



## Message for Lent 2025

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

Lent reminds us that we must walk the path towards Easter with conviction to arrive renewed in body and spirit. The salvation that Jesus Christ came to bring with his death and resurrection involves all our relationships with God, with ourselves, with our neighbour, with creation. The path towards Easter calls us to renew our outlook and our heart as Christians, through repentance, conversion and forgiveness, to live all the richness of the grace of the Paschal Mystery.

In this Lent with prayer, fasting and almsgiving we must show joy on our faces, we must smell the scent of freedom, we must release that love that makes all things new.

Prayer, which expresses our true personal relationship with the Father, helps us overcome the self-sufficiency of our ego, opens us to welcoming the mercy of the Lord and to listening to the needs of our neighbour and the groans of creation.

Fasting helps us change our attitude toward our neighbour and other creatures, overcoming the temptation to consume everything to satiate our greed.

Then almsgiving becomes real, in works of charity and solidarity, in sharing our time and our goods with our brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis, to whom we extend our solidarity and prayers for his health, wrote in his Message for Lent this year: "The Jubilee motto "Pilgrims of Hope" brings to mind the long journey of the people of Israel towards the promised land, narrated in the book of Exodus: the difficult journey from slavery to freedom, wanted and guided by the Lord, who loves his people and is always faithful to them. As Christians we are called to walk together, overcoming the temptation to look only at ourselves, to be "weavers of unity", who move towards the same goal, towards

the hope that does not disappoint (see Rom 5.5) founded on the Paschal victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death.”

In this year, which marks the 1700th anniversary of the common profession of faith in the Council of Nicaea and in which all Christian confessions celebrate Easter on the same date, our Order is called to be the spokesperson for the desire for unity among all Christians and for the aspiration for peace common to all humanity.

I address grateful thanks to the Spiritual Protector of the Order, His Beatitude Youssef Absi Greek-Catholic Melkite Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem and of all the East, to H.E. Don Francisco de Borbon Graf von Hardenberg, 50th Grand Master, to the Members of the Grand Magistral Council, to the former Spiritual Advisory Council, to the Council for Ecumenism and to all the members of our Order for the journey we have made together in recent years.

I wish you a joyful Lenten journey, rich in the fruits of conversion and in works of mercy especially towards the sick. I assure you of my prayers and my blessing from the bottom of my heart.

***Monreale March 2, 2025***

***Michele Pennisi EGCLJ, Archbishop Emeritus of Monreale & Ecclesiastical Grand Prior***