

2023-2024



JERUSALEM CROSS

ANNALES ORDINIS EQUESTRIS SANCTI SEPULCRI HIEROSOLYMITANI



“Peace be within you!”

(Psalm 122)



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of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem*
Cardinal Fernando Filoni

*Governor General of the Equestrian Order
of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem*
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“The signs of Christ’s charity are manifested today”

Holding *The Jerusalem Cross 2023-2024* in our hands allows us to grasp certain aspects of the life of our Order, as if it were the result of a precious fabric from whose threads emerge events and words of peace and good. In truth, the life of the Order is infinitely richer than what is narrated here. And this is due not only to the initiatives of the Grand Magisterium, but above all to the activities of the Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations which, over the course of the year, have shown an increasingly beautiful and interesting variety of initiatives documented on their media sites and in their publications.

The elevation of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem to the College of Cardinals, the first in the history of the Church of Jerusalem, the quadrennial Consulta with the presence also of numerous Grand Priors and the Audience with the Holy Father, the drama of the massacre of October 7 and the terrible reaction on the population of Gaza, were the three moments that marked the life of our Order in an indelible way.

It is a beautiful mystery, however, that as Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, each of us lives and feels the joy of being part of that project in which the signs of Christ's charity are manifested today in the education of the young, in the pastoral life of the Mother Church and in solidarity with charitable institutions and families.

We entrust to you, dear Knights and Dames, the pages of this magazine, so that it may accompany you, not only in your knowledge, but also in your love and friendship towards the Land of Jesus and our Order.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni



This oil lamp is a gift the parish of Taybeh made to the Grand Master and will burn in his chapel until there is peace in the Holy Land

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A word from the Chancellor

This issue of our annual magazine appears against the sad backdrop of the war in the Holy Land. In these pages, we report on the solidarity pilgrimage that the Grand Master and the Governor General of the Order made to Jerusalem at the end of December 2023 and the beginning of January 2024. The 30,000 Knights and Dames of the Order spontaneously mobilized to send humanitarian aid to the Latin Patriarchate, in addition to the usual support, via the Grand Magisterium. We continue to carry concern for the Mother Church in our hearts and in our prayers, as can also be seen from the extensive report in *The Jerusalem Cross* on all the projects undertaken in the service of Christian life in the Holy Land. We also look back at the major events of recent months, such as the Order's quadrennial Consulta and the investitures presided over by the Grand Master and the Governor General. I hope that this issue, published in six languages, will be widely distributed to Lieutenancies around the world, so that our mission becomes better known and new members join us.

Alfredo Bastianelli, *Chancellor*

How do we repair our world torn apart by hatred and violence?

A colloquium at Palazzo della Rovere



An important conference was held at Palazzo della Rovere on May 11, 2023, on the theme “The Holy Land a Place of encounter”, organized by the Federico II Study Center of Palermo and the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, with the presence of numerous personalities from the ecclesiastical and diplomatic world.

In their welcome address, the heads of the Federico II Study Center – Giuseppe Di Franco, President, and Mario Nanni, Chairman of the Scientific Committee – emphasized the historical contribution of Emperor Frederick II to multicultural dialogue in the Middle Ages, thanks in particular to the friendly relations established with Sultan Malik al-Kamil. The chairman of the Italian Chamber of Deputies’ Culture Committee, Federico Mollicone, also paid tribute to the work of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in promoting a culture of peace in the Holy Land, particularly through education, supporting the Latin Patriarchate’s schools, which welcome pupils of different faiths.

Grand Master Cardinal Fernando Filoni, then opened the talk by highlighting the experience of encounter exemplified by the saint from Assisi during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land:

“Francis appreciated the religiosity of Sultan Al-Malik who prayed five times a day. Their encounter became a model for mutual respect and in Francis the idea of fraternity replaced that of conquest by arms, preferring the Christian witness of life and preaching. The Holy Land experience that opened his heart and mind, we find in the *Regula non bullata* of 1221, on his return from Palestine; he wanted his friars in the Holy Land to be ‘subject to every creature’ and to cultivate friendship: ‘If a friar by divine inspiration intends to go among the Saracens ... let him not quarrel, nor have contentions, but be subject to every

Speakers at the symposium on the Holy Land, from left to right: Msgr Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar for Israel, Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, Rabbi in Jerusalem, Elena Dini, from the Order's Communications Office, moderator, Cardinal Ravasi, Prefect Emeritus of the Dicastery for Culture, Nader Akkad, Imam in Rome.



A large audience attended the interfaith symposium held at the Order's headquarters in Rome on May 11, 2023.

human creature for the Lord's sake as a Christian...'; this opened the way apparently to utopia. The Franciscans, however, have been living and guarding, without violent conquest, Christian holy places and welcoming pilgrims for eight centuries," the Grand Master stressed. He then compared this fraternal Franciscan approach to the diplomatic work of Frederick II: "If Francis' vision of the Holy Land can be said to be prophetic and at the same time radical, in another sphere the vision of Frederick II appears politically revolutionary when, a decade or so after Francis of Assisi, he came to Palestine, forced to conduct a crusade; he went on to obtain, the control and the royal crown of Jerusalem and the access for Christian pilgrims to Bethlehem and Nazareth, all without bloodshed. Frederick II's crusade, the Sixth Crusade, was atypical because it took place – it was 1228 – without fighting; the dispute was resolved through diplomatic means, so after forty-two years and several failed military expeditions or brief successes, Jerusalem returned to the disposal of Christians, the emperor having signed a ten-year peace with Sultan Al-Kamil," Cardinal Filoni added, before explaining how the Order of the Holy Sepulchre "strengthened by the 'spirit' of Francis of Assisi and the 'vision' open to dialogue between peoples of which Frederick II was the interpreter" has a duty to contribute to the encounter, "a contribution that passes through collaboration with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, university and school education, social work, aid to refugees and the many victims of hatred and violence."

The four speakers then developed the theme of the colloquium, each according to his or her expertise and religious affiliation. Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, Prefect Emeritus of the Dicastery for Culture, affirmed that the encounter between God and humanity and among humans is at the heart of the universal

message of Jerusalem.

Arriving directly from the Holy City, Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum pointed out that in Hebrew Jerusalem, which means "search for peace," "is a name in the plural, *Yerushalyim*, with the Hebrew ending of the plural: "im." "Beloved of the three Abrahamic religions, Jerusalem," she pointed out, is "a teacher of assembling, a teacher of cure and healing, put at the gates of Eden, to remind us that they open only if we assemble together, only if we encounter, to remind us that God is revealed through his many beloved creatures and nations, and His cure is around us every day, in the human beings around us, awaiting that we encounter each other - and heal." For his part, Imam Nader Akkad, of the Rome Mosque, pointed to the fact that "Jerusalem in Arabic is called 'al-Quds,' a word that refers precisely to the holy, the sacred, thus the Holy Land, the sacred city, the Holy City."

Following reflections on Jerusalem and the Holy Land as a place of encounter, holiness, healing and hope, Msgr. Rafic Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar for Israel – who also arrived from the Holy Land that morning together with Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum – shared his personal experience of interreligious dialogue linked to his childhood in Lebanon.

At the end of his moving words, the Patriarchal Vicar referred to Jesus' words that "the lamp of the body is the eye" (*Mt 6: 22-23*), that "the simple eye, of which Jesus speaks, goes together with the pure heart: so if we want to do something to help repair our world torn apart by hatred and violence, perhaps the first step is to heal our gaze on others, whoever they may be, and to purify our hearts, because only a healthy tree, with healthy roots, can bear healthy fruit."

The Patriarch of Jerusalem created cardinal by Pope Francis



“You, new Cardinals have come from different parts of the world, and the same Spirit that made the evangelization of your peoples fruitful now renews in you your vocation and mission in and for the Church,” said Pope Francis, meditating on the story of Pentecost, the “baptism of the Church”, in his homily at the Consistory celebration on September 30, 2023, during which he created the Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, His Beatitude Pierbattista Pizzaballa, cardinal. “We are evangelizers to the extent we cherish in our hearts the wonder and gratitude of having been evangelized, even of being evangelized, because this is really a gift always present, that must be continually renewed in our memories and in faith. Evangelizers who have been evangelized, not functionaries,” added the

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem surrounded by a delegation from the Order, at Saint Mary Major, on October 1, 2023, the day after the consistory during which the Pope made him a cardinal.

Holy Father, for whom the College of Cardinals is called to resemble “a symphony orchestra, representing the harmony and synodality of the Church.”

Setting off in procession from the Palazzo della Rovere, a large delegation from the Order – comprising around a hundred Knights and Dames – took part in the Consistory in St Peter’s Square, surrounding the Patriarch of Jerusalem in prayer as he received the cardinal’s red hat and ring from the hands of Peter’s successor and was given St. Onuphrius on the Janiculum as his titular parish church. In addition to the Cardinal Grand Master and the Governor General, members of the Grand Magisterium and numerous Lieutenants were present on behalf of the Order, and were able to personally congratulate the Patriarch of Jerusalem during the courtesy visits organized that same day, also greeting four other members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre among the new cardinals: Cardinal Stephen Brislin, Archbishop of Cape Town and Grand Prior for South Africa; Cardinal

Luis José Rueda Aparicio, Archbishop of Bogota and Grand Prior for Colombia; Cardinal Américo Manuel Alves Aguiar, Bishop of Setúbal; and Cardinal Agostino Marchetto, Apostolic Nuncio and Archbishop of Astigi.

The following day, Sunday October 1, in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, a Mass of thanksgiving brought together the authorities and faithful from the Holy Land around Cardinal Pizzaballa, in a warm and festive atmosphere.

At the end of the celebration, the Governor General presented Cardinal Pizzaballa with a pectoral cross of the Order, on behalf of the 30,000 Knights and Dames from all over the world.



Vatican media interview with the Grand Master after his return from the Holy Land

(Vatican Radio, Vatican News) – From December 28, 2023 to January 3, 2024, Cardinal Fernando Filoni led a small delegation on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Bethlehem in a gesture of



solidarity with the Holy Land ravaged by war. Prayers in the Holy Places and visits to Palestinian Christian families were at the heart of the intense trip. Interviewed on his return by the Holy See media, the Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre explained the significance of this highly symbolic initiative. Below is a summary of the interview.

How did the idea of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land come about?

It seemed important to me and the small delegation that accompanied me to go to Jerusalem to show our support – spiritual, moral and material – for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, with which we are in constant contact. In these times of tension and violence, this pilgrimage was in a way the small visible instrument that we had, as peacemakers, to show that we do not accept war.

For a pilgrimage is not only a spiritual and moral act that we perform in respect of a holy place, it is also a way of showing our closeness to the local populations and in particular to the Church of Jerusalem.

We chose this period – from December 28, 2023 to January 3, 2024 – because it included

January 1, which is the World Day of Peace. Once again, we saw this as a sign of solidarity and prayer.

What was the situation you encountered there?

There was nobody there. The old city of Jerusalem, usually so busy, so full of pilgrims and visitors, was deserted and depopulated. The shops were closed. The streets were clean, washed every day, but not a single passer-by was to be seen. We were the only ones, along with a few other people, to see the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre completely empty. It was quite impressive. Of course, the inhabitants are still there. But commercial and tourist activities have ground to a halt. Pilgrimages are part of the soul of Jerusalem and they are sorely lacking.

This means that local Christians are suffering from this situation, as many of them make their living from tourism...

Christians and Muslims. Several Jewish families also make their living from religious tourism. In fact, the entire Old City of Jerusalem is suffering from the lack of pilgrimages, but we can extend this situation to the entire city – with its hotel industry usually frequented by thousands of visitors – and beyond, to the whole of the Holy Land.

How do the Christians you met feel, particularly about the situation in Gaza, where the death toll – including children – is rising daily?

We weren't able to go to Gaza because it's completely closed off now. However, the parish priest in the enclave, Father Gabriel Romanelli, was with us all the time, passing on information he received directly from his parish, where around 600 people were taking refuge at the time. It is

A photo taken during a procession in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in early 2024, during the Grand Master's pilgrimage for peace.



increasingly difficult to meet the basic needs of these people, whether in terms of food, water, medicines or electricity.

For our part, we visited several Christian families living in the Old City of Jerusalem. I was struck by their poverty. Before October 7 and the start of the war, many of them worked in hotels and now find themselves unemployed, with no income. Their living conditions, like the general atmosphere, have really deteriorated.

What do you see as the path to peace? As we have seen, the Pope has called on the world's leaders to commit to a lasting solution - there is much talk of a two-state solution. Are you hopeful that this can be achieved?

Hope can never be lacking because it is linked to the mystery of the risen Christ. Jesus himself is Hope. So we believe that dialogue is possible. How should this happen? In what ways? To find out, we need to sit down around a table, because one side cannot decide against the other! Israel's right to live on this land must be respected, as must the Palestinians' right to live on this same land. We must not think in terms of destroying the other, but of giving them the opportunity to live with dignity, with justice – this is a fundamental aspect – and with respect for all diversities. With respect, too, for all minorities, who have the same rights. And let's not forget the pilgrims, who have the right to go to the Holy Land. Of course, the Holy Land is administered by state entities, but it belongs to everyone, historically, biblically and spiritually! It is the land of Revelation; God has gifted it to everyone.

Is another pilgrimage planned in the near future?

Our pilgrimage was intended as an encouragement: it is possible to visit the Holy Places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The security is there. Let's not say to ourselves: "It's war, it's all over," no! I'd therefore be in favor of starting small pilgrimages again, with small groups. This will help us understand that life can begin again. Pilgrimages don't solve problems and tensions, but they can be a reminder that peace is possible. Pilgrimages, in their own way, cultivate peace.

Interview by Federico Piana

Barbiconi

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM

“Dames and Knights of the Resurrection”

Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium 2023

On April 19, 2023 the members of the Grand Magisterium met in Palazzo della Rovere following Mass celebrated in honor of Our Lady of Palestine, Patroness of the Order, presided over by the Grand Master in the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia. “It gives me great pleasure to meet with you in person for the first time after the years of the pandemic,” said Cardinal Fernando Filoni, opening the proceedings and recalling the purpose of this meeting: to share with confidence and encourage each other for an ever more generous service of the Mother Church in the Holy Land, in Palestine, Jordan, Israel and Cyprus. The Governor General, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, welcomed the new members, John Secker, Vice Governor for Asia, Australia and the Pacific, and Tom Standish, who was Lieutenant for the United States, and thanked Mary O’Brien, also from the United States, who had reached the end of her term. The Governor emphasized the Order’s expansion efforts, particularly in Latin America and Africa and informed the members of the Grand Magisterium about the details of the

contract for the lease of part of the Palazzo della Rovere to a hotel company, which will fully cover the Grand Magisterium’s operating expenses. Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa, busy in Cyprus, participated in the meeting with a letter in which he thanked the Order for the support it has provided through the financing of numerous projects.

The meeting continued with the approval of the budget and the report of the Treasurer, Saverio Petrillo, who highlighted the generosity of the Lieutenancies, which has enabled over 14 million Euros to be sent to the Patriarchate in 2022. In his presentation, Sami El-Yousef, Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate, described the projects supported by the Order in the various countries that make up the Holy Land, especially those in favor of education and youth employment in the most disadvantaged areas, indicating the Patriarch’s desire to develop pastoral and humanitarian activities in Cyprus, where the reception of migrants is mobilizing the Church. With respect to this issue, the President of the Holy Land Commission, Bartholomew



McGettrick, spoke of an “underground Church” with regards migrants, vulnerable and deprived of the most basic rights, victims of a form of modern slavery, not only in Israel but throughout the Middle East. The Grand Master, who personally discussed the Order’s mission with the Holy Father on January 28, 2023, spoke of this service to migrants as a priority.

The Vice Governors General then took turns to speak. Tom Pogge, for North America, emphasized the formation of members through the Grand Master’s book on the spirituality of the Order, now available in audio-book format, for the moment in English. Jean-Pierre de Glutz, for Europe, testified his commitment to making all the important documents of the Order available in different languages, so that the Knights and Dames can have the necessary tools for their formation. Enric Mas, for Latin America, described the Order’s expansion initiatives in new countries such as the Dominican Republic, where a Magisterial Delegation will be created,

and Paraguay, and expressed his wish that the Bishops receive the *Newsletter* published by the Grand Magisterium to be better informed on the Order’s mission and work. John Secker, for Asia, Australia and the Pacific, presented his program for the further development of the Order, for example in Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Indonesia. Chancellor Bastianelli, for his part, appealed for a broader recruitment for the Order, noting that the statistics are declining after the pandemic.

The meeting concluded with a moment of prayer led by Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, Assessor, who invited the members of the Grand Magisterium to be “Dames and Knights of the Resurrection,” following the example of Blessed Bartolo Longo, apostle of the Rosary and founder of the Marian Shrine of Pompeii.

The autumn meeting of the Grand Magisterium was held six months later, at the end of the Consulta which takes place every four years.

The Order’s Quadrennial Consulta

The Grand Priors were exceptionally invited to the quadrennial meeting of the Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates, organized around the Grand Master and the Governor General

“**M**ay the Virgin Mary, invoked by you as Queen of Palestine, always assist you in your mission,” said Pope Francis as he received, on November 9, 2023, the participants of the Consulta of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre gathered in Rome for their statutory general assembly, the theme of which was the formation of Knights and Dames.

Before blessing all the members of the Order and their families, the Holy Father turned his thoughts to the Holy Land, gravely declaring: “We are sadly witnessing a tragedy unfolding in the very places where the Lord lived, where he taught us through his humanity to love, to forgive and to do good to all. And instead, we see them torn apart by terrible suffering that affects above all so many innocents, so many innocent dead.

That is why I am spiritually united with you, who certainly live this meeting of the Consulta sharing the great sorrow of the Mother Church of Jerusalem and imploring the gift of peace.”

It was in this extremely worrying context for the Holy Land that around 150 leaders of the Order from some forty countries prayed and worked from November 6 to 10, 2023, gathered around the Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, and the Governor General, Ambassador Visconti di Modrone.

Each day of the meeting began with morning Mass, during which the members of the Grand Magisterium and the Grand Priors, Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates, spiritually guided by the Grand Master, kept the faithful of the diocese of Jerusalem in their prayers, particularly during the



Eucharist celebrated in honor of Our Lady of Palestine on November 8, presided over by the Assessor of the Order, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo.

As soon as the Consulta opened, after the words of welcome from the Grand Master and the Governor General, the eyes of the participants turned to the Holy Land, with the online intervention of Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, broadcast live, during which he described the terrible situation being experienced by the entire population, reaffirming his desire to work for unity and pronouncing words of hope in the midst of a deep spiritual night. He warmly thanked the Order for its regular and generous support, which is more necessary than ever. Father Flavio Pace, Under Secretary of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, was one of the key speakers. He suggested that the Order could expand by welcoming non Latin Catholics from other continents as members, in the spirit of the collaboration that exists within ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches), where the Order contributes

During the Order's Consulta, the Patriarch of Jerusalem spoke live from the Holy Land, one month after the attacks on October 7, to give an account of the tragic situation in which the local population is caught in the daily difficulties of war.

materially to projects in the Holy Land involving Catholics from other Churches, in particular Melkites and Maronites. “The whole Church has a moral duty to support the Mother Church of Jerusalem, because this is rooted in the apostolic tradition, ever since the Apostle Paul called the Christian communities he founded to this solidarity with their brothers and sisters of the Holy City,” commented Cardinal Filoni, during a lively debate on formation, with members also having to deepen the biblical sources of their commitment. After the inaugural session, the first two days were devoted to unique and valuable bilateral meetings between the Grand Master and the Governor General with the Lieutenant and Grand Prior of each Lieutenancy, and to exchanges in language groups on the basis of a draft document, in Latin called an *Instrumentum laboris*, centered on the theme of this Consulta.

The debates, enriched by the presence of the Grand Priors, touched on many aspects, against the backdrop of the ecclesiological urgency of embodying the chivalric ideal today by responding personally to the universal call to holiness launched by the Second Vatican Council, since every member of the faithful received in baptism an outpouring of royal blood.

The plenary session on the third day was marked by the presence of Mgr. Roberto Campisi,



Then, the four Vice Governors General – Tom Pogge, Jean-Pierre de Glutz, Enric Mas and John Secker – used the summaries of the international working groups to provide the Grand Master with indications and

Assessor of the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, who, informed of the work of the groups, highlighted that it is essentially a question for the members of the Order of experiencing an indispensable formation of the heart, by putting the Gospel into practice, to progressively acquire “a heart that sees”, according to the expression of Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Deus caritas est*. “May you be encouraged to live the present moment, which the Holy Father has termed ‘dark nights of conflict’, like ‘lamps of charity’ that stop hope from fading in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi, continuing to burn and kindle brilliant sparks of peace and flames of good.”

Daily morning mass fostered the ecclesial dimension of the Consulta.

Grand Priors of the Order, Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates gathered to reflect together on the formation of Knights and Dames.

input to consider as he draws up the final document on the formation of Knights and Dames, in addition to the new Regulations and Ritual that accompany the new Constitution of the Order signed by Pope Francis. “It is not intended to answer every question, but to refocus us on the nature of the Order, its specificity, which concerns the death and resurrection of Christ. Our Order is lay, chivalrous in the noblest sense of the word, and its members are called to nobility of heart, which is expressed in their concern for the Holy Land,” Cardinal Filoni summarized. The Grand Master also announced the forthcoming creation of a commission of historians whose task will be to clearly establish the origins of the Order, which are mainly linked to the great renewal of the Church initiated at the beginning of the 13th century by Saint Francis of Assisi during his historic pilgrimage to the holy places of the Christian faith.



On the fourth day, after the pontifical audience in the morning, the Fall meeting of the Grand Magisterium was held, with the live online participation of Sami El-Yousef, Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, who gave an update on the status of the projects supported by the Order in 2023, thanks



Mass in St Peter's Basilica, the pilgrimage to St Paul's Outside the Walls and finally Mass at the Roman Marian shrine of Divine Love were the spiritual highlights of the Consulta 2023.

to more than 12 and a half million Euros in donations from the Knights and Dames sent to the Holy Land this year. In his report, the Governor General spoke of the

contributions being received for humanitarian aid in Gaza, and then highlighted the Order's development efforts, particularly in Asia and Africa, opening up prospects for greater participation by "friends of the Order" in the future, people who should find ways of becoming more involved in the life of the Pontifical Institution, perhaps by means of a foundation recognized as being of public utility.

On the final day, a pilgrimage was organized to Saint Paul Outside the Walls, followed by the Grand Master's concluding Mass at the Marian shrine of Divine Love. Before leaving, the participants in the Consulta personally signed a letter to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, assuring him of their prayers for his diocese and of their affectionate closeness at this very difficult time for all the inhabitants of the Holy Land.

François Vayne

An Order that participates in the mystery of charity in the most beautiful way

“**T**he Constitution I have approved constitutes the high road on which to travel as a lay Order, with a purpose that was already well foreseen by Blessed Pius IX and then confirmed by his successors: to associate men and women who are committed to a fuller participation in the life of the Church, starting from that "Mother" Church in Jerusalem, according to the teaching of the Apostle Paul (cf. *1 Cor 16:3*), and opening up to the whole world. With this universal outlook, you are called to be an Order that, strong in its own identity, participates in the mystery of charity in the most beautiful way, open and available, ready to take on those services that the Lord requires through the needs of our brothers and sisters: from the education of children in schools to concrete solidarity with the most fragile categories, such as the elderly, the sick, and refugees.”

(Extract from Pope Francis' address to the participants of the Consulta, November 9, 2023)



During the audience he granted to the participants in the Consulta on November 9, 2023, the Holy Father blessed the icon of Our Lady of Palestine, Patron Saint of the Order, celebrated every year on October 25.



An international review of the Order presented by the four Vice Governors at the Consulta

ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT

Jean-Pierre de Glutz
Vice Governor General

The *Instrumentum Laboris* on the formation of members was read with interest and attention by the Lieutenants and the European Magistral Delegates.

All the comments were very positive, and the Lieutenants look forward to making an active contribution in the planned working groups.

Having participated throughout the year in numerous Investitures and Chapters, as well as in meetings of the Lieutenants by language group, certain points seem to be at the center of the Lieutenancies' interests and concerns.

Communication between the Grand Magisterium and the Lieutenancies among themselves, as well as with the Latin Patriarchate, is good and the Lieutenants feel well supported.

The Grand Magisterium's written and oral communications are extensive and provide important support for Lieutenants and individual members.

The post-Covid period, like the international political situation, still shows a reluctance on the part of many of our members to maintain or even increase their donations to the Holy Land.

The war between Israel and Hamas has deeply shocked our members and we expect an effort from most Lieutenancies to provide additional funds for the humanitarian fund.

The Grand Magisterium is in close contact with the Patriarchate, in order to define together the most urgent priorities.

The balance between the spirituality and charity of our members is enhanced by the Cardinal Grand Master's book on spirituality and the continuous information provided by the



Patriarchate and the Governor General to the Lieutenancies.

IN THE VAST ASIAN, AUSTRALIAN AND PACIFIC REGION

John Secker
Vice Governor General

In this large region of approximately 150 million Catholics, the Order is currently present in Australia, Guam, Malaysia, New Zealand, The Philippines, and Taiwan. Conversations are currently underway in India and Singapore which it is hoped will lead to the Order becoming established in those countries in the relatively near future.

In many ways the Asia, Australia and Pacific region is a microcosm of the Catholic Church globally with its blend of mature "first world" Churches in countries such as Australia, centuries old Churches engrained in most facets of society such as The Philippines and the young vibrant



The Grand Master and Vice Governor General John Secker, surrounded by Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates from the Asia, Australia and Pacific region, on the occasion of the 2023 Consulta.

Churches developing in areas of the new evangelization in Asia.

In Australia the Order is active in all capital cities – Canberra, Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney with a current membership of around 500 Knights and Dames. There is work underway to grow our Australian membership significantly and to become known and established in regional centers as well as the capital cities.

Guam with its strong Catholic population has enabled the Order to become well established and the island offers good prospects for further growth.

Penang, Malaysia is our most recently established region which is being supported in its development by the Western Australia Lieutenancy. We welcomed more than 10 new members recently and the prospects for continued growth are strong.

The Order is reaching out from its initial roots in Auckland to other New Zealand Dioceses as it looks to consolidate its presence amongst the relatively small New Zealand Catholic population.

The Philippines was the earliest point of representation in this region of the Order and is one where we are now actively seeking to build our presence amongst the broader Catholic community – a recent Investiture there took membership into three figures and extended our reach further beyond the Manila area which augurs well for further growth in the next few years.

Taiwan is an exciting area for the Order as it spreads its wings from its initial base in the Taipei area to several other regional cities. Membership is showing strong growth and is now well into three figures with this trend anticipated to continue into the future.

IN LATINA AMERICA

Eric Mas

Vice Governor General

The Vice Governor for Latin America was created approximately 4 years ago, to show and encourage the renewed interest of the Grand Magisterium in that region, which has an important possibility of growth.

Disregard the adverse circumstances of the pandemic, during which most of the activities were suspended and new developments were not possible, the Order in Latin America has progressively grown since last Consulta in 2018, and the perspectives for the near future are very optimistic.

At this point we have six Lieutenancies in the region, two of them in Brazil (Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo) and the rest in Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela and México, each one with its own peculiarities. The total number of members in these six Lieutenancies is now of approximately a little bit less than 500 people. All Lieutenancies celebrate periodical Investitures, and particularly the Mexican Lieutenancy is growing very rapidly, after some years of decline. We have also to point out that a few of the members in these Lieutenancies are nationals of other countries in



the region and are helping in the extension of the Order to their countries of origin or residence.

In that sense, different actions have been taken to promote the presence of the Order in other Latin American countries, always with the help of the local Bishops and of the Secretary of State through the different Nunciatures. In the Dominican Republic the Order already has the agreement of the Bishop's Conference to be established there, and there are different candidates who are in the process of preparation to become members in a near future.

In other countries, the actions have reached different degrees of development, but there is the hope that perhaps in a couple of years the Order can be present in countries such as Ecuador, Paraguay, Panama, the Antilles and a couple of other States in Brazil. And for the future there are plans for Peru, Bolivia and other countries in Central America.

The Grand Magisterium has great hopes about the growth of the Order in the region, both through the increase of number of members in the present Lieutenancies and the creation of new national structures.

IN NORTH AMERICA

Thomas Pogge
Vice Governor General

There are 15 Lieutenancies in the North America Area: 9 in the United States, 5 in Canada, and 1 in Puerto Rico. North America, with its 14,500 Members, represents approximately 48% of the membership and contributions of the Order.

As we emerged from the pandemic, there is a concerted effort to grow the membership as well as the annual contributions on order to support our fellow Christians in the Holy Land. Each of our Lieutenancies are holding their annual Meetings which consist of very meaningful religious ceremonies, spiritual formation of its members, Investiture of new members, promotion of existing members, a review of the business operations of their Lieutenancy, and an update on the operations of the Order worldwide.



To facilitate communications, a North America website was created which can be found at: www.eohsjnorthamerica.org/. Within the website are links to the Order in Rome, the Latin Patriarchate, and the Vatican.

During the pandemic, as a way of staying connected, we initiated live monthly broadcasts through the North America website. These broadcasts featured different guest speakers such as the Cardinal Grand Master, the Governor General, etc. These are archived and can be found on the North America website.

We were successful at translating His Eminence's book, *The House was filled with the fragrance of the perfume*. A spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, into English which was distributed to all our North America households. Many priests and Lieutenancies are using the book for homilies and moments of reflections. Just recently, through a generous grant, we were able to convert His Eminence's book to an audiobook in English which can be downloaded from the North America website (www.eohsjnorthamerica.org/).

We are in the process of conducting an \$8 million Capital Campaign in North America to help renovate and upgrade the 44 schools of the Latin Patriarchate in the Holy Land. Education of all students, Christians, Muslim, and Jewish in our schools is one of the keys to future peace. Every child deserves to have a school with modern conveniences to facilitate a quality education.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishop has initiated a three-year program to revive the belief in the True Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The Knights and Dames of North America are supporting this effort of our Catholic Bishops.

Annual report on the activities of the Grand Magisterium's Holy Land Commission

In 2023, the Grand Master appointed Tim Milner as a member of the Holy Land Commission for the next three years. He reappointed Detlef Brümmer as a member and Bartholomew McGettrick as Chairman of the Commission, who present here an annual report on their activities.



The Holy Land Commission paid two main site visits to the Holy Land in 2023. It also had several meetings between those site visits, with the Presidency of the Order and with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The Commission set its agenda to overview projects approved by the Grand Magisterium; discuss with key staff in the Patriarchate and elsewhere in the Holy Land its work in the field; and review the policies and practices of the ways in which the Order might better identify and communicate its priorities to the Grand Magisterium.

The role of the Holy Land Commission is to identify how the Order best serves the needs of the Holy Land, while recognizing that it is the Patriarchate that determines its own priorities.

The Commission was aware that it was operating in times when there were considerable financial constraints within the Order, and a degree of uncertainty about funds available for the growing demands in the Holy Land. Undoubtedly a special feature is the growing set of needs in Humanitarian Aid.

The Holy Land Commission of the Grand Magisterium – that we see here with the Apostolic Nuncio to Jordan - visits the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem twice a year, analyzing current and future projects with Chief Executive Officer Sami El-Yousef.

HUMANITARIAN AID

In undertaking the site visits it was clear that there is need to support increased funding in the area of humanitarian aid to support the work of the Patriarchate. The current funding level is not meeting the needs leaving Patriarchate staff

to make the agonizing decisions on who gets and who does not get support. The Patriarchate is having to plan its humanitarian aid within the budget allocated; but this is a real concern to everyone.

This raises the point about setting the priorities across Education, Pastoral Care and Humanitarian Aid. All three require greater aid, and this is an ongoing discussion in the Grand Magisterium. In the course of the year some

adjustments were made to increase the proportion of funds available for humanitarian aid.

EDUCATION

The needs of schools continue to be an ongoing priority for the Order. The approach to deferred building maintenance and resources in schools is a particular area to be addressed. The current “campaign” with North American lieutenancies was discussed as to whether this would achieve what had been envisaged. What was needed was an initial funding injection followed by annual on-going funding that would allow a continuous process of refurbishment and development.

PASTORAL CARE

An emerging concern among parishes and schools is in the “Projects” which have become part of the expectation for developing the institutions of the Holy Land. The uncertainty surrounding these has been a considerable cause for concern. There needs to be a more transparent and effective process of funding projects within the overall work of the Patriarchate. Some mechanism will be further discussed to enable projects to take place.



Education is a priority for the Latin Patriarchate, supported in its work by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP

The Commission expressed its support for the strategic planning that is taking place within the Patriarchate and recognizes it as a very significant development that will lead to the possibility of much more effective long-range planning.

In addition, it was recognized that there is a need to develop Christian leaders at all levels and every effort should be made to establish suitable opportunities for different ministries and requirements.

A training video for the Investiture Ritual

The Grand Master has asked for a training video to be produced to help Lieutenancies better organize Investiture ceremonies in line with the new Ritual. This video, based on images taken in Rome during the Investitures of the Lieutenancy for Central Italy in December 2023, is intended for Lieutenants, who will be able to use it to unify procedures even further on a global level.

As the Grand Master often reminds us, “the Rite of Prayer Vigil that gathers us this evening and tomorrow’s Investiture Ceremony are two moments of the same solemn act.” The members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre are all aware that the Risen Lord has chosen them for a noble ecclesial,

human and social mission, which helps them to respond generously to the commitments they have made and to grasp the joy of this unique mission. “All this takes place in a Liturgy that is always a very high expression of prayer addressed to the Lord, done communally in the likeness of the ancient practices of Investitures,” says the Grand Master when he is invited to preside over these celebrations.

At the Vigil, he is keen to explain to the new members the meaning of the blessed custom, the vase of perfumed oils for the Dames, and the sword and spurs for the Knights, as symbols of their new dignity. “It is not, therefore, a question of weapons or material objects for a human mission, but of a mission in which God Himself intervenes and the symbol of this liberating



mission is Jerusalem; for the sake of Jerusalem God will not allow Himself to rest, He will not allow it to be forgotten and will place watchful sentinels on its walls. Jerusalem is therefore the symbol of God's immense love for humanity, of an eternal, faithful, fruitful love," he stresses on this occasion.

For the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem is not only the Holy City loved by Jews, Christians and Muslims, but also

Celebration of the Investiture Mass of the Lieutenantcy for Central Italy, in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, Rome, in December 2023.

the place where Jesus made the supreme sacrifice of himself by offering himself to God the Father. Jerusalem is also the place of the empty tomb, the place of the risen Christ, the harbinger of peace.

"For us, the Church of Jerusalem is at the same time the Mother Church of all Churches, whom



we love and for whom we care as children, in the same way that the Acts of the Apostles speak to us, in recalling the caring zeal of Paul and Barnabas.”

During these celebrations, the Grand Master explains to the new Knights and Dames that they will have the task of caring for the wounded members of the Church, just as Mary of Bethany and the holy women cared for the Body of Christ, just as Nicodemus went to obtain myrrh, and

Joseph of Arimathea offered his tomb where Christ’s body rested for three days with honor and respect.

The Investiture thus enables all members of the Order to remember that the cloak and insignia they wear are not a manifestation of vanity, but a visible sign of their dignity, which is also a sign of service to justice, peace and solidarity in the Holy Land and in their local Churches.

The cloak, a luminous sign of our identity

A reflection by Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone

We live in a world of symbols. We must be careful we know how to interpret them, not limiting ourselves to their external appearance, however striking and solemn it may be, but delving into their meaning, searching for the transcendent. We must, in a word, flee the danger of being dazzled by the external aspects in order to enjoy a more luminous and revealing dimension: let us therefore try to look at symbols with the eyes of the soul and heart.

Let us consider our main symbol, the cloak. As in the Revelation of St. John (Rev. 7:2-4,9-14) someone might ask, “These who are clothed in white, who are they and where did they come from?” Are we able to answer “They are those who have washed their robes, making them white in the blood of the Lamb”?

Indeed, the cloak of our Order, which we receive on the altar at the moment of Investiture, should invite us never to be satisfied with the aesthetic enjoyment of its contemplation, but to seek a deep understanding of its meaning.

What is its meaning?

For a Knight, wearing a cloak invokes an obligation to loyalty, obedience, respect, honor discipline, sacrifice, responsibility, solidarity, to name but a few chivalric virtues. The recipient must live up to these virtues and wear it with dignity. For a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the whiteness of whose cloak reveals the Jerusalem Cross commemorating the five wounds of Our Lord, it also means something more.

For Dames, the black cloak, possibly embellished with white gloves and satin linings (as is the tradition in some countries) and

surmounted by a lace veil or mantilla, highlights femininity with understated elegance.

St. Paul reminds us that as baptized we are “clothed in Christ” (*Gal 3:27*). And that is what we are to feel as we wear our cloaks with the Jerusalem Cross, reminding us of the white robe of Baptism.

I tremble to remember that terrible invective of Jesus:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (*Mt. 23:27*).

Those who glory in their garments out of vanity are wrong, but so are those who detect a contradiction between the splendor of the cloak and the humility recommended for every Christian. Indeed, one can wear a brilliant uniform with humility and on the contrary be haughty in a shabby dress. So, we should not be prevented from admiring the beauty of the cloak. Our Lord was also transfigured on Mount Tabor.

Therefore, the cloaks we wear should not only remind us of what we represent, but also help us to transform ourselves into authentic

Knights and Dames who have in the Empty Tomb, and therefore in the mystery of Christ’s Resurrection from the Tomb, the ideal reference of their commitment.

Let them be, on the one hand, the shining sign of our dignity as a risen people and, on the other, the reflection of what we carry in our hearts, aware that their symbolic power achieves its purpose in the total identification between the suit and the wearer. ■



Farewell to Lieutenant General of Honor, Professor Agostino Borromeo

“It is good to set out into the world to rise again in the dawn of God’s love”

Presided over by Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the celebration of the funeral of Professor Agostino Borromeo, Honorary Lieutenant General of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, took place in the Basilica of the Twelve Holy Apostles in Rome, on February 6, 2024.

The Mass was concelebrated by Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, Assessor of the Order, and Mgr. William Shomali, Patriarchal Vicar for Jerusalem and Palestine, who came on behalf of the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Cardinal Edwin O’Brien, who was Grand Master of the Order when Professor Borromeo held the position of Governor General, the Grand Master of the Order of Malta, Fra’ John Dunlap, and the Grand Hospitaller, Fra’ Alessandro de Franciscis, also participated.

A delegation of Knights and Dames, led by the Governor General Amb. Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, and many friends came from various countries to be close to the family of the deceased.

At the end of the celebration, Father Davide Meli, Chancellor of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, read out a moving message from Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, paying tribute to the work carried out by Professor Borromeo in the service of the Church in the Holy Land.



We publish here the homily that Cardinal Fernando Filoni gave in tribute to the memory of the Professor.

“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live”
(John 11, 25).

Distinguished Authorities,
Dear Family and Friends of Prof. Borromeo,
Dear Brothers in the episcopate and in the priesthood.

With the splendid and comforting words of the Gospel of John, I wish to introduce this moment of reflection for the Liturgy of Farewell to our Brother Agostino Borromeo. Ours is a Farewell in prayer, which, even in the sadness of separation, is filled with gratitude to God for having given him as a husband and father to his family, as a devoted son to the Church and as an upright citizen to our country, wherever he carried out outstanding tasks in various fields.

We cannot forget, first of all, that Prof. Borromeo, belonging to the noble Borromeo Family, had in him a distinctive trait, never self-congratulatory, of counting among his ancestors the great Archbishop of Milan, St. Charles, one of the ecclesiastics who most masterfully interpreted the renewal of the Church of his time.

He was a man of great historical culture, who made an extremely valuable contribution to knowledge and historical criticism of complex

and not infrequently controversial events. Agostino Borromeo graduated in Political Science (with a focus on history) from the University 'La Sapienza' in Rome, where he became Professor of *Modern and Contemporary History of the Church and other Christian Confessions*, and later also lectured in History of Christianity and the Churches at the Free University Maria Santissima Assunta in Rome (LUMSA); he obtained a Diploma in Archival Studies at the School of the Vatican Secret Archives and attended the theological courses of the Institute of Religious Sciences at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Among other things, he was President of the Italian Institute of Iberian Studies, a Collaborator of the Italian Historical Institute, and a Member and Academician of numerous Italian and international scientific and cultural associations. It would take a long time here to list all his numerous publications and professional and non-professional activities. However, I cannot fail to mention his inclusion in 2002, at the behest of Pope Saint John Paul II, among the Members of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, and by Pope Benedict XVI among the Lay Auditors of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops in 2010. I must also mention his membership of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and his generous commitment to UNITALSI. However, it was in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, of which he was a Knight of the Collar, that he lavished the wealth of his gifts and manifested his organizational skills: first as Chancellor and Member of the Grand Magisterium, and then as Governor and Lieutenant General, also becoming its Honorary Commander.

As Grand Master, on the occasion of my official pilgrimage to the Holy Land, I wanted to count him among the Members of the delegation; an inclusion that he welcomed with great pleasure; indeed, he himself said: "It will be my last trip to the Land of Jesus";



The funeral of Professor Agostino Borromeo, Lieutenant General of Honor, was attended by his many friends and family, who came to pay their last respects in the Basilica of the Holy Apostles in Rome.

it was May 2022. He remembered it as a memorable event, almost as if he foresaw that it would be the ultimate synthesis of his entire commitment to the Land of the Lord.

Count Borromeo indeed had an extraordinary passion for the Holy Land, which he always visited with the spirit of a 'pilgrim' even when he went there to have a direct perception of the works the Order was supporting in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. As we have often commented among ourselves, the Holy Land must not be reduced to a mere archaeological site of the faith or a land where we are forced to watch helplessly as Israelis and Palestinians dispute. All Christians have a role and a task to play, and he was proud that the Order of the Holy Sepulchre carried it out with humility, simplicity and effectiveness.

Dear Professor Agostino, at the center of your faith was the mystery of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection, and this faith in the Risen One was the sure and certain line you followed throughout your life. Yours was a living faith, witnessed with humility, simplicity and serenity, but also with that strength that came from nobility of spirit and intelligence; a faith deeply anchored in the words of the Gospel that we have heard: Jesus addressed Martha of Bethany, at a time saddened by the death of her brother Lazarus, proclaiming: *"I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die"*; then he asked: *"Do you believe this?"* To this question, like Martha, you too, Agostino, answered: *"Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."*

This was the faith of Agostino Borromeo, which he lived throughout his life in a fruitful and rich way, remaining a devoted son and servant of the Church, always with a constant and ideal commitment, almost in deference to the spiritual legacy of his illustrious ancestor St. Charles.

Dear Prof. Borromeo, with your fidelity you have contributed to bringing about that Christian animation in society that accepts the challenges of modernity without opposition, and, at the same

time, with due analysis and comprehension of the facts.

Your hidden work in the service of the sick with UNITALSI showed us the meaning of your charity, while in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre you manifested your generosity towards the poor and the needs of the Land of Jesus; all this, we can say, with that character of a layman who lives his 'vocation' in the world and fulfils the far-sighted and sacred 'mission' of the baptized.

Thank you for your lucid testimony of faith that certainly cannot be encapsulated in these brief words of mine.

Allow me now, however, to add a word about that Agostino who lived family life in an exemplary manner, where he found the sap for an engaging and life-giving serenity. Today, to his wife Beatrice, his children Carolina, Renato and Francesco, as well as his sister Ludovica and brother Gianalfonso, goes all our sympathy and human closeness. You loved him and he loved you; may the memory of an unforgettable living together accompany you and console you, even if his departure opens a void in your existence; but his testimony of good will not be lost, for you nor for all of us. And may this give us the sense and fullness of a life beyond death and of Christian consolation.

Today to Christ the Lord we all entrust our brother Agostino, and with our prayers we ask that the Risen Lord, in his mercy, purify him of any weaknesses and faults he may have committed in his own existence and, thus purified, introduce him, as a good and faithful servant, into the Father's house.

May he pray for his family and for us, and may he continue to sustain us with his affection before the Lord.

I would like to conclude here with the words of a great Bishop of Apostolic times, Ignatius of Antioch, who said to his Christians: *"It is good to set out into the world to rise again in the dawn of God's love."*

And this, dear brother Agostino, is what the Lord grants you.

Amen.



Professor Borromeo (on the right in the photo, wearing his cloak and insignia) accompanied the Grand Master to the Holy Land in May 2022: it was his last pilgrimage to the holy places of the Christian faith.

“His love for the Order and the Holy Land, his noble figure as a Christian committed to works of charity, and his witness of deep faith remain etched in our souls”

A letter from Cardinal Pizzaballa read at the funeral of Professor Borromeo

Most Reverend Eminence,
Your Excellency, Mr. Governor General,
Dearest Borromeo Family,
May the Lord grant you peace!

On behalf of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Auxiliary Bishops and the priests, religious and faithful of the diocese, represented here by the Vicar General, I address to you the sentiments of our sincere condolences accompanied by our prayers for the soul of dear Professor Borromeo.

His love for the Order and the Holy Land, his noble figure as a Christian committed to works of charity, and his witness of deep faith remain etched in our souls. We nurture deep gratitude for all he did for the Latin Patriarchate throughout his life in the Order and especially during his tenure as Governor General.

A year ago, he returned as a pilgrim to the Holy Land despite his faltering health. He wanted to venerate the Holy Sepulchre of Christ, to which he dedicated most of his life, for the last time. We are sure that the Lord Jesus, whom he loved so much on Earth, will welcome him graciously into the Jerusalem of Heaven. We are certain that the maternal intercession of Mary, His and our Mother, will be a consolation to his loved ones, and especially to his spouse, Mrs. Beatrice, his daughter and children.

Dear Family Members, dear Members of the Order, in this time of sadness, we are close to you, trusting in the Risen Lord, who gives His consolation and fills us with Christian hope.

In Christ,

+Pierbattista Cardinal Pizzaballa

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre

A pilgrimage for peace

*The Grand Master of the Order in the Holy Land during the war
(December 28, 2023 - January 3, 2024)*

Less than three months since the start of the war, Cardinal Fernando Filoni travelled to the Holy Land from Dec. 28, 2023, to Jan. 3, 2024, accompanied by Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, Governor General, and François Vayne, the Order's Communications Director. Welcomed by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order, the small delegation met with representatives of the local Church and prayed at the Holy Places for peace, spiritually united with the 30,000 Knights and Dames scattered around the world. The Grand Master's pilgrimage, which took place against a backdrop of war and severe social crisis, encouraged the Catholic community

in the Holy Land and demonstrated that it is possible to return to the Holy Land without fear.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2023

The Order's delegation arrived in the Holy Land on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, welcomed at the Tel Aviv airport by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, and the parish priest of Gaza, Father Gabriel Romanelli,

Welcome of the Order's small delegation at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, December 28, 2023.

who was in Bethlehem on October 7 and has not been able to return to his parish since. That same evening, an official ceremony in honor of



Cardinal Filoni was held in Jerusalem at the headquarters of the Latin Patriarchate, during which Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa thanked the Grand Master for his bold and generous initiative, which he also described as courageous. He received a voluntary donation from the Grand Master of about one million Euros, which the Knights and Dames sent to him for the occasion – in addition to their ordinary contributions – through the Grand Magisterium.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2023

On the morning of the following day, after a moment of recollection in prayer by the delegation at the Holy Sepulchre, the Governor General participated in a working meeting with the Patriarchate's Chief Executive Officer, Sami El-Yousef, and his team, to discuss current problems related in particular to unemployment in Palestine, which has worsened since October 7 due to the impossibility for Palestinian workers to cross the border and work in Israel. Cardinal Filoni then met with the bishops and priests of the Latin Patriarchate, in the presence of Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa. The talks highlighted the extreme gratitude of the Mother Church of Jerusalem which, at this time of great difficulty related to the ongoing conflict, can count on the moral and material support of the universal Church through the solidarity of the Order.

In the afternoon, the delegation visited some

The Grand Master praying at the tomb of Christ.



Working meeting of the Patriarchate's administrative team with the Governor General.

Christian families supported by the Patriarchate who live in very small apartments in the Old City of

Jerusalem. Many families are in fact supported thanks to donations from the Knights and Dames, thus enabling the Christian community to remain present in the city where Christ gave His life for humanity. Moved by the painful situations he saw with his own eyes, Cardinal Filoni listened attentively to the members of these families grappling with major social problems related in particular to the lack of work, praying with them for peace in the Holy Land.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2023

On the third day of the pilgrimage, the Grand Master celebrated mass at dawn at the Wayside Shrine of the Holy Sepulchre, entrusting the special intentions of the Knights and Dames around the world to Christ. He also prayed intensely for all deceased members of the Order who contributed in their lifetime to the support of the Mother Church of Jerusalem. In his homily he recalled, in light of the day's readings, that after his birth the Lord was presented in the temple in Jerusalem according to the law of Moses, with respect to which he assumed the mission of completing divine revelation. The Cardinal gave thanks to the Risen Lord for accompanying everyone's history and lives, imploring Him to return the gift of His Peace to



Mass celebrated by the Grand Master at the Holy Sepulchre.

Visit to the "bowels" of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre with a Franciscan friar of the Custody.



the Holy Land.

After mass, the delegation shared breakfast with the Franciscan community in charge of the Holy Sepulchre, visiting the restoration work on the flooring of this Holy Place so dear to the hearts of all Christians. The Grand Master and the Governor General spoke at length with the religious who have preserved the Catholic presence at the Holy Sepulchre for centuries, in communion with the Greek Orthodox and Armenian clergy.

Continuing this spiritual journey of solidarity, the delegation traveled to Taybeh, Palestine, to meet with the parish community and visit the

home for the elderly run by the Latin Patriarchate. This village, once called Ephraim and now entirely inhabited by Palestinian Christians,

A time of prayer at the Benedictine monastery of the Dormition in Jerusalem.



was a refuge for Jesus and his apostles immediately after the resurrection of Lazarus (*Jn* 11:45-56). St. Charles de Foucauld stayed there, trying to put the Gospel into practice. Cardinal Filoni explained his decision to visit Taybeh in light of the Order's commitment to supporting the Christian population so that they can continue to live in their land despite the unfavorable political and social context.

In the evening, in Jerusalem, the Order's three delegates were welcomed at the Benedictine

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Sunday Mass of the Holy Family at Beit Sahour, the village built where the angels announced the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem.

Continues from page 29

Dormition Abbey, a monastic community that prays for the intentions of many people and works to promote dialogue among believers of the three great monotheistic religions. After vespers, the meal was followed by a discussion with Abbot Nikodemus Schnabel, particularly on the difficulties associated with the rise of religious extremism in Jewish communities. At the place where, according to tradition, the Virgin Mary fell asleep surrounded by the apostles, the delegation prayed Compline with the Benedictine community, entrusting the Mother of God with the intention of peace.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2023

On the last day of the year, the three pilgrims travelled to Beit Sahour, a village near Bethlehem, Palestine, to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family at Sunday mass. This village is said to have been built where angels warned shepherds of Christ's birth. The Grand Master presided at the Eucharist in the parish church, concelebrating with Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa. Cardinal Filoni developed the theme of pilgrimage in his homily, tracing how God became a pilgrim among us by becoming incarnate in a family, giving us the example of making our lives in turn an encounter

of love with others, regardless of race or culture.

After Mass, the delegation met with the local Catholic community for lunch with the parish council. In the afternoon, a moving prayer for peace was held in the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem-silent and empty of pilgrims-before visiting the Effetà Institute, desired by Pope Paul VI, where deaf-mute children from all over Palestine are cared for. In the evening, back in Jerusalem, the delegation participated in the *Te Deum* presided over by the Custos, Father Francis Patton, in the Holy City's Latin Catholic parish, run by Franciscan religious, before a New Year's Eve dinner at the invitation of the Latin Patriarchate.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2024,
WORLD DAY OF PEACE**

On World Day of Peace, January 1, the Grand Master concelebrated the Mass presided over by Patriarch Pizzaballa in the Pro-Cathedral, in the

A moment of intense meditation in the grotto of Bethlehem for Cardinal Filoni and Ambassador Visconti di Modrone.

presence of many faithful who had come to entrust the new year to the Mother of God on her liturgical feast. At the end of the





celebration, Cardinal Filoni gave a short speech of thanks for the welcome given to the small delegation of the Order, and then recited the prayer for peace addressed to Our Lady Queen of Palestine, which he had written. All the participants, to whom the text of the prayer had been distributed earlier, joined in the invocation, before the farewell ceremony followed by the meal offered by the Patriarch to his three guests. During the New Year’s luncheon, the Governor General discussed

End-of-year Te Deum in the Latin parish church of Jerusalem administered by the Custody.

the situation in the Holy Land with the diplomats present, drawing their attention to the Order’s continuing efforts to promote peace education, particularly through the Patriarchate’s network of schools supported by the Knights and Dames.

In the afternoon, leaders of the St. James Vicariate, which is responsible for the pastoral care of about 100 Hebrew-speaking Israeli Catholics, presented their delicate missionary work to the Rome delegation.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024

On the penultimate day of the pilgrimage, the Grand Master and his two traveling companions walked in the footsteps of Christ through the now deserted streets of Jerusalem – near the apartments of struggling Christian families visited a few days earlier – primarily along the Via Dolorosa, meditating at each station of the Way of the Cross. “Today Golgotha is in Gaza,” exclaimed a passerby, imploring members of the Order and their friends to continue to pray and act for peace in the Holy Land.

In the afternoon, the delegation participated in the traditional daily procession organized by the Franciscan friars to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, on the Sites of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Savior. Humbly, among the few pilgrims present – with a lit candle in his hand – Cardinal Filoni meditated at the foot of Calvary, near the stone where the body of the Crucified One was anointed, in front of the empty tomb and at the spot, marked by a large circle on



Mass for the World Day of Peace, on the feast of Mary Mother of God, was concelebrated by the Grand Master in the Pro-Cathedral of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem.





Cardinal Filoni took part in a procession organized daily in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, led by the Franciscans in charge of the holy place, to the sites of the Savior's passion, death and resurrection.

Asylum Seekers then took place at the Saint Rachel Center in Jerusalem, where the children of these people are cared for during the day by the Vicariate. Also with the help of the Order, the Latin Patriarchate provides pastoral and social support to 70,000 foreign Catholic workers in very precarious situations in Israel, mainly from Asia and Africa.

the ground, where Mary Magdalene met the Risen One on Easter morning.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2024

Before returning to Rome on January 3, the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus and the Patriarchate's Pro-Cathedral, at the end of a week-long pilgrimage, the delegation went early in the morning, at 6:30 a.m., to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre for mass presided over on Golgotha by the Grand Master. All members of the Order had been invited the day before – via social media – to join him spiritually, since peace presupposes the conversion of each person.

On the morning of the last day of the trip, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone held a second meeting at the Patriarchate devoted to economic issues, reviewing with Sami El-Yousef and his staff the various operational aspects of balanced resource management. With this in mind, the Governor General agreed with the Patriarchate's administrative team on procedures to better ensure the identification of humanitarian priorities at this dramatic time, not only in Gaza but throughout the Holy Land.

A visit by the Vicariate for Migrants and



Visit to the Saint Rachel Center in Jerusalem, which is part of the Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers.

At the end of this pilgrimage for peace, a farewell meeting was held at the Patriarchate, during which Cardinal

Pizzaballa, surrounded by his staff, once again thanked Cardinal Filoni and Ambassador Visconti di Modrone for the Order's solidarity with the Church in the Holy Land, hoping that the exceptional step taken will encourage the Knights and Dames to return on pilgrimage in the near future. ■

Meeting with Christian families in Jerusalem

During their pilgrimage to the Holy Land in late December 2023 and early January 2024, the Grand Master and the Governor General met with poor Christian families living in Jerusalem, supported by the Latin Patriarchate thanks to contributions from members of the Order. Dima Kalak Khoury, the Patriarchate's Director of Social Services, who led the Grand Magisterium's small delegation on these visits, agreed to present several concrete situations experienced by these people housed in Custody apartments.

A COURAGEOUS MOTHER

Nisreen, a 53-year-old mother struggling to overcome life's challenges after years of separation from her husband. Residing with her four children in a modest \$500 rented apartment, Nisreen suffers from diabetes and heart ailments, requiring frequent hospital visits. Reduced to unemployment due to her health problems, she struggles to obtain essential medications. Despite her eldest daughter's commendable efforts in contributing to the family income through a sales job at clothing company, the family still faces economic hardship. Nisreen's eldest son dreams of studying electricity to become a professional technician, and with the generous support of the Order, we've pledged to make that dream a reality. The family's youngest son is currently in 10th grade. The dire economic situation of the family often leads to food shortages and the inability to pay utility bills. The Latin Patriarchate contributions, whether in the form of food coupons or assistance with utility



In each Christian family visited in Jerusalem, the Grand Master prayed after listening to the people in difficulty and assuring them of the support of the members of the Order.

bills, provide essential relief to this family in need. Moreover, our empowerment programs aim to equip Nisreen's children with the skills and opportunities necessary to contribute meaningfully to their family expenses.

A FAMILY FIGHTING TO SURVIVE

Nancy, a 32-year-old mother of four, faces considerable challenges. Her husband, a 40-year-old taxi driver, has seen his income severely

impacted by the ongoing war. Discrimination prevents him from picking up Israeli passengers, and the risk of attacks in Israeli areas further hinders his work. Struggling to make ends meet, the family was evicted from their Beit Hanina home due to the inability to pay the accumulated rent. With the assistance of the Latin Patriarchate and the parish priest's help, they secured a small apartment. The house is so small that some members of the family are forced to sleep in the kitchen. To alleviate their financial strain, we facilitated Nancy's employment as an assistant in the Greek Orthodox Monastery kitchen, providing a modest income. Despite these efforts, the housing situation remains challenging, and we



are working with the Custody of the Holy Land to find a more suitable home. The parish priest contributes to their current rent, and our support extends to food coupons, utility bills, and the children's school fees in addition to their property tax (Arnona) through the East Jerusalem fund. In their dire circumstances, Nancy's parents try to help, but their limited income hinders consistent assistance. This family is in urgent need, and the support of the Order can make a significant impact on their journey toward stability and a brighter future.

Despite the current difficult conditions, Christian families testify to their desire to remain in the land of their ancestors and to work for harmony between all.



A HOUSEHOLD FACING UNEMPLOYMENT

Michelin, a woman separated from her husband, faces substantial challenges in caring for her two daughters – 21 and 24 years old – and her 22-year-old son. They reside in a cramped house provided by the Custody of the Holy Land, where unhealthy living conditions persist due to severe space constraints. Michelin, once employed in a daycare, lost her job during recent layoffs triggered by the ongoing war. Unfortunately, one of her daughters, who used to work part-time in a hotel, also faced unemployment.

The family's financial struggles are exacerbated by the fact that Michelin's son, the sole earner, works as a laborer in a hotel with very few hours and a meagre salary. In response to their dire situation, we utilized the East Jerusalem fund to assist Michelin in settling accumulated debts with the national insurance. Additionally, we provided support with property tax payments and food coupons. Despite these efforts, their circumstances remain challenging, stressing the urgency of ongoing assistance. The Order's emergency support can make a meaningful difference in alleviating the hardships faced by Michelin and her family during these difficult times.

A FATHER'S DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAKE OF WARTIME REPRISALS

Suleiman, a father of three, faces numerous challenges as he strives to provide for his family. His daughter, supported by a scholarship from

the Custody of the Holy Land, is pursuing her education at Bethlehem University. Suleiman's older son, aged 23, successfully completed his optics studies with the assistance of Latin Patriarchate and is now looking for employment. Now, his second son aspires to study bus driving, seeking our support in this endeavor. The family's financial difficulties are compounded by the fact that Suleiman's wife is unemployed and lacks formal education. Suleiman himself suffers from heart problems, requiring regular medications and checkups due to blocked arteries. Formerly employed as security guards at the Western Wall (Kotel), Suleiman and his two sons were



unfortunately fired in a retaliatory action following the attacks on October 7. To address their pressing needs, we extend assistance with rent, food coupons, and utility bills. The family, however, continues to face significant hardships, struggling to put food on the table. Ongoing support is crucial to empower and uplift this resilient family in their journey toward stability and self-sufficiency.

Discussions with Christian families in Jerusalem highlighted the importance of the humanitarian aid provided by the Order to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

LIVING IN ONE ROOM WITH SEVEN CHILDREN

Nakhleh, in his mid-50s, faces formidable challenges as he resides with his wife and seven children in a one-bedroom apartment in the old city of Jerusalem. His life took a drastic turn



when he had to cease working on a delivery van after being diagnosed with cancer, adding a layer of complexity to the family's struggles.

Dima Kalak Khoury, Director of Social Services of the Latin Patriarchate, led the Order's delegation to Jerusalem during visits to some Christian families in need.

Despite these hardships, there's a glimmer of hope as his daughter, supported by our empowerment programs, pursues her studies in medical secretary training. Additionally, two of Nakhleh's grown-up sons aspire to become bus drivers, with one already receiving our support, and plans in motion to assist the second son. However, the family's situation remains challenging: his wife is unable to work due to the demands of caring for their large family as the remaining children are still in school. We've stepped in to alleviate some of their financial burdens by assisting with food coupons, utility bills, property tax, and school fees. The gravity of their circumstances emphasizes the need for ongoing support. With a significant number of family members, we are committed to ensuring Nakhleh's family does not face these challenges alone.

Update on projects supported by the Order in the Holy Land



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Beginning at the end of 2023 and in the first part of 2024, Lieutenancies around the world, through the Grand Magisterium, sent a voluntary solidarity contribution of about \$1,5 million for the needs of the people affected by the ongoing conflict since the previous October 7.

During 2024, with the exception of ROACO-related projects and, of course, regular contribution to the Latin Patriarchate for its institutional activities (educational, pastoral, social), the Order's support will go mainly to humanitarian aid in the territories affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Order thus continues to contribute to the survival of refugees in Gaza Parish and to the many humanitarian situations in the West Bank, where aid consists of food vouchers, financial contributions for utilities or school fees, the purchase of medicine and coverage of medical expenses.

Given the cancellation of work permits for many in the West Bank and the resulting rise in unemployment, the goal is to work to put solutions in place through support for the development of small businesses or initiatives and, in general, to help local people find ways to generate income for their livelihoods.

In the meantime, in this annual edition of *The Jerusalem Cross*, we look back at the projects implemented in 2023, before the outbreak of war in the Holy Land and its devastating side effects.

OFFICES OF THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

A NEW TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

Over the years, telephones installed decades ago had become obsolete, and the devices needed to be replaced. The project, subsidized by the **Lieutenancy for Switzerland and Liechtenstein**, enabled the purchase of a new switchboard server and telephones from which employees and priests of the Latin Patriarchate in Palestine, Israel and Jordan can benefit, with a total of about 106 people thus having the opportunity to carry out their service in a more functional manner.

A DIGITAL ARCHIVING SOFTWARE

A digital software was implemented so that it could streamline data archiving, retrieval and storage processes, reducing physical storage space and ensuring data integrity.

The project had been submitted in April 2021 and adopted by the **U.S. Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy**, but the pandemic and restrictions

had slowed its implementation. In 2023 the new software was purchased and installed, allowing the 120 employees of the Latin Patriarchate in Jordan, Palestine and Israel, as well as the 52 parishes (including 12 in Palestine, 6 in Israel, 33 in Jordan and 1 in Cyprus), to benefit from this new system.

RENOVATION OF THE RAINWATER COLLECTION SYSTEM

As that of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem is a historic building, of times it needs restoration and adaptation works that will ensure its good long-term preservation. Among these, a project to renovate the rainwater collection system on the roofs was proposed to the Lieutenancies through the intermediary of the Grand Magisterium and was supported by the **Lieutenancy for Northern Italy**. Diverting rainwater away from the foundations of buildings helps prevent erosion, contributing to the overall soundness of the structure and responsibility to the environment.

PATRIARCHATE SCHOOLS

SCHOOL SUPPORT IN GAZA

The grant from the **Lieutenancy for Austria**, ensured the continuity of education of 26 students of the Holy Family School in Gaza for the school year 2022-2023. The support was provided through scholarships that aimed to cover the tuition of needy pupils whose parents lost their source of income due to the Covid-19 pandemic and were not reinstated after restrictions were lifted; whose parents have a

temporary contract that does not guarantee a steady income; who have at least one chronically disabled parent who is unable to work; or who are growing up with only one parent.



SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS IN PALESTINE

This project was proposed to support Christian students at Birzeit University whose parents lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic and could not get them back, but instead, had to declare bankruptcy or sell their assets to meet the rising cost of living.

Thus, through the donation from the **Lieutenancy for Germany**, students in need received a scholarship to cover their educational expenses during the Summer and Fall semesters of 2021 and the Spring and Fall semesters of 2022.

VISUAL AIDS FOR CATECHISM



The Patriarchate's catechetical office aimed to build a good Christian education program for students in Christian schools in Palestine, Jordan and Israel. Thus, new methods of explaining and



telling the Bible were introduced, relying on the use of visual aids and enabling students to absorb the meanings of the stories through interaction and participation.

With these aids, funded by the **Lieutenancy for Belgium**, teachers have found that children stay focused and that the meanings of Bible stories are easier to understand and memorize.

INTERACTIVE PROJECTORS AND NEW DESKS



Most of the Latin Patriarchate schools in Palestine were established in the 19th century as an extension of the Church's spiritual commitment to educate and provide proper Christian teaching to future generations. A recent needs assessment of the various facilities had revealed that some of them lacked modern and essential equipment. New trends in teaching and learning and technological advances were taken into account in the assessment. In light of these changes, and through the support of the Grand Magisterium, the Latin Patriarchate purchased 28 interactive projectors for 8 schools in Palestine (Taybeh, Bir Zeit, Aboud, Ain Arik, Jifna,

Ramallah, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour).

In addition, again thanks to a donation from the lieutenancies that came through the Grand Magisterium, older desks were replaced with new ones to provide students with the comfort they needed to attend classes. The schools in greatest need and thus given priority were those in Birzeit, Zababdeh, Beit Sahour, Ramallah and Nablus.

IMPROVED LEVELS OF SAFETY AND SANITATION

The school in al-Fuheis, Jordan, suffered from a degraded sanitation infrastructure due to irregular maintenance and overuse. Therefore, it was critical to intervene to ensure that the sanitation facilities were adequate to the needs of the children, including spaces to fit, clean environments, privacy, and safe access to clean water.

Thanks largely to the contribution of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, renovations were carried out that provided the units with adequate ventilation, new flooring, completely private access and use for each bathroom, new sinks, safe and clean drinking water taps, and adequate lighting.

UPGRADING COMPUTER LABS

Upgrading school computer labs is critical to evolving educational needs. They are designed to facilitate learning activities and collaborative group work. Some schools in Palestine had outdated systems that slowed down the process of

both teaching and learning.

With the support of the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, the main goal of this initiative was therefore to create technologically advanced spaces and tools that could accommodate a larger number of students by providing them with more modern tools with extended functionality.

The schools targeted were specifically those in Zababdeh, Nablus, Birzeit, Ain Arik, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Taybeh and the two Latin Patriarchate schools in Gaza. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing conflict, it has not been possible to complete the project in Gaza, however, improvements in schools in the West Bank, namely Zababdeh, where 1,034 young people study, Nablus (607 students), Birzeit (470 students), Ain Arik (256 students), Beit Jala (840 students), Beit Sahour (393 students) and Taybeh (373 students) have been made and completed. These institutes now have computer labs that conform to contemporary technological trends.



THE BUILDINGS OF THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE

PALESTINE

RENOVATION FOR THE HOLY FAMILY PARISH AND SCHOOL IN GAZA

The parish hall of the Holy Family in Gaza was in an unsafe condition, mainly due to the moisture that had built up and natural deterioration, not to mention the years of

bombing in the neighborhood. Therefore, it was necessary to take remedial measures to repair and restore its stability and safety, and it was possible to do so thanks to a grant from the **U.S. Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy**. The rehabilitation project included work to insulate, reinforce the basement floor and the entire balcony and allowed the 120 members of the Gaza Latin parish, as well as the entire local Christian community of about 900

people, to have a safe and renovated place to gather. Unfortunately, this work was damaged by the war that began on Oct. 7, 2023.

One of the schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Gaza is located in Al-Zaytoon. This school was in need of renovations and these and it was possible to carry them out through the contribution of the **Lieutenancy for Austria**. The renovation has had a significant impact in that it has created a more conducive environment for teaching and learning, resulting in improved academic performance of students, increased enrollment, with additional benefits to the community through access to quality education and a safer environment. Again, efforts have been hampered by the war.

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THOMAS AQUINAS CENTER

The Thomas Aquinas Center is the only Christian Catholic youth center in Gaza among the more than 130 non-Christian centers operating in this troubled part of the world. The project, which started in 2021 thanks to the support of the **Lieutenancy for Germany**, covered a number of activities, including: a salary for teachers who taught English language courses, project management, computer skills, and salary

coverage for the center's managers, with a total of 17 people. It is worth mentioning that 72 young Christians found jobs in Gaza thanks to the training programs offered by the center, which ceased activities following the outbreak of the 2023 war, which completely destroyed Gaza.

WORK ON BEIT JALA SEMINARY

Several renovations and safety improvements have been completed at Beit Jala Seminary, established in Jerusalem in 1852 by Patriarch Joseph Valerga for the purpose of training diocesan priests to serve all the parishes of the Diocese of the Holy Land and transferred to Beit Jala in 1936.

Through the grant from the **Lieutenancies for England and Wales**, which adopted this project in 2021, it was possible to start the tender and begin the work, providing a benefit to the approximately 100 people living and working in the Major and Minor Seminary, and to all visitors and guests. In addition, besides the annual financial savings, this change decreases electricity and gas consumption, and thus protects the environment.

Another intervention was then carried out and completed in the rooms housing the seminarians, which had parts of cracked plaster, as well as



moisture stains on the ceilings and walls due to rainwater leaks from the roof, and to the bathrooms, which were in poor condition and needed renovation.

With the support of the **Lieutenancy for Austria**, a renovation project for these spaces had been initiated in 2022, which involved dismantling and installation operations, electrical work, sanitary and ventilation work, and much more, and resulted in a significant transformation of the facilities.

Instead, thanks to the support of the Grand Magisterium and other organizations, it was also possible to restore the roof.

Further intervention at the Beit Jala Seminary completed in 2023 was the replacement of one of the elevators, thanks to the contribution of the **Lieutenancy for Switzerland and Liechtenstein**.

All of this benefits the 15 priests and seminarians who currently reside in the Seminary, as well as all future priests and seminarians who will succeed the current residents in the years to come.

RESTORATION OF THE MULTI-PURPOSE HALL IN ABOUD PARISH

Moving into the West Bank territories, we arrive in the village of Aboud, which is home to several historical sites and which, like many areas in the region, has experienced tensions and conflicts related to the broader geopolitical situation in the Middle East. Indeed, the village, with its archaeological and religious heritage, reflects the history of the region and the mixed Christian and Muslim population that inhabits it, which contributes to its cultural richness. Aboud is home to 2,000 residents, including 1,000 Christians (500 Latin Christians). The renovation of the parish's multi-purpose hall, which is used for spiritual and recreational activities: exhibitions, conferences, school activities, retreats, events, festivals, etc., was made possible thanks to contributions that also came through the Grand Magisterium.

248 students, priests and the 500 members of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Parish can now benefit from this space and participate in the initiatives that are carried out.

REPLACING THE SOUND SYSTEM OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE VISITATION, ZABABDEH

Staying in the West Bank, we move to the northern part, to Zababdeh, a relatively small village that nevertheless plays a significant role in preserving the Christian presence there. Here, for decades, Our Lady of the Visitation Church has been serving its parish and its youth, and over time, some of the equipment used, particularly the sound system, had become malfunctioning. Thanks to support that came through the Grand Magisterium, a state-of-the-art sound system was purchased and installed, with microphones, amplifiers, speakers and modern sound processing equipment. The project also included training for church staff and volunteers who would operate it.

JORDAN

INSULATION WORK IN THE PARISH OF ST. ELIJAH IN WAHADNEH

Al Wahadneh, is a village in Ajloun Governorate, located on a small hill and affords a view of the Jordan Valley. The parish was founded in 1926, and in 1963 the church was built, then consecrated in 1964. Wahadneh is home to 8,000 residents, 500 of whom are Christians for whom the parish is a very important hub. St. Elias Church, which has served the community for decades, had begun to show signs of thermal insulation problems, which caused plaster damage inside the building. Thanks to the grant sent through the Grand Magisterium, the work done has solved the building's roof drainage problem and the parish and community of Wahadneh can benefit from a safe and welcoming place.

RENOVATION OF THE RESIDENCE OF THE SISTERS OF THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY IN SALT

Salt is the first parish established by the Latin Patriarchate in East Jordan (1866) and is home to 2,000 Christians, 450 of whom are Latin Christians.



The Sisters of Our Lady’s Assumption Parish have served this Christian community for decades. They have lived in the same residence since its founding (1910-1912), and despite numerous renovations to repair and preserve the building, it still had unsafe and poorly functioning sanitary units, as well as a lack of adequate access. Support for the Sisters stemmed from a desire to support their mission to serve the local Christian community. Hence, the renovation of parts of the house, mainly by building new bathrooms and repairing adjacent spaces. The project included demolition work, reconstruction, waterproofing and thermal insulation, and then putting in new toilets and sanitary facilities.

The work, which began in 2022 thanks to a grant sent through the Grand Magisterium, was completed in early 2023, allowing the 6 nuns living in the Residence of the Sisters of the Assumption of Our Lady to live in a welcoming and functional space.

RENOVATION OF FIVE ROOMS FOR SCOUTS IN AL-MISDAR

Christ the King Parish in Al-Misdar has earmarked five rooms for the scouts to provide them with a space to meet, practice, and store their equipment.

Through contributions received in spring 2022 from the Knights and Dames,

renovations and securing of the rooms enabled the approximately 100 scouts of Christ the King parish to have a welcoming space.

PURCHASE OF A BUS TO ACCOMPANY DISABLED CHILDREN

The Our Lady of Peace Center (OLOPC), located in the mountainous area of Khirbet Al Souq, south of Amman, officially opened in 2004 by Jordan’s Queen HRH Rania Al-Abdullah, provides therapeutic and learning services for children with mental and physical disabilities and their parents, regardless of race, color or religion. Services carried out free of charge by qualified therapists, ranging from family counseling to social skills development and rehabilitation. In addition to serving the population of Amman governorate, OLOPC has similar programs in five other districts in Jordan. These subdivisions mainly provide physical therapy services for children and adults, while the Aqaba branch offers comprehensive services for physical and mental disabilities.

In order to give disabled children in Aqaba the opportunity to participate in all extracurricular services and activities, without being excluded and discriminated against, it was important for



the Center to have a means of transportation suitable for the needs of these recipients. Thus, the purchase of a bus designed specifically to be able to transport children with disabilities was proposed.

Through contributions also received from the Knights and Dames, the approximately 45 children with disabilities who receive care and counseling at the OLOPC office in Aqaba can be transported from their homes to the center and back.

PURCHASE OF A MINIVAN FOR THE PASTORAL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES OF THE JEC IN SMAKIEH

In Jordan, the Jeunesses Etudiantes Catholiques (JEC) has 30 youth groups comprising a total of 3,068 registered members spread across nine different towns and villages. Each youth group in each locality is divided into five age groups: workers (22-35 years old), undergraduates (19-22 years old), high school students (16-18 years old), preparatory school students (13-15 years old), and elementary school students (6-12 years old).

Smakieh is one of the areas where JEC has about 200 members who participate in activities and prepare trainings and workshops, retreats and spiritual gatherings, summer camps, religious festivals, sports events, educational trips and meetings. All these initiatives are held in Amman, 130 kilometers away from Smakieh, and other often distant locations.

A means of transportation was needed to enable JEC members in Smakieh to attend and arrive on time for the various activities.

With the help of the **Lieutenancy for Western Spain**, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem provided the JEC members in Smakieh with a minivan that allows them to travel easily and serves as a platform for interaction, enhancing the overall experience of the participants who, by traveling together, can share moments and create stronger bonds.

RENOVATION OF THE MARTYRS' CHURCH AND PARISH HALL IN MARJ EL HAMAM

Established in 1986, the parish of Marj al-Hamam consists of 350 families. The interior of the small church needed repair work as the walls, ceilings and floors showed signs of cracks, erosion and damage caused by moisture and water infiltration.

The project aimed to renovate the old small church and parish hall to preserve their historical value, improve their structural integrity and create a welcoming space for the community. Through grants from the lieutenancies, which came to the Latin Patriarchate through the Grand Magisterium, the renovation involved the complete restoration of the architectural, electrical, plumbing and interior systems.

MAINTENANCE OF THE ELECTRICAL SYSTEM OF THE CONVENT OF ST. JOSEPH IN ADER

In Ader, a small village in southern Jordan with a population of about 2,000 Latin, Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christians, there is St. Joseph Parish. With contributions that came in from the Grand Magisterium, work was done to renovate and secure the electrical system, allowing the approximately 500 members of St. Joseph Parish, the priests and all who use and visit the facility, to live in a safe environment.



ISRAEL

RESTORATION OF THE MAIN COURTYARD AND GUESTHOUSE AT DEIR RAFAT

Moving instead to Israel, to Deir Rafat, the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Palestine and the Holy Land is part of a complex that includes two wings: one dedicated to hospitality and professional development centers, and the other to the monastic community. In 2022, a renovation project was initiated with a grant from the **Lieutenancy for Australia New South Wales** for this place that attracts pilgrims from all over the world. The main courtyard and guest wing of the convent were remodeled, providing a welcoming and comfortable environment for residents and visitors. Sanitary units were brought up to code, and improved insulation and roof maintenance contributed to energy efficiency and reduced utility costs. Aesthetic improvements, including tree trimming, painting and whitewashing, revitalized a more pleasant and relaxing look to the complex. Replacement of the old water tanks and solar panels with a more efficient system confirmed the commitment to sustainability and responsible resource management. Overall, this renovation project not only preserved the historic charm of Deir Rafat, but also ensured its functionality and sustainability for years to come.



Founded by Patriarch Louis Barlassina in the 1920s, the shrine of Our Lady Queen of Palestine in Deir Rafat is of great importance to the entire diocese of the Holy Land. The nuns of the Monastic Family of Bethlehem ensure a free presence of prayer and adoration in this Marian shrine, which welcomes Christians of all denominations, as well as Jews and Muslims, who share the same desire and prayer: peace of heart, peace in families and peace for this beautiful land of Jesus. By the decree Est quidem notum of Pope John Paul II (Jan. 21, 1994), Queen Palestinae was proclaimed patroness of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. The feast of Our Lady of Palestine, set for October 25, is celebrated on the last Sunday of October.

Some results of the “Youth Empowerment Program” for youth in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the women’s entrepreneurship program in Jerusalem

In Palestine, young people make up about one-third of the population and always face difficulties and obstacles in building a future for themselves, due to poor social conditions and insecurity caused by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The program, “LPJ Youth Empowerment,” aims to support the economic empowerment of young Christian men and women between the ages of 21 and 35 in East Jerusalem and the West Bank by providing them with vocational skills and guidance and encouraging them to become agents of positive change within their communities.

Launched then in 2022 with the contribution of the **Lieutenancy for Germany**, this edition of the program reached 22 women and 20 men who, during 2023, completed their course.

For these 42 young people, the experience was very important, both emotionally and professionally: some of them, who had confessed to feeling depressed and hopeless, regained enthusiasm and confidence in the future at the end of the course.

Most of those who benefited from this program were able to find a job, start their own business or begin internships with other

companies. They now have the confidence to provide for themselves and their families.

Instead, the “Empowering Women in Jerusalem” program was established to support and improve the lives of Christian women through vocational training, enabling them to start their own businesses. The financial empowerment of women is indeed essential to break the cycle of poverty and ensure a decent life for those who are unemployed or facing financial hardship. Providing education and skills enables people to

realize their potential, make their voices heard, and promotes equality between men and women, with the goal of building more inclusive communities and a more just and equitable society.

Through the support of the **Lieutenancy for Germany** and the **Lieutenancy for Western Spain**, 40 women from East Jerusalem were able to access the program. In addition to their chosen course of study, these participants were offered additional training in business management, marketing, financial literacy and record keeping.



Most of the people who have benefited from the program for young people in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have been able to find work. Thanks to the Order, they are able to provide for their families.

The Order's participation in ROACO meetings

“Holy Father, I bring you the prayers of thirty thousand Dames and Knights of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.” It was with these words that Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, addressed Pope Francis on June 22, 2023, during the audience granted to the members of the ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches). The Holy Father expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the work of hope accomplished, and then welcomed the group of young delegates from the

Jerusalem, Msgr. Adolfo Tito Yllana, the Apostolic Nuncios to Turkey and Iran Marek Solczyński and Andrzej Józowicz, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Asmara, Menghsteab Tesfamariam, the Custos of the Holy Land, Father Francesco Patton, and the then Vice Chancellor of Bethlehem University, Brother Peter Bray. In his address, the Cardinal Secretary of State gave a detailed summary of the Holy See's interventions in the various crisis regions of the world, while the other speakers focused on the situation in the Holy Land.

During the discussions, the Governor General committed the Order to a series of projects in Israel, Palestine and Jordan. In Israel, these concern the Community of the Beatitudes in Emmaus and the Greek Melkite parish of Saint Georges in Maghar; in Palestine, the Notre-Dame de l'Annonciation school in Ramallah and the Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem; and in Jordan, the Greek Melkite pastoral center in the Arjan district of Amman.

Six months after this plenary session, in January 2024, the Governor General, participated in the ROACO steering committee chaired by Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, to review initiatives to be launched in 2024 and approve a series of projects. Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa addressed the meeting via video conference from Jerusalem, illustrating the latest developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its impact on society and the Christian community. The Order has committed to four projects (renovation of the electric circuit at a Greek Catholic school in Jordan, furnishing a classroom at a Carmelite school in Israel, restructuring of a Benedictine monastery in Jerusalem and a missionary sisters' kindergarten also in Jerusalem) for a total of €236,000, the first instalment of contributions to ROACO initiatives for 2024. ■



Eastern Churches invited to share their experiences as part of the work of this meeting. The Governor General also assured the new Prefect of the Eastern Churches, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, of the Order's continued support for solidarity projects in favor of Christians in the Middle East. The 96th plenary session of the ROACO in Rome was held from June 20 to 22, in the Aula Magna of the Casa La Salle, under the presidency of Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti. The meeting was also attended by the Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Apostolic Nuncio to Israel and Apostolic Delegate in

The 96th plenary session of the ROACO in Rome was held from June 20 to 22, in the Aula Magna of the Casa La Salle, under the presidency of Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Oriental Churches.



The first 50 years of Bethlehem University

A Jubilee to look forward

2023 marked the 50th anniversary of Bethlehem University, an academic institution that provides first-rate education to young Palestinians, both Christian and Muslim, who train here to be competent professionals in their own societies and elsewhere.

For the past 30 years, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, aware of the importance of the education professionally carried out within this university, has not hesitated to become a promoter and supporter of various initiatives for the benefit of the students.

The jubilee of Bethlehem University concluded with a beautiful ceremony on October 1, 2023, just days before the outbreak of the conflict that still distresses the Palestinian and Israeli populations. On that occasion, the new Georgette Salameh Student and Visitor Center, for which – among various other projects – the Order contributed, was blessed and dedicated.

On October 1, 1973, Bethlehem University opened its doors with 112 students and 16 academic staff members in a building shared with a high school. Now the University welcomes

3,300 students a year and has more than 200 professors among those full- and part-time teaching in 9 master's programs, 22 bachelor's degree programs, 6 diplomas and 3 associate degrees. Of the student population, 78 percent are women.

Brother Peter Bray – who served as vice chancellor for 15 years and has been a valuable interlocutor for the Order – helped us trace some of the highlights of the relationship between Bethlehem University and the Order of the Holy Sepulcher, starting with the first exchanges in 1993:

“The first news of financial support was in 1999, when on May 6 of that year Robert Benson, then Lieutenant for England and Wales, wrote to Brother Michael O’Hern, President and CEO of CBIS (Christian Brothers Investment Services), about the possibility of establishing a fund through the Order’s De Furstenberg Foundation to secure financial assistance for Bethlehem

The jubilee of Bethlehem University was marked by a beautiful celebration on October 1, 2023.



University, primarily in connection with the religious studies offered by the University. This fund has been supporting the Department of Religious Studies ever since. Later, in 2005, the Order established the Cardinal Hume Chair of Religious Studies to support the Department. The main goal of the Department of Religious Studies is to prepare students to become teachers of Religious Studies in schools.

On January 8, 1998, Brother Vincent Malham, the then Vice Rector, received a fax from Count Ludovico Carducci Artenisio, of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, indicating that Cardinal Furno, Grand Master of the Order, had approved the establishment of a \$25,000 annual scholarship at Bethlehem University. This was followed by other scholarships desired by successive Grand Masters and the various Lieutenancies to support students at this university.”

Certainly another important aspect has been the expansion of the University’s facilities to which the Order has contributed significantly over the years: The Millennium Hall, built – as the name suggests – at the beginning of the new millennium, houses a theater named after Cardinal Furno, at the time Grand Master of the Order. Various other buildings have been renovated thanks in part to funds sent by the Order: The De La Salle Hall, Bethlehem Hall which became the space that initially housed the Nursing faculty, and the library. In addition to the renovations, Brother Peter Bray mentions the latest two structures built with the Order’s help. “In 2021 the new facilities for the Nursing and Health Sciences were opened. The Order contributed significantly to that through a bequest from Dame Rose Bente Lee,

Bethlehem University welcomes 3,300 students every year and has more than 200 professors.

that was left to the Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy in the USA and was then designated for the facility for the Nursing and Health Sciences. The building was named the John Patrick Cardinal Foley Hall after the Grand Master who held that position from 2007 until 2011.”

On December 31, 2023, Brother Peter Bray concluded his term as Vice Chancellor and Bethlehem University and welcomed his successor, Brother Hector Hernan Santos Gonzalez, who will accompany and lead this treasured academic institution with passion and commitment in the coming years. In his farewell address on the University’s website, Brother Gonzalez writes, “As we look back and remember with gratitude the work and dedication of many people who have enabled Bethlehem University to grow into what it is today, we look forward to the 50th jubilee and beyond.”

Thinking about his 15 years in the office of Vice Chancellor, Brother Bray shares a personal thought: “I am very aware of the challenges that characterized that time, but also how much the opportunity to be part of an institution that has made a difference in the lives of the young people entrusted to us has been a blessing. It was wonderful for me to be able to work with extraordinary people to help create an oasis of peace where students could feel safe and cared for, a place where quality higher education was available and where they had a sense of belonging. I left Bethlehem University with a deep sense of gratitude to God, the Palestinian people, my community and some truly inspiring students who have deeply enriched my life.”

He then ends with thanks for the Order of the Holy Sepulchre’s willing support for the University as an institution and, above all, the students. In the past ten years, the contribution sent by the Order has been about 4 million euros. “The support that Bethlehem University has received from around the world has helped students know that they are not forgotten, and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has been a significant player in this. Being aware that they are not forgotten was an important aspect of keeping hope alive, so I was deeply grateful for this support.”

Elena Dini

THE LIFE OF THE LIEUTENANCIES

Growth of the Order and an echo of investitures around the world

2023 was a year of return to community life, after the Covid-19 restrictions of previous years. It was also a year of changes, new entries, promotions and appointments that show just how alive and active the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is in the world.

Indeed, over **55** Investiture Rites took place in 2023, during which more than **1,000** new Knights and Dames were admitted to the Order. On the same occasions, over **980** Members were promoted.

Below, we relive some of these great moments, when the Grand Master and Governor General were present.

*Sassari, Italy,
April 28-29, 2023*

*Milan, Italy,
May 12-13, 2023*





Brussels, Belgium, June 8, 2023

Princess Astrid of Belgium and her husband entered the Order

On June 8, 2023, during a solemn ceremony in the Chapter Church of Notre-Dame des Victoires in Brussels, the Grand Master conferred the insignia of Grand Cross of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem on Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, Princess of Belgium, and her husband, His Imperial and Royal Highness Archduke Lorenz of Austria-Este, Prince of Belgium. The ceremony took place in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio for Belgium and Luxembourg, Msgr Franco Coppola, the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, the Lieutenant for Belgium, Damien de Laminne de Bex, the Chancellor, Ambassador Alfredo Bastianelli, and other dignitaries from the Court of Belgium, the Order and the Lieutenancy. The award is part of a historic tradition in which the families of the illustrious recipients have always been very close to the Church and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.



*Prague, Czech Republic,
September 8-9, 2023*



*Barcelona, Spain,
October 6-7, 2023*



*Rome, Italy,
December 15-16, 2023*



*New York, United States,
October 13-14, 2023*

*Madrid, Spain,
October 27-28, 2023*



The meaning of pilgrimage to the Holy Land for members of the Order

Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger, Lieutenant for Switzerland and Liechtenstein, reflects on the importance of visiting the Mother Church of the Holy Land, based on her experience in 2023.

This article illustrates what Knights and Dames all over the world experience during pilgrimages organized by the Order.



Pilgrimage to Jerusalem has been a lofty ideal for Christians throughout the centuries. The longing for the heavenly Jerusalem was omnipresent.

Through today's pilgrimages to the Holy Land, in addition to visiting the Holy Places, we can see with our own eyes the situation of Christians still living there. This is a powerful sign, an expression of the close bond between us, the Knights and Dames of our Order, and the local Christian population. It is also a testimony of our love for the land where our Lord Jesus Christ lived.

The local people experience a different reality

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land by the Lieutenancy for Switzerland and Liechtenstein, in May 2023.

than we do here in Europe. They experience violence and injustice in many contexts.

What great happiness and immense joy was granted to me when I was able to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in May 2023 together with more than 70 people from the

Lieutenancy. The warm welcome at the Latin Patriarchate with the presentation of the pilgrim's shell was the highlight of the trip for me. It was an honor that the Patriarch, His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, had welcomed us to Jerusalem and personally conferred the pilgrim's shell to each Knight and Dame visiting the Holy Land for the first time as a Member of the Order. Following this, as Knights and Dames, we had been able to experience the solemn entrance into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Learning of the events that have shaken the Holy Land since October 7, 2023, has been shocking. Since then, the terrible news from the Middle East has added another chapter of suffering to the history of the Holy Land. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected

by this tragedy. Our commitment to the projects, our attachment and our closeness to the Christian people in the Holy Land remains undiminished, even though we will not be able to go there in the near future. We must not lose hope and we must not leave our brothers and sisters in the faith in the Middle East alone.

As Dames and Knights of our Order, we are part of the Mother Church of the Holy Land. We must fill the streets and holy places with our presence and prayers. And we will return as soon as political conditions allow again. Because the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is not just any church, it is the place where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered, died and rose again. And from this Church the light shines into the world through the resurrection of Christ.

Enabling young students to fall in love with the Holy Land

The Lieutenancy's initiative for England and Wales could become a model for others

As part of the outreach programme of the Lieutenancy for England and Wales a small team of members have embarked upon a programme of going into the Catholic Chaplaincies of universities and giving presentations to students about the Order and its work in the Holy Land and talking to students afterwards. This work has produced a genuine interest in the Order among catholic students, so we decided to establish a Bursary Scheme to fund two post graduate students to come out with us to the Holy Land to experience for themselves at first hand the work we do. This was a completely new venture for us, and so two post graduate students having been selected, in October 2023, five of us, myself the Lieutenant, our Pilgrimage Director, our Ecclesiastical Master of Ceremonies and Nicholas and Peter spent eight days in Galilee, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. We wanted them not just to see for themselves the work the Order does, but also to experience at firsthand

what life is like for Christians there.

This was a completely new experience for them and a great joy for us who have been to the Holy Land many times, to witness the reaction of them both as they travelled around. Our programme was built around daily Mass, and consisted of visiting the holy sites and meeting people in the local Christian communities. They met students at Bethlehem University and the Seminary where they experienced the warm hospitality always extended to us when we visit there. We were all invited to spend one evening in the home of a Palestinian family in Bethlehem and join them in a family meal. This gave the students the opportunity to talk to members of three generations of the same family about the difficulties of their daily life as Christians. For those of us in the West who don't have to fight for our faith, this was a profound experience for both Peter and Nicholas who saw first-hand the bond between the Christians there and the members of



The Lieutenant for England and Wales, Michael David Byrne (center back row), accompanied by the Director of Pilgrimages, the Master of Ceremonies, and young students Nicholas and Peter, invited to discover the Holy Land and the Order.

praying; experiences such as their first Mass on Calvary in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, and standing at the water's edge in Tabka on Lake Galilee, staring across at the Golan Heights picturing Our Lord on the Lake and in the boats with his Disciples.

For many of us repeated pilgrimages to the Holy Land make the experience more profound and reflective, but nothing can ever replicate the total impact of the first pilgrimage there. That experience lives forever, and it was a privilege for the three of us who had been there many times before, to witness the joy of this new experience of our young students for whom this pilgrimage will motivate their commitment to the land of Christ forever.

Peter and Nicholas returned home having had a profound experience in two ways; firstly, the experience of daily life in the Holy Land seen at first hand; and secondly, the experience at seeing the work of the Order not just in terms of material support and almsgiving but the

deeper element of standing alongside the Christians there in their daily struggles to live out their faith. They both experienced for themselves the difference between being just a religious tourist and a real pilgrim.

They returned home with much to think about and their own faith renewed. They both demonstrated the success of this new initiative of our Bursary Scheme, and it is hoped to repeat this programme regularly in the future when it is possible to do so.

Michael David Byrne
Lieutenant for England and Wales

our Lieutenancy, who over the years of many pilgrimages have struck up a personal relationship with so many Christian friends there.

Both Peter and Nicholas returned home deeply impressed by all they had experienced for the first time. Although in a general sense they knew what to expect because they had previously attended many talks and meetings with members of our Lieutenancy, no amount of previous information could make up for actually experiencing life there for themselves; the sights and smells, the noise and bustle of the Christian Quarter in Jerusalem and the views, and just being there thinking and

A book to listen to!

The Grand Master's book on the spirituality of the Order is now an audio book in English, with other language versions in production.

His Eminence Cardinal Fernando Filoni's book, *The House was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume: A Spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre*, has been a great blessing! It is a reminder that the primary purpose of membership in the Order is deepening our personal relationship with Our Lord.

Through a grant from a generous member, Mrs. Shirley J. Drury, and the generous donation of time and talent of Matthew Bunson and Timothy Milner, we were able to convert the book into an audiobook.

This is a wonderful development, and we are happy to report that the English version of the audiobook is available to download, free of charge.

One can access the audiobook via the North America EOHSJ website at: www.eohsjnorthamerica.org. The audiobook is available also on the Order's website.

His Eminence's book is profound. Many priests and Lieutenancies have been using the book for homilies and meditations. A Shakespearian actor in London was hired to record the reading. By incorporating the 187 footnotes, the reader was able to bring this text even more alive. The audiobook will enhance the opportunity for each member to deepen his or her Spirituality and reaffirm why we are members of this wonderful Order.

Please use both the book and the audiobook for recruiting new members and informing the Catholic community about the Order.

Thomas Pogge

Vice Governor General for North America



CULTURE AND HISTORY

Discoveries in the courtyard of Palazzo della Rovere

A press conference was held on July 26, 2023 at the Order's headquarters to present the archaeological results of three years of excavations in the garden of the Palazzo della Rovere. The Special Superintendent for Rome, Mrs. Daniela Porro, underlined the exceptional importance of the finds from the Julio-Claudian and late medieval periods. In his speech, the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, emphasized that the Order has always been willing to facilitate historical research work, the costs of which were covered by the hotel company that rents part of the Palazzo della Rovere.

A bubble in space and time, miraculously passed down to us, containing centuries of history, from the late Republican age to the 15th century: from a portion of the infamous Theater of Nero, documented by coeval literary sources but never found in the topography of the

urbe, to the lesser-known but more interesting Middle Ages, particularly for scholars.

New Archaeological Discoveries: Theatrum

An aerial view of the excavations in the courtyard of Palazzo della Rovere.





Neronis is the title of the press conference held on July 26 in the Palazzo della Rovere in Rome, headquarters of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, attended by Grand Master of the Order, Cardinal Fernando Filoni; Special Superintendent for the city of Rome, Daniela Porro, archaeologists from the Superintendence, Renato Sebastiani and Alessio De Cristofaro, and Marzia Di Mento, archaeologist. Governor general of the Order, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, recounted the genesis of the excavations, the restoration project of the inner courtyard of the Renaissance palace donated by Pius XII to the knights to make it their headquarters.

The surveys required to carry out the excavation, which began three years ago, revealed an unexpected treasure, which is still being studied, but is already full of surprises of great documentary value. The interpretative hypothesis-the emperor's theater mentioned by Pliny, Suetonius and Tacitus-is truly fascinating. "Archaeology is a slow, cold-blooded science," explained Alessio De Cristofaro, "that works on a circumstantial basis."

In this case, the clues are many. First of all, the "imperial" splendor of the building: stucco covered with gold leaf, precious decorations, rare materials, including an African marble column and an alabaster capital. But also matrices for rosaries and semi-finished bone items found in



the early medieval layers, medals carried by pilgrims, and delicate and beautiful worked glass chalices-probably for liturgical use-miraculously reassembled thanks to the patience of the staff who conducted the excavations, led by archaeologist Marzia Di Mento.

"This is a discovery of exceptional importance," reiterated the Special Superintendent of Rome, Daniela Porro, "which would testify to an extraordinary building from the Julio-Claudian age, the theater where Nero rehearsed his poetic and singing performances, known from ancient sources but never found.

The medieval and modern finds are also of great interest, enriching historical and topographical knowledge about the evolution of an important area of the city." In ancient times the excavation area, begun two years ago under the scientific direction of Renato Sebastiani and continued by Alessio De Cristofaro, was located within the

Horti di Agrippina Maggiore, the vast estate of the Julio-Claudian family where Caligula had built a large circus for horse racing and Nero had built a theater.

The remains that have come to light concern the left side of the hemicycle cavea, the *scenae frons*, sumptuous finely worked columns of fine marble, refined stucco decorations, and service rooms, perhaps storerooms for costumes and scenery. While very rare specimens of glass goblets, jugs and ceramic material, pilgrim insignia and roadside beats testify to the area's evolution in the medieval age between production and manufacturing activities and trips to the tomb of the apostle Peter. From what are technically called "layers of abandonment" of roads come two pilgrim insignia (Holy Face of Lucca and Holy Virgin of Rocamadour) and a flask shaped in the shape of St. Peter's rooster, important pieces of jubilee history.

Silvia Guidi
L'Osservatore Romano
 July 26, 2023



GUGGIONE

SINCE 1975

DECORATIONS OF KNIGHTLY ORDERS



Order of the Holy Sepulchre

Papal Equestrian Orders

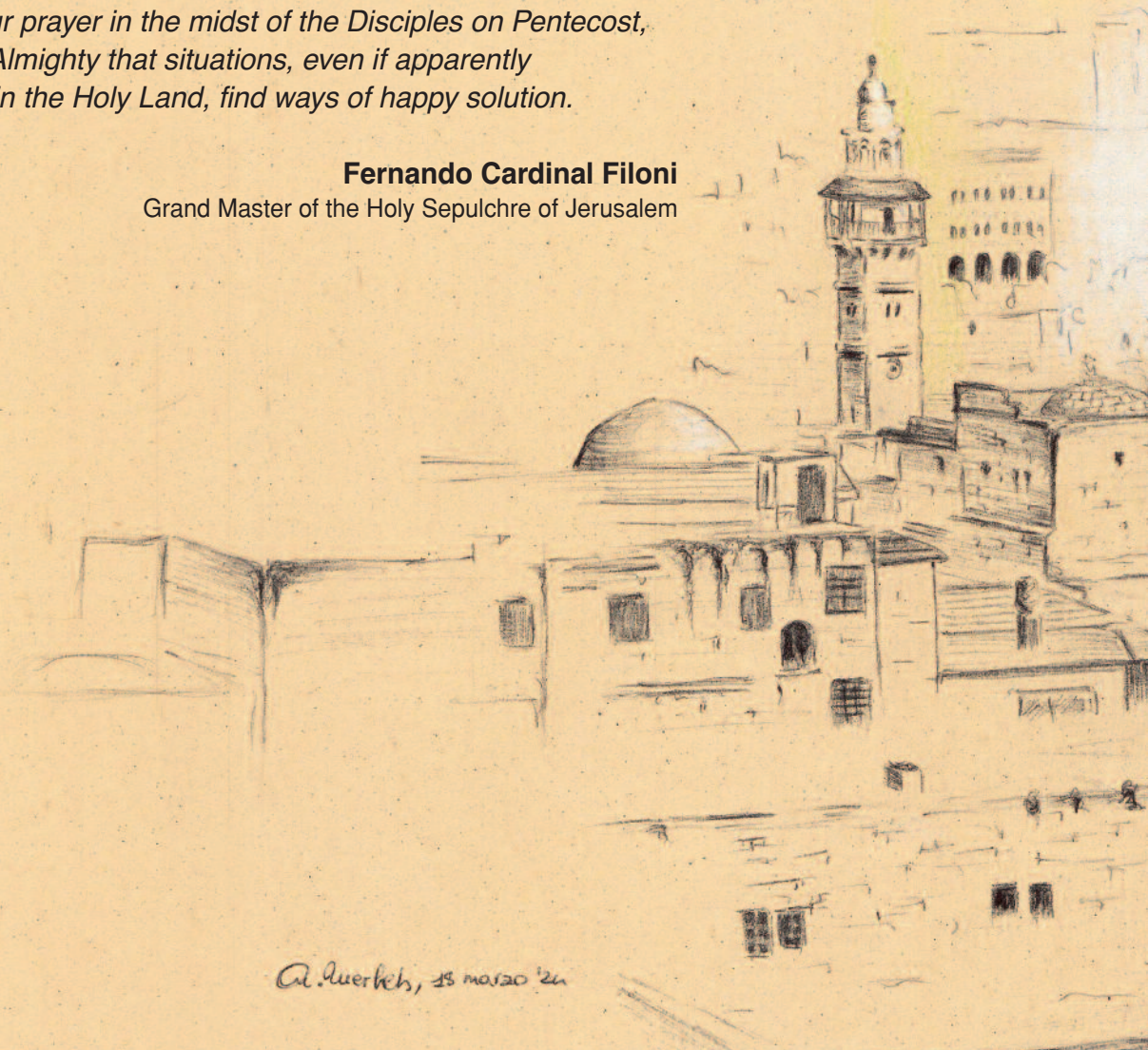
Order of Malta

Italian Dynastic Orders and Orders of the Italian Republic

PRAYER FOR PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND

*Queen of peace,
Chosen daughter of a land still devastated by wars, hatred, violence.
We confidently address our plea to you:
Do not allow that Jesus' cry at the sight of the Holy City
which did not understand the gift of peace
may, once again, fall into indifference and political calculation.
Look at the afflictions of so many mothers, fathers, brothers,
sisters, children, victims of destructive energies that
are blind and without a future.
Inspire ways of dialogue, a vigorous will in solving problems and
a collaboration of certain hope.
Don't let us ever get used to oppression, to consider the struggles as
'inevitable' and the victims they produce as 'collateral'.
Make sure that the logic of aggression does not prevail over good will
and that the solution of many problems is not considered impossible.
Just like with Your prayer in the midst of the Disciples on Pentecost,
obtain from the Almighty that situations, even if apparently
insurmountable in the Holy Land, find ways of happy solution.
AMEN*

Fernando Cardinal Filoni
Grand Master of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem



A. Auerke, 15 MARZO '24