

Homily at Holy Hour

It is a privilege to accept the invitation of Supreme Knight Virgil Dechant to reflect with you, my brother Knights, your ladies, whose presence is another sign for your support of our Order, and other family members and friends, on the word of God proclaimed in this Holy Hour.

Your theme, "Open Wide the Doors to Christ," is a theme the Church Universal takes to heart as we prepare for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

For us in the Western Hemisphere the Holy Father applied the Jubilee theme in a specific way when he came to Mexico in January and gave us his beautiful Apostolic Exhortation entitled, *Ecclesia in America*, "The Church in America." In it he summed up and added to the discussions of the Synod of Bishops' Assembly for America, which had met in Rome in 1997. (Incidentally, Supreme Knight Virgil Dechant was a participant at the Synod, offering his witness to the faith and concerns of the Catholic laity of America.)

In Mexico City, as in Rome, Pope John Paul II made it clear to us why he called our gathering a synod for America. He wanted us to understand that in this one hemisphere, for all our geographic and linguistic differences, we of the Church share a single calling. He said, "The decision to speak of America in the singular was an attempt to express not only the unity which in some way already exists, but also to point to that closer bond which the people of the continent seek and which the Church wishes to foster as part of her own mission." The way to strengthen that bond, he indicated, is to live out the synod theme, "Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity in America."

The Holy Father spoke of the "Living Jesus Christ." This is the very Christ for whom we prepare to "open wide the doors." You Knights are helping to "open wide" the doors of St. Peter's in Rome, with the enormous task of redoing the magnificent atrium at the entrance of the Basilica built over the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles. You are opening wide your own hearts in this and other activities of prayer and spiritual preparation for the Great Jubilee.

Early in his exhortation, Pope John Paul recalls the Gospel accounts of those who actually met the living Jesus Christ. Their experiences can be ours, even this afternoon, as we recall our own meeting with the living Jesus Christ at the Eucharist this morning and now are gathered in his presence.

Ours now can be the open attitude of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at the well. He asked her for a drink of water and stirred in her own heart a thirst for something deeper, something far greater than she could understand. He spoke to her of a “living water” and she was touched in her inner heart of hearts.

“Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst.” (Jn. 4:15) Even though she did not yet understand, she was asking for this living water, the transforming gift of love built on faith. When Jesus reveals to her that he is the Christ, the anointed one of God (Cf. Jn. 4:26), she feels impelled to tell the other townspeople this good news, the news that she has found the Messiah. In this good news we too rejoice on the eve of the Great Jubilee.

Then there is the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, St. Luke reports, “and a wealthy man.” (Cf. Luke 19:1-10) Zacchaeus has heard about Jesus, he is eager to see him, but he is a short man. We can see him running along side the crowd, craning for a glimpse of the one whose teachings and signs have attracted so much notice. He spies a sycamore tree and quickly climbs up to a perch with a good view of the road beneath. When Jesus passes by, he shouts to gain his attention. The Lord responds with words that must have startled and delighted Zacchaeus, “‘Come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.’ And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all