



Madrid, December 3rd, 2014

Dear Confreres and Consoeurs,

Faith is a gift. We should consider Faith as the largest gift received from our Lord after our own lives. He who has Faith needs no other anchor. When there is Faith there is no fear, no apprehension, none of the dizziness that this frantic and changing world has us submerged in. Next year will mark the five hundredth anniversary since our most famous Spanish Saint, Santa Teresa de Jesús, was born. One of her most famous scriptures reads: "*Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you, when everything passes, God never changes, with patience you may obtain whatever you want, he who has God lacks nothing, why God alone is enough*". Without no doubt this is an ode to Faith, the spirit of eternity which brings us the strength to continue. Anyhow, Faith has been pursued and insulted throughout the years. Most of us will have certainly encountered someone in our way who has judged us for the sake of being Christians, someone who may have used a million arguments against us to prove God does not exist, someone who may use curses on our religion to question our beliefs, or maybe someone who had Faith some time ago, but lost it after what he as a human considered as an injustice.

As many of you may already know, I traveled to Rome last October and visited our Spiritual Protector during the Bishop's Synod held in The Vatican. During a calm walk across the Vatican gardens, I had the chance to enjoy a friendly conversation with His Beatitude. When approaching the rear side of the Cathedral's beautiful dome the Patriarch confessed his great worry concerning the difficult situation in Syria and the entire Middle East. His face turned pale and his restless words made a contrast in the peace and silent scenario. Suddenly, in front of me I could see the Patriarch no more, but just a man's desperate face observing how his people are being slaughtered. Not in vain and despite what anyone may say against it, we are going through one of the largest Christian persecutions in history. Our brothers and sisters are dying by the hundreds because of their Faith. That of which many of us are judged through words and accusations is the same for which many others are being killed in other countries. So, is it not worth hoisting Faith and carrying it high above? Is it not worth fighting "everyday small battles" in the name of Faith since others have given up their lives trying to protect it? I believe it is worth the effort. Let us pray for our brothers and sisters who are being pursued in the name of Faith.

Over two thousand years ago the so called *King of Peace* was born in Bethlehem. Ironically it is now *ground zero* for the most ongoing religious conflict in history. We are beginning Advent. This is a time to be aware as Christians, to observe, to take peace with us to wherever we may go. We, as Knights and Dames of The Very Noble and Ancient Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem should always take Peace and Faith with us. Peace will not expand without Faith, and Faith will not endure without the strength of Peace.

The Lord is coming. Let us rejoice. Let us receive Him with arms wide open. Happy Christmas to all.

Atavis et Armis

D. Carlos Gereda de Borbón, Marquis of Almazán
Grand Master of The Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem