



GRAND MASTER

Dear Confreres and Consoeurs,

Having come back from our Order's Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, I wish to address you all after the hectic weekend we spent together. As some of you have reminded me this meeting was one of my first wishes. The idea of achieving various targets simultaneously was the main objective behind having Santiago, during a Holy Year, as the venue of the Order.

I must, first of all, thank everybody involved in the organization of the event namely the Grand Priory of Spain and specially the Prior Joaquin Cayuela and his close collaborators. But I must also thank all the 400 pilgrims that have come with the Heads of Jurisdictions from all over the world and representing practically the whole of our beloved Order.

The result, for me, has exceeded all expectations. I hoped we would succeed in having many and diverse members and the numbers and geographic scope of the pilgrims have been overwhelming. I wished to recover the Meeting of Heads of Jurisdictions, which in fact is a constitutional obligation, and this is going to be the start of a regular event which is basic for us, since the Heads of Jurisdictions have the knowledge on the ground of the Order's activities and problems.

The event started with a greeting where some pilgrims came directly from the long and tough walk giving an example to the rest. The meeting of Heads of Jurisdictions was a fruitful and constructive exchange of information particularly on plans and future needs. All my obsessions are: more involvement, better communication, and absolute transparency. For this reason I ask the Head of Jurisdictions not to hesitate in approaching the senior officers of our Order if they need some information, some help or whatever. I also ask you to get in contact with other Head of Jurisdictions to learn from each other especially about charitable works.

Nearly all had the direct experience of a short Pilgrimage by walking down the last 6 kilometres of the way of Saint James. The Pilgrims Mass at the Cathedral was an example, in the words of the Dean, of the union of the Churches of the East and West, Saint John and Saint James. Our Spiritual Protector H.B. The Patriarch Gregorios III was given precedence in the ceremony honouring his rank. The Order was placed in the centre of the ceremony although the early chaos seemed a bad omen. Our Ecumenical nature was made evident by the number of members of Clergy from different Christian Churches present. The Investiture was beautiful with all its pomp and circumstance in the unrivaled baroque framework of the Monastery of San Martin Pinario. Dinner was noisy but joyful. The climax of the different acts was the Melkite Mass full of feeling and emotions of incredible spirituality for which we must be grateful to our Spiritual Protector and his Archimandrites.

Finally we obtained the aim of sending a message to the outside world of strength, unity, spirituality and pride of belonging to Saint Lazarus. The future in front of us looks brilliant, so let us go ahead with our hospitaller work. Moreover I request from those of you that were present to please transmit to those that were unable to come the feeling we all had mingling together in the medieval city of Santiago de Compostela.

The Marquis of Almazan