



## **Lent message from H.E. Mons. Michele Pennisi, Ecclesiastical Grand Prior of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem**

Dear Confreres and Consoeurs of the Sacred Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem,

We are preparing ourselves to joyfully celebrate Easter. Lent is that special time of the year of grace that invites us to return to the Lord with an open heart and to renew our personal life and our lives within the community.

Pope Francis recently sent out a message inspired in what Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew: *"Because of the multiplication of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold."* (Mt 24,12).

Love grows cold the moment society becomes enslaved by idols such as money earned in a dishonest way, power that oppresses people's dignity and pleasure without restraints. But love can also grow cold among members of our own Order if we neglect our individual prayers, fail to attend celebrations in our community, show indifference, incur in selfish laziness, sterile pessimism, envy and the temptation to isolate ourselves. The mentality that rules our world nowadays is to only deal with what is palpable and evident.

Sometimes charity is extinguished in many hearts, but it will never be extinguished from God's heart. He always gives us new opportunities to start loving again just as Jesus Christ loved us, to put a stop to the iniquity and corruption in the world and to defeat the frost that paralyzes actions. During this time of Lent, the Christian tradition offers us remedies such as prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

**Prayer** warms our heart by calling us to the primacy of the love of God our Father, makes us humbler but also full of trust in Providence and more open to dialogue and communion.

**Fasting** allows us to experience what people who lack the essentials have to experience every single day of their lives. It makes us more attentive to the Word of God. The Word itself can satisfy our hunger for lasting truth and happiness.

**Almsgiving** is an expression of charity. It offers us the opportunity to take an active act of Providence towards his children, helping us to share our material and spiritual goods with others.

I encourage all of the members of the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem to support the health structures in the service of the poorest and marginalized, to pray for the Christians persecuted in the Middle East and to commit themselves every day to be builders of peace.

The light of the Risen Christ dispels the darkness of evil and the fire of the Holy Spirit allows our hearts to burn again with faith, hope and charity.

I warmly bless you and assure you of my remembrance in prayer.

**Michele Pennisi. Archbishop of Monreale. Monreale, February 21<sup>st</sup> 2018.**

***Ecclesiastical Grand Prior of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem***