**Message for Pentecost 2020**

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Military Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem,

We are preparing to celebrate the feast of Pentecost in a time when our lives are full of concern and fear for the contagion of the Coronavirus: for the deaths it is causing, for the stress of our courageous health workers, for the economic consequences, for the uncertainty of the future.

  The challenge of Covid-19 has changed us: we will not be the same as before. Certainly we could be better, but only if we allow ourselves to be truly guided by the Holy Spirit, who helps us conquer all fear and makes us capable of turning our life into a gift of love that surpasses even the dismay of death.

We are asked for a supplement of love that can open hearts to a new hope, to a new lifestyle that overcomes isolation, that overcomes the fear of being infected, that fear which leads us to avoid helping others.

Pentecost is the feast of the Spirit, the gift *par excellence* of the Risen One, which is poured out abundantly on the community of the first believers and is given to us to provide strength in the demanding task of freeing the world from disease and all forms of evil, to make us aware of being children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Spirit is a force that descends from above, from the world of God and enters history to vivify it; a force which instils in us strength and courage to overcome all difficulties.

The men and women on whom the Spirit has been poured out are the new creatures, transformed by the breath that recreates things. The Holy Spirit, who is the source of multifarious spiritual gifts and the guarantee of unity, enables us to speak the true and only language of love and allows us to listen in all languages.

In the common struggle to help (with the help of God) the sick to become well, the true development of all peoples is measured.

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth, defaced by diseases, wars, injustices that cause poverty and suffering, physical and moral pollution: help us to confront our weakness, conquer our inability to forgive, overcome the temptation of the division of Babel; make us one heart and one soul, so that once our mutual misunderstandings are swept away, the visible unity of all believers in Christ shall be realized.

Happy Pentecost.

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Ecclesiastical Grand Prior of the Order of St Lazarus