

I am grateful to be with you, knights and ladies of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher. I am grateful to share the cross of Christ with you. I am grateful to stand beside you, spiritually, in the Holy Sepulcher, awaiting the day of resurrection and joy. The cross, in itself, is a defeat. It is the instrument of the worst torture of the most brute criminals. But, for us, the cross is our glory, it is our joy, and we share in Christ's triumph over sin and death through His sacrificial gift of suffering.

And we are suffering as a Church in these days. As Cardinal DiNardo has said in Rome to the Holy Father, just yesterday, the Church in the United States is suffering from the lacerations of many sins. The Body of Christ has been wounded and offended, and we all feel it very deeply. Its as if we are in the Holy Sepulcher right now, in the immediate moments after Christ's death, saddened and wondering what will be next. We have heard rumors that the resurrection will come, but we still await it.

Jesus voluntarily took on the sufferings of the world as He accepted the cross. He would pay the price for sins *He never* committed. It was not just, as we normally account justice. It was not right, as we normally account righteousness. Yet, the only way the

world could be reconciled was by Jesus accepting His cross, and walking to His passion and death. Only then could the resurrection come. It was a sacrificial gift Christ decided to make for us — though we did not deserve it. As the Sacred Liturgy itself says, “at the time he was betrayed, and entered willingly into His Passion.”

Our gospel passage from St. John says that “God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son...” Pope Francis reflected on this last year when he said, “Jesus reminds us that His way is the way of love, and there is no true love without Christ’s self-sacrifice. We must embrace suffering, because, as Christ told his disciples: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

Brothers and sisters, we are suffering as a Church in this moment of our history. We feel embarrassed and confused by reports of betrayal, cover-ups, back-biting, and in-fighting. The huge majority of the Church, lay, religious, and clergy alike, who *never* committed these sins and who *never would* approve of such sins, are yet called upon to pay the price of repair, renewal, and new hope. We feel the injustice of it. In part, we want to rebel against it. Yet, as with Jesus at the moment of His cross, our world and our time will

**not be reconciled until we, too, decide to take up the cross of this moment, and offer our sacrifices, “entering willingly” into the task of the repair and renewal needed at this time. As knights and ladies of the Equestrian Order, we are at the forefront of this suffering. The common people of the Body of Christ look to us for direction and hope. I stand with you and for you, and I take up this cross beside you. At first, the cross is our pain. In the end, it will be our glory!**