



GRAND MASTER

Madrid, 6th. of December, 2011

Dear Confreres and Consoeurs,

Once more Christians will soon commemorate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. In contemplating the Nativity of the Lord we open our hearts to *Hope*, and see the divine glory wondrously revealed in the innocence of a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. That night in Bethlehem, Christ became one of us, to be our companion through the various paths of history. Take the hand held out by the Child: it is the hand of a friend not one that will seize anything from us. We live in terrible times, amidst what is probably one of the worst crisis of modern times. Economic difficulties hem us in, and there seems no clear way out. Nevertheless, following the tradition of our Order, born in Holy Land, we must fulfill the destiny for which we were created: service to our neighbours and help for those in need.

Let us be living witnesses to this *Hope*. *Hope* that, according to Saint Thomas Aquinas is: *inspired virtue which qualifies humanity to have confidence and full certainty of eternal life and the means, supernatural as well as natural, necessary to achieve it, resting on the almighty aid of God*. But there is more. Christmas should encourage us to strive for more solidarity among families, nations and mankind - a light of *Hope* for all. And we, who are followers of the Green Cross, are those who should exemplify this *Hope* in a world that has drifted apart from the Lord. This Christmas, we must go deeper in love and hope. We must be messengers of the great news of the birth of the Redeemer, and make yet greater efforts in works of charity to mitigate, wherever possible, the ills affecting our society.

During these Christmas Festivities, I wish you all possible happiness. May the Babe of Bethlehem, the Lord Jesus, lighten your homes and his blessing, once more, be daily upon them. In these days, our prayers should echo the message of the angels - "peace on earth and goodwill to all who are God's friends" - and, as is our particular duty, remembering those who are persecuted for professing the Christian Faith.

Dear Confreres: let the news that no-one is a stranger to the love of the Lord, be the message of our Order of Saint Lazarus. God bless you and the work you do in his name!

Atavis et Armis

Carlos Gereda de Bourbon

Marquis of Almazan

P.S. I hope to see as many of you as possible in the Pilgrimage to Kevelaer in May, which is organized by the Order in Germany. Please see: www.st-lazarus.net Events.