lot of the work in the Church, something for which we must be eternally grateful.

The Holy Father ties this into the thanksgiving we express for the work done by the Mother of God. Cardinal Filoni expresses it well: “In truth,” he writes, we have to remember that “the reception of grace in the world had taken place through Mary.” Were it not for Mary, the Incarnation would not have happened as it did. God would have found His way to bring it about, but He does it through the “fiat” offered by the Virgin Mary. That “fiat” is what allows Jesus to become incarnate in her womb through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Cardinal Filoni then reminds us that, in the Semitic tradition, one did not let a woman live by herself; a widow, for instance, would live with her children or members of her extended family. Mary, according to tradition, was a widow for a long time. It would have been expected that a woman like her would be taken into the care of her child or by a close and trusted relative. And so, from the Cross, Jesus says to

John “Behold your mother.” Cardinal Filoni notes that “this was the last human concern of the Lord.” And I think that’s so beautiful. You know, here He is accomplishing the salvation of the entire human race, physically dying, suffering, bleeding out, not being able to breathe, and the last thing He does is make sure His mother gets taken care of. It brings me to tears thinking about it.



Next, Cardinal Filoni writes about Mary being given the title “Our Lady Queen of Palestine.” Saint John Paul made that a perpetual title of hers in 1994. We in the Order venerate her under that rubric on October 25.

*“Then He Led Them Out As Far As Bethany, And Lifting Up
His Hands He Blessed Them” (pp. 99-102)*

The final section of the book is about the Ascension, the return of Jesus to the Father, His return to Trinitarian communion. Cardinal Filoni here reveals an incredible insight: that when Jesus returns to the Father, He brings with Him every human experience that He had in His human nature. And His Eminence lists some of them. He writes that Jesus brings with Him to the Father the joy in praying that His disciples noticed in Him, the fervor of the people to whom He had given bread, the joy of forgiven sinners, the gratitude of the poor.

But He also brings to the heights of Heaven the sensation of physical pain that He experienced in His scourging and crucifixion, the experience of being condemned unjustly, of being abandoned by His friends. We often think of God as containing within Himself the perfection of everything that is good. And that's true. But God also contains within Himself now – because of what Jesus did – our experience of pain, our experience of being betrayed, our experience of abandonment.

Everything that Jesus went through, the good and the bad, now is brought into the “being” of God Himself. There’s nothing we could go through that God Himself doesn’t know experientially. So, you know, sometimes you’ll hear people say, “Oh, God is crying over this.” And it’s too tempting to respond by saying “Well, no, He’s God. He doesn’t cry.” But because of what Jesus does in His Ascension, God has within Himself the experience of crying because Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Jesus wept because what He loved so much was falling into so much evil! He wept – not with tears of rage but with those tears that flow when one’s heart is breaking. Jesus, in the Ascension, brings all of that into the life of the Trinity. And so, God knows what heartache feels like.

And then, says Cardinal Filoni, “finally, He brings death. God knows what it’s like to die.” That’s one of the most powerful statements in the whole book. It would be well worth it to use this final section of the book for prayer this next week (and even beyond)! It’s an incredible meditation that brings us face-to-face with the reality of what Christ was doing in His Incarnation, in His Passion, in His Resurrection, and in His Ascension. We owe His Eminence a debt of gratitude for sharing that insight with us.

MARY QUEEN OF PALESTINE

Patroness of the Order

To you, Virgin Mother Mary,
Queen of the Land of Christ we come to praise you,
to thank you and entrust to you all your children,
inhabitants and pilgrims of this Land.

Virgin, Daughter of Zion,
teach us the love you have for everyone, without distinction.
Show us your merciful heart, give us your clarity of vision.
As in the days of Nazareth teach us to listen attentively
to the voice of God and to his Word of life.

Teach us fidelity in our daily work
and silence capable of creating profound communion.

Like in Cana watch over families,
so that there is no lack of joy and unity.

As on the streets of Galilee and Judea,
precede us on the path of discipleship
in the footsteps of your beloved Son
to the supreme offering at the foot of Calvary.

As in the Upper Room, intercede with the gift of the Spirit
that cries in us: “Abbà”.

The One Father for Jews, Christians and Muslims,
Help us all to walk on the paths of forgiveness
and reconciliation so the walls that divide may fall.

Mother of the Prince of Peace,
also gift us the taste of Heaven that supports our hope,
so that soon “justice and peace will kiss” this Holy Land
and the entire earth.

Amen.

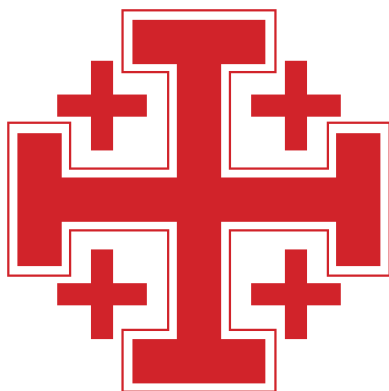
Our Lady, Queen of Palestine, Pray for us and all the peoples
of the Lands made sacred by your Son's Life, Death, and
Resurrection.

*The Blessed Virgin Mary, under this title, was officially declared
Patroness of the Order in 1994, by order of the Apostolic See.*

Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem,
Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, asked several contemplative
monastic communities of his diocese to write a prayer to
Mary Queen of Palestine, patron of the Order of the Holy
Sepulchre, whose feast falls on October 25.

The hope expressed is that with the Virgin Mary we place
ourselves before the One for whom nothing is impossible.

Faced with the difficult situation of the Holy Land, we
strengthen our trust in the Mother of the Prince of Peace,
confident of the power of her intercession in favor of justice.



KNIGHT'S CODE OF HONOR

My soul to God — by the full spiritual life;

My life to Christ the King;

My heart to our Blessed Lady; and

My own honor — the ineffable honor that
comes to him who called the Church my

Mother and to him who calls God,

my Father and strives to live like His Son.

THE MEMORARE

Prayer of the Order

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,
I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To you I come; before you I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me.

Amen.

Membership carries with it certain spiritual and temporal responsibilities with the first being daily prayer for peace in the Holy Land. Praying the Memorare to Our Lady, Queen of Palestine is especially encouraged. The Blessed Virgin Mary, under this title, was officially declared patroness of the order in 1994, by order of the Apostolic See. The Memorare was given to the Order by St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, when he urged the Second Crusade.

THE KNIGHT'S PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ,
for Your five wounds that we carry on our insignia
we pray to You.

Give us the strength to love all whom
your Father has created
and, more so, our enemies.

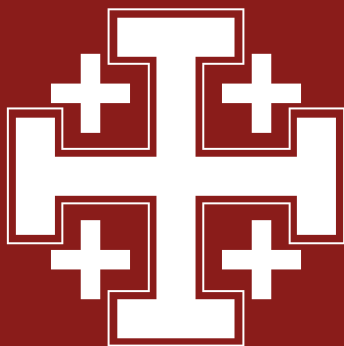
Free our soul and heart from sin,
from partiality, from egoism and from cowardice
so that we can be worthy of Your sacrifice.

Let your Spirit fall upon us all,
the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre,
so that it may render us as convinced
and sincere ambassadors of peace and love
among our brothers and sisters and, especially,
among all those who think they do not believe in You.

Give us Faith to face all the problems of everyday life
and to deserve, one day, to approach,
humbly but without fear, Your presence.

Amen.





Equestrian Order *of the* Holy Sepulchre *of* Jerusalem

MIDDLE ATLANTIC LIEUTENANCY, USA

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