



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem © * Knights of Malta *

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Chancellor's Update

FROM THE “PRESENT” TO “THE PRESENCE”

Lent begins with these sobering words: **“Remember man, thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.”**

This reminds us that we are allotted but a short time here to achieve our ultimate goal - eternal happiness. Christ says: “What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his soul?” Knowing that God gives us the means to do so, only a fool would **not** make the salvation of his soul the number one priority of his life.

We all know what our penny Catechism teaches we must do to save our soul (pray, obey God's commandments, keep our souls in the state of grace, etc.). Admittedly, this is not easy. In times of trial, God seems far away. Our Faith is tested. The media and academia bombard us daily with pseudo-scientific propaganda that we and the world around us are only matter that evolved by blind force over millions of years. But in our hearts we know that we are not merely living, that we are **persons**, and persons are rational spiritual beings, **souls** (hoki). [In Armenian, when asking "how many?" (kani) we say of things: “kani had,” but of people: “kani hoki.”]

If cultivating the **spiritual life** is to be our number one priority, we must of necessity do it here in this material world where we/our bodies are bound in **time and space**. With the intellectual power of our spiritual soul, we can begin by detaching ourselves from this hard to escape **“present”** in the material world and enter the **“presence”** of the spiritual world by an exercise called the **“Presence of God.”** Our intellect is made for the infinite and enables us to see things as they are: **that the universe is being continuously held in existence by the Will of God. Distinct from and transcending all creation, God is yet closer to us than we are to ourselves.** Rest assured that this truth is based on sound philosophical as well as theological science (not to mention the certitude of the Divine Virtue of Faith).

With the help of God's Grace, by continuing to exercise our soul's faculty of intellect (prayerfully studying the beautiful God-given doctrines of our Catholic Faith and the words of Christ in the Gospels) our minds are elevated to see beyond, into the unfathomable world of the Supernatural Order wherein we are enabled to share in the Life of God Himself. And by exercising our soul's faculty of will, we put our Faith into practice and begin living in this higher Supernatural plane. In this way, though immersed in this finite world of time and space, whatever our present condition, we can sense God's purpose in all; and be assured of His All-Powerful Presence and Fatherly Providence. As members of Christ's Mystical Body, in our helplessness we now unite ourselves with the "helplessness" of Christ on the Cross. **And then the Glorious Resurrection! May the blessed assurance of this hope inspire us all!** (The above by the late Joe Topalian, OSJ, former Armenian scholar in residence.)

"Victimae paschali laudes Immolent christiani.

"Let Christians offer to the Paschal Victim the sacrifice of praise.

Agnus redemit oves: Christus innocens Patri Reconciliavit peccatores.

The Lamb hath redeemed the sheep: the innocent Jesus hath reconciled sinners to his Father.

Mors et vita duello Confluxere mirando: Dux vitae mortuus Regnat vivus.

Death and life fought against each other, and wondrous was the duel: the King of life was put to death; yet now he lives and reigns.

Dic nobis, Maria, Quid vidisti in via? Sepulchrum Christi viventis: Et gloriam vidi resurgentis. Angelicos testes, Sudarium et vestes.

Tell us, O Mary! What sawest thou on the way? I saw the sepulcher of the living Christ; I saw the glory of him that had risen. I saw the angels that were the witnesses; I saw the winding-sheet and the cloth.

Surrexit Christus spes mea: Praecedet vos in Galilaeam. Scimus Christum surrexisse A mortuis vere; Tu nobis victor Rex, miserere. Amen. Alleluia.

Christ, my hope, hath risen! He shall go before you into Galilee. We know that Christ hath truly risen from the dead. Do thou, O conqueror and King, have mercy upon us. Amen. Alleluia." [The Liturgical Year by Abbot Guéranger, OSB Paschal Time – Book 1 p 145]

