



Message for Lent 2023

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

During Lent the Lord invites us to detach ourselves from the mediocrity and vanity of daily life in order to experience his merciful love.

Even if our ordinary commitments force us to remain in the places where we have always been, we are invited to enter the inner chamber of our heart and to "climb a high mountain" together with Jesus, to relive the experience of the Transfiguration in which the divinity of Christ appears to the disciples under the sign of Beauty. We have to set out on an uphill journey, which requires effort and concentration, like a hike in the mountains. Going up we have to keep our eyes firmly fixed on the path but pointing towards the goal, where the panorama that opens up at the end surprises and rewards by its wonder.

The Transfiguration of Jesus shows the beauty of the divine light that radiates on him and reveals his true identity and mission as the beloved Son. In the disciples who climb the mountain we see the anxieties of the people of our time about the meaning of life and the tragedies of history and we ask ourselves "How can the gentle beauty of the Risen Crucified One bring salvation to this cynical and cruel humanity?"

In the disciples who are present on the mountain, we see the beautiful experience of the revelation of the Father and the beloved Son, wrapped in the cloud of the Spirit.

In the disciples who come down from the mountain, we see the need to live the life of faith through the sincere imperative of conversion and renewal in the harshness of daily life.

Jesus Christ, Beauty of God incarnate foreshadows his passion and death in the background to his disciples through his Transfiguration. This Transfiguration, which is a window open to the future to confirm the faith of the disciples in the face of the scandal of the Cross, is for us an invitation not to fear because God, ancient and ever new beauty, reveals himself as love that saves and conquers the silence and solitude of death. The Transfiguration is an experience of fullness, harmony and peace that helps us to keep hope alive, despite the difficulties of the journey.

Finally, I encourage all members of the Order to support health care facilities at the service of the poorest and most marginalized in the various countries of the world and in particular Turkey and Syria which have been hit by the recent catastrophic earthquakes.

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

+ **Michele Pennisi**

Archbishop Emeritus of Monreale & Ecclesiastical Grand Prior