

**Mass with the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem  
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**

**August 3, 2011  
Wednesday of the Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time**

**+ Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Dear Knights and Ladies, my brothers and sisters in Christ,

As members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, we are concerned for the well-being of the sacred places in the Holy Land. This concern is rooted in the historical reality that in Jesus Christ “a great prophet has arisen in our midst and God has visited his people” (Luke 7:16). In Jesus Christ, God has not only visited the people of Israel, but the Gentiles, as well, particularly the woman from Canaan in today’s Gospel.

In the humility of the Canaanite woman, Saint Augustine saw a type, a figure of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Whereas many of the Jews rejected Jesus in their pride, this woman, in her humility, implores Jesus to heal her daughter.

Of this Canaanite woman, Saint John Chrysostom cried out in praise: “Behold the woman’s wisdom! She did not venture so much as to say a word against anyone else. She was not stung to see

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Saint Augustine, *Sermon* 77.11-12.

others praised, nor was she indignant to be reproached. Behold her constancy.”<sup>2</sup> She did not argue with the Lord, but accepted the truth of his words.

She knew that the Gentiles - from which she came - lived like dogs in an unclean manner barking at their false gods.<sup>3</sup> Yet whereas many of the Jews did not recognize Jesus’ divinity, she did, and begged him only for the crumbs others refused to eat. Because of her humility, the Lord answers her request.

Reflecting on the healing of the woman’s daughter, Saint John Chrysostom asks,

“Do you see how this woman, too, contributed not a little to the healing of her daughter? For note that Christ did not say, ‘Let your little daughter be made whole,’ but ‘Great is your faith, be it done for you as you desire.’ These words were not uttered at random, nor were they flattering words, but great was the power of her faith, and for our learning.”<sup>4</sup>

We must learn from her example; we must learn ever anew the value and strength of a humble faith. She knew the truth of the words of Saint James: “The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects” (James 5:16).

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<sup>2</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 52.3*. In *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament Vol. 1b: Matthew 14-28*, Manlio Simonetti et al, eds. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Epiphanius the Latin, *Interpretation of the Gospels*, 58.

<sup>4</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, *Ibid.*

For this reason His Holiness the Pope has given to our Equestrian Order two principle tasks: first, to foster the practice of the Christian life in the modern world; and, second, to preserve the faith in the Holy Land.

This first task of fostering the practice of the faith in the modern world must always begin with each individual Knight and Lady of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem as we seek to growth in faith, hope and love. Each of us must beg the Lord's mercy as we call out to him, "We have sinned, we and our fathers; we have committed crimes; we have done wrong" (Psalm 106:6). We must not forget his works; we must wait for his counsel; we must not give in to cravings in the deserts of our lives and we must fight to resist temptation (see Psalm 106:13-14).

If we seek to live in this way we will remember the wondrous deeds of the Lord and our humility will deepen as we see the reality of who we are. We will learn ever more clearly the wisdom of Saint Francis of Assisi who often said, "What a man is in the eyes of God, that he is and nothing more."

Following the humility of the Canaanite woman and growing in holiness and righteousness, our prayers, too, will be powerful in their effects as we pray for peace and for our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.

This desire to grow daily in holiness is incumbent upon every member of the faithful, but especially upon the Knights and Ladies of the Equestrian Order. Membership in our Order should, in the words of Blessed Pope John Paul II, “make you feel more and more the burden and responsibility of distinguishing your toil with an exemplary Christian life with consistent and generous adherence to Christ and to the Church. In this way,” the Pope said, “you will give before the world the best confirmation of the reason for its existence and activity.” I, too, urge you to distinguish yourselves in this way so that more men and women might be added to our Equestrian Order.

As our membership increases, so, too, will our holiness and our ability to help foster the faith of Jesus Christ in the Holy Land and to lend our prayers and financial support to our often persecuted brothers and sisters living in Jerusalem and in the surrounding environs.

Even Israel's government is concerned about the dwindling number of Christians in the Middle East, according to Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren. "We are the cradle of faith," he said, "so faith plays a role in our diplomacy as well."

When questioned about the future of Christianity in the region, the Ambassador pointed to his work as church advisor for Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister who was assassinated in 1995. "I have a very personal attachment to the issue," he said. "The Middle East is hemorrhaging Christians."

According to Ambassador Oren, the Christian population of the region, which has been there for 2,000 years, "is dwindling and dwindling fast as a result of violence, intolerance and attacks." Pointing to the growing number of attacks on Christians in Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon, he characterized the trend as "an event of historic importance and of immense tragedy."

"The Christian communities in the Middle East are the natural bridge between a complex and troubled area," Oren said, "and the

United States and the West in general have an interest in protecting these communities.”<sup>5</sup>

The prayers, efforts and support of the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre are very important to the continued presence and future stability of Christianity in the Holy land. Let each of us, then, invite others to join the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem through the witness of our lives and through our constant prayers for peace. As we pray in this Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for Christians in the Holy Land, let each of us always remember the words of the Psalmist: “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy” (Psalm 137:5-6)!

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> Joyce Coronel, “Caught in the Middle: Christians in the Holy Land,” *The Catholic Sun*, April 18, 2011, at <http://www.catholicsun.org/2011/april/18/caught-in-the-middle.html>.