

JERUSALEM CROSS

2025-2026

ANNALES ORDINIS EQUESTRIS SANCTI SEPULCRI HIEROSOLYMITANI



“Today the Church once again entrusts you with the task of being guardians of the Tomb of Christ”.

(Leo XIV to the pilgrims of the Order, October 23, 2025)

Thank you, Pope Francis

December 17, 1936 – April 21, 2025



FRANCISCUS



To Recap

To recap is a verb that indicates the end of a chapter and the moment when its key points are recalled. To recap is necessary in order to have a clear idea of what has been said or, as more appropriate in our case, what has been done. Recapping a year that has been so dense and full of events and vitality gives the impression of not wanting to forget what has happened. The life of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem commenced in 1847, the year in which Pius IX re-established the Order in a stable and organized form. During its 178 years of existence, the Order has kept at heart the mission that the Pontiff entrusted to it, namely to care for and support the Holy Land through the restored Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which was entrusted to Patriarch Valerga.

The year 2025 had at its center the Holy Year with the Jubilee of the entire Church. Last year was rendered unforgettable because of the immense participation of Dames and Knights, with the most memorable images being the panoramic views of the central nave of St Peter's Basilica and the meeting with Leo XIV in the Paul VI Hall. However, for the Order, it was also the year in which two profound emotions accompanied the hearts and prayers of all of us. The first being the peaceful passing of Pope Francis, followed by the second, the election of Leo XIV.

Accompanying these events, we cannot forget the dramatic situation of isolation in which the Land of Jesus found itself, which was deprived of its pilgrims because of the unacceptable violence in Gaza and Israel. The sporadic pilgrimages of courageous Members of the Order were intended to state that we accept neither the logic of violence nor the condition of solitude in which the Land of Jesus has been left.

Yet hope, sustained by prayer, never failed, and we certainly did not become accustomed to violence. On the contrary, precisely for this reason the Order of the Holy Sepulchre reacted with greater generosity in the fostering of works and gestures of charity, while at the same time we have commenced projects that represent a future of growth. Among these are the creation of the *Area of Friends of the Order* and the *Foundation of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem – Third Sector Body*, whose purpose, according to our Constitution, is "to call to the attention of Catholics, other Christians, the members of other religions and men of good will of the whole world the good works in which the Order is involved in the Holy Land" (Art. 4, 7).

These two initiatives were also accompanied by two further projects: the creation of a *Historical Committee* for the study of the life of the Order and a *Compendium for Ecclesiastics*, aimed at helping Ecclesiastics better understand and integrate themselves into the Order.

These are aspects that every reader will be able to discover more fully by leafing through these pages.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of spiritual life, which I have always encouraged among Knights and Dames, in the awareness that there is no mission (support for the Holy Land) without an inner motivation, since the Order is not a Chivalric Order tied to human institutions



A portrait of the Grand Master created by the artist Maria Teresita Ferrari Donadei using the typically medieval technique of egg tempera on panel. In this work, the artist wished to show the profound spiritual bond that Cardinal Fernando Filoni has with the Order and with the Holy Land.

(governmental or social) but to the mystery of Christ's Redemption: His most holy Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

To precisely support the spiritual journey of our Members, the volume of meditations *My Days Are in Your Hands – Men and Women in the Footsteps of Jesus* was created. In this same line, we can understand the significance of the canonization of the first Knight Grand Cross, Saint Bartolo Longo, and the forthcoming beatification of the Argentine Knight Enrique Ernesto Shaw. To add here, there are so many other Knights and Dames, known only to the Lord, who quietly follow in the footsteps of Jesus, drawn by their love for the Holy Land!

This year I was deeply edified by the many Investitures in which I also had the joy of taking part. These involved men and women, young and old, who feel called to offer their contribution to the Holy Land while at the same time receiving great spiritual benefit from their commitment.

This is what I mean by our Order on a journey; I spoke of this during the pontifical audience on June 24, 2025, with Leo XIV.

The Pope's encouragement was reaffirmed on the memorable occasion of his Address on October 23, 2025, to more than 3,600 Knights and Dames in the Paul VI Hall, where he made these significant words resound: "Today the Church once again entrusts you with the task of being guardians of the Tomb of Christ. Do so with *the hopefulness of expectation, the zeal of charity and the joyful enthusiasm of hope*. As Saint Augustine said to the Christians of his time: "Advance, advance in goodness... Do not stray from the path, do not turn back, do not stop!" (*Serm.* 256.3). I give you my heartfelt blessing, and I pray for all of you. Thank you."

Now, with the Holy Year of 2025 concluded, the Order resumes its journey toward the Jubilee Year of the Redemption, which will take place in 2033. Today, we are already in preparation for that date through our pilgrimages to the Holy Land and through fidelity to our Institution.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

CONTENTS

THE ORDER AND THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

- 5** The decline of the Christian presence in the Middle East
- 9** *Nostra aetate* and the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem
- 11** The Relationship between Jews and Catholics
The Origin of Nostra aetate from 1965 to Today
- 12** The relationship between Muslims and Catholics
Nostra aetate n. 3: a path of fraternity in dialogue
- 14** The 1,700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea
Interview with Mons. Flavio Pace, Secretary of the Dicastery for Christian Unity
- 17** The canonization of Bartolo Longo

PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM

- 21** The new Pope's first audience with the Grand Master
- 22** The Jubilee of Over 3,600 Knights and Dames from Around the World
- 26** Living the Mission Together: A Family's Journey with the Order
- 27** The Youth Pilgrimage
- 28** New foundations for the future of the Order
 - The General Regulations of the Order
 - The Historical Committee of the Order
 - A Compendio for the Ecclesiastics of the Order
 - The new Foundation of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem
 - Friends of the Order

- 30** Eight Years in the Service of the Order: A Path of Dialogue and Innovation
- 34** The Order is strengthening its action in response to the tragic situation of the Christians in the Holy Land
- 37** The meeting of North American Lieutenants
- 38** The Governor General's visit to the Asia-Pacific region

THE ORDER AND THE HOLY LAND

- 41** Holy Land Commission: Report And Reflection For 2025
- 43** "The Holy Land is not merely a place to be supported, much less a problem to be solved: it is a source"
An interview with Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa
- 48** The Order's concrete solidarity with the Catholic faithful of the Holy Land
- 59** The construction of the Church of the Baptism made possible with the support of a Jordanian Knight of the Order

THE LIFE OF THE LIEUTENANCIES

- 61** Changes within the Lieutenancies of the Order
- 63** From Asia to serve the Holy Land: the Order's Lieutenancy for the Philippines
- 64** South Africa: from Magistral Delegation to Lieutenancy
- 66** Slovakia officially becomes a Magistral Delegation of the Order
- 67** The Holy Sepulchre "a place of strength and a source of energy"

A WORD FROM THE CHANCELLOR

In this issue of the *Jerusalem Cross*, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre presents its historic meeting with Pope Leo XIV, whose encouragement has rekindled the enthusiasm of the Knights and Dames to continue serving the Mother Church of Jerusalem with perseverance and discretion. In these pages, we also revisit our Jubilee pilgrimage and the significant developments within the Order, which is experiencing strong growth across several continents. The projects supported by the Order in the Holy Land are likewise described in detail, since support for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem lies at the heart of our mission. We hope you enjoy the reading and we invite you to use this magazine to help make our pontifical Institution ever better known among those around you.

Alfredo Bastianelli

Welcome, Pope Leo XIV

May 8, 2025



The decline of the Christian presence in the Middle East

The Governor General of the Order, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, wrote the following article on the decline of the Christian presence in the Middle East, which can seem unstoppable. In his text, he examines the causes and consequences of this painful historical reality in different Countries and compares them with those more specifically characteristic of the Holy Land. (From L'Osservatore Romano, September 4, 2025)

If we look at the history of the Levant over the past century, we see that the decline of the Christian presence began with the waning of the Ottoman Empire and with the Armenian Genocide during the First World War, which affected all Christians in the name of a national and religious identity promoted by the “Young Turks.” With the emergence of the new Turkey following its defeat in the First World War, the crisis began of the system of interethnic and interreligious coexistence that had prevailed under the Ottoman Empire.

After the first world war, the victorious powers, which were predominantly the United Kingdom and France, divided the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire through the mandate system of the League of Nations. This created states such as Iraq, Transjordan (later Jordan), Palestine (under British mandate), Syria, and Lebanon (under French mandate). These new state entities, often with artificially drawn borders, did not always reflect local ethno-



Leo XIV praying for the Christians of the East before the tomb of Saint Charbel Makhlouf in Lebanon.

religious realities, thereby sowing the seeds of future conflicts. The fall of the Ottoman Empire was therefore not only the end of a political entity but a watershed event that reshaped the map and history of the Near East, and gave rise to challenges and conflicts that persist to this day.

The ongoing hemorrhage of Christians from the Levant has seen sharp accelerations during the Lebanese civil war, with the fall of the regime of Saddam Hussein, then with the emergence of ISIS, and finally with the collapse of the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. In the Holy Land, it is largely due to the consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The causes of this phenomenon are therefore to be

found, in general, in wars, persecution and discrimination, and in the growing sense of instability resulting from the fall of regimes that had in fact – at least to some extent – protected the *status quo* for Christians. To violence, persecution, and conflicts must be added socio-economic reasons and the hope of many Christians to achieve better living conditions in welcoming Western Countries.

Why is this phenomenon worrying? For a Christian the answer is obvious: this is the land where our faith was born. However, for others? For others, including moderate Muslims, the departure of Christians should also be a cause for concern, since in a complex society such as that of the Near East, Christians, who are divided into different confessions and rites, have traditionally been elements of dialogue and moderation, and a foundation for coexistence that is not always easy to achieve.

Nonetheless, in each country this phenomenon has shown both common elements and different nuances.

LEBANON

The decline of the Christian presence in Lebanon is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon whose causes are rooted in the Country's recent history and socio-political dynamics. Waves of emigration began in the 19th century and intensified in the 20th century with the end of the French mandate, but they reached a peak during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), which caused a deep fracture within the Christian community. Violence,

Our Lady of Lebanon, in Harissa, watches over all the Christians of the Middle East.



devastation, and uncertainty about the future pushed tens of thousands of Christians to seek refuge abroad. To this must be added the recurring economic crises, corruption, and tensions linked to the rise of radical Islamism. Christians in Lebanon have also historically recorded a lower birth rate compared with the Muslim population, particularly the Shiite community. This, combined with emigration, has progressively altered the demographic balance that in the past saw Christians in the majority or at parity with other communities. This has had political repercussions. The Lebanese constitution, which assigns the presidency to a Maronite Christian, had been conceived at a time when Christians formed the majority. Demographic change has made this structure increasingly difficult to sustain politically, which has further fueled tensions.

Lebanon's involvement in regional conflicts, for example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Syrian civil war, has had a direct impact on the Country's security and stability, with devastating consequences for the Christian community, which has felt increasingly

isolated and at risk. During the civil war, rivalries among different Christian factions weakened their cohesion and political influence. Therefore, this has made the community less able to act as a united bloc in the face of external challenges, with a profound impact on both its identity and the political stability of the country, which had been based on a balance among different religious confessions.

IRAQ

The conflict in Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein had a devastating impact on the Christian population. Saddam's regime, although undemocratic, maintained a certain degree of stability that provided a form of "protection" for religious minorities, including Christians. With the fall of the regime, the situation drastically worsened, and led to the progressive marginalization and persecution of Christians. This has resulted in a mass exodus: it is estimated that before 2003 there were more than one and a half million Christians. In the following years, their number fell to only a few hundred thousand, with the real risk that their presence could disappear

entirely. They became easy targets for extremist groups and sectarian militias, with church bombings, kidnappings, and killings. The arrival of ISIS further worsened the situation, causing a massive flight from the Nineveh Plain, which had been the historic heart of the Christian presence in Iraq.

The power vacuum allowed extremist forces to rise that has destabilized the Country's fragile interethnic and interreligious balance, therefore transforming the Christian population into a persecuted minority that has been largely uprooted.

SYRIA

Similarly, in Syria the end of the regime of Bashar al-Assad, which in some ways had provided protection for Christians, has had a complex impact on the Christian population that now faces an uncertain future. Despite promises from the new government leaders, numerous episodes of sectarian violence, attacks, and religiously motivated discrimination have occurred, which has prompted an increasing number of Christians to leave the Country. The Christian population, which before the conflict numbered around two million, has drastically declined. Yet this uncertainty has not entirely extinguished a cautious optimism: in some cities, such as Aleppo, there are signs of a slow recovery, and Christians have been noted for their efforts to promote dialogue among different factions, reopening churches, schools, and hospitals.

JORDAN

Jordan is considered one of the most tolerant Countries in the region toward Christians who enjoy a certain degree of religious freedom and a relatively privileged position in the social and economic fabric. However, the percentage of Christians of the total population has drastically declined over time. In the 1950s, Christians made up nearly 30% of the population; instead, today, though estimates vary, they range between about 2.8% and 6%. The decline is mainly attributable to strong Muslim immigration, which has reduced the Christian proportion, but also to significant waves of emigration and to certain isolated yet recurring forms of discrimination, especially against Christians who have converted from Islam or in cases of mixed marriages. These issues often have roots in the Country's tribal social system. Compared with other countries of the Near East, Jordan presents a better situation for Christians, but their numerical decline remains a clear reality.

PALESTINE

As for Palestine, the decline of the Christian presence is due to a multiplicity of contributing causes, the foremost of which can be traced to the situation of conflict, violence, and political instability. To the direct victims of the conflict in the Gaza Strip, whether from armed violence, hunger, or disease, must be added the continuous tensions and abuses in the West Bank, which have created such a

climate of insecurity that many Christians who had the means have chosen to emigrate in search of a better life.

Attacks on and violence against Christians by extremist groups have increased as the conflict has intensified. The occupation of territories, expropriations by settlers, and restrictions on freedom of movement imposed by Israel, for example, the construction of the separation barrier, have made daily life extremely difficult for Palestinian Christians, limiting their access to work, education, and even to their own family.

The demolition of Palestinian homes and the vandalism of water systems in entire villages are seen as part of a clear plan aimed at removing Palestinians from the land to create space for Israeli settlements. The practice of forced self-demolition of homes, imposed by the authorities, adds psychological trauma to the material loss of housing and the uprooting from their roots, since entire families are forced to demolish their own houses to avoid fines or arrest.

The tolerance shown by Israeli courts toward documented violence committed by settlers against the Palestinian population, along with the absence of prospects for restraint or an end to this situation, has generated a deep sense of discouragement, especially among young Christians, who increasingly feel "unwanted" in the land of their ancestors and seek opportunities elsewhere. Psychological warfare is considered an integral part of



this strategy to clear space for settlements and has led to a noticeable rise in hospitalizations among victims of mental trauma.

To the violence in the Gaza Strip and the expansion of settlers in the West Bank must be added the significant factor of the economic crisis facing much of the Christian population in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, which largely depends on hospitality activities linked to pilgrimages. The war, which followed shortly after the Covid pandemic crisis, has further deepened the dramatic collapse in the number of pilgrims, and left thousands of people without sources of income. The Israeli authorities have revoked many work permits for Palestinians, and many Palestinian Christian workers have been replaced by immigrants from other parts of the world.

Another significant reason lies in direct attacks against freedom of worship, acts of violence and discrimination against individuals, and the

Pilgrims to the Holy Land in recollection before an icon of the Virgin painted on the Separation Wall. This structure, which is made of concrete and fencing, is more than 700 km long, running mainly along the 1949 Green Line and demarcating the Palestinian territories in the West Bank.

desecration of churches, religious symbols, and cemeteries by extremist elements – particularly from ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups – which have contributed to creating a constant sense of threat for Christians.

More generally, it can be said that with the decline of the Christian presence, the Near East risks seeing the instability there increase. After all, no State can be considered isolated, but rather exists within a reality of close interconnection. The Land of Jesus in particular, which is where our faith was born, has an even stronger reason to fear this phenomenon and to seek to halt it. The absence of a Christian presence would risk reducing the places of Our Lord's preaching and Passion to mere archaeological tourist

sites. However, in a broader sense, its isolation and marginalization by any form of religious fundamentalism deprives the entire region of a source of social and, ultimately, political balance.

The Christian community therefore looks to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem as an indispensable source of support. It is necessary to respond responsibly to this danger, within the framework of the mission entrusted to us by the Holy Father to sustain the Christian presence in the Holy Land. We must become fully aware of this phenomenon and study effective ways to counter it.

In this context, the appeal of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, appears more than justified: he urges every effort to be made in the educational formation of the new generations and in offering them dignified employment opportunities. Only with this support, together with our prayer, will this small but essential minority of faithful be able to develop the strength and self-confidence necessary to understand the meaning of their presence as Christians in these Holy Places.

This implies an ever stronger commitment by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre alongside the Patriarch, in his formative, educational, and social assistance role, while reviewing if necessary the forms of its humanitarian support and the management of emergencies.

Leonardo Visconti di Modrone
Governor General

Nostra aetate and the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

October 28, 2025 marked the 60th anniversary of the conciliar Declaration *Nostra aetate* on the relations of the Catholic Church with non-Christian religions. It is a fundamental text for contemporary interreligious relations and still today remains a key point of reference for reflection, especially in contexts such as the Holy Land, where relationships with other traditions and non-Christian believers are part of daily life and require deeper mutual knowledge and cooperation for better coexistence.

By its Constitution, the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem counts among its purposes the “exercise of solidarity in favor of the populations of the Holy Land,” the promotion of justice and peace, including “the recognition and respect for the dignity and human rights of

individuals [and] in particular freedom of religion and worship.” The same Constitution also recalls that the Order must “promote mutual understanding among peoples, dialogue, forgiveness,

A meeting with the Pope at the Colosseum in October 2025 marked the 60th anniversary of *Nostra aetate*.

reconciliation, and other fundamental values that are necessary prerequisites for the peaceful coexistence of all the peoples of the Holy Land” (Constitution, Art. 4, nos. 2, 3, 5).

This premise recalls the importance of the conciliar document *Nostra aetate* (“In Our Time”), whose





promulgation marked its 60th anniversary in 2025. These two Latin words, as a title, identify the historic Declaration On The Relations Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions (October 28, 1965). It is not a long document and consists of only five sections, in which the style that is to guide the Church's relations with followers of other religions is outlined.

As an Institution of the Church, I draw the attention of the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre to paragraphs 3 (regarding the Church's vision in relation to the Muslim religion), 4 (regarding the Jewish religion), and 5 (on universal fraternity). The Council states, "The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men." At the same time, it urges us to forget the past and to cultivate mutual understanding, encouraging

A painting representing interreligious dialogue, placed at the entrance of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue in the Vatican: "Followers of God", Dolores Puthod, 1978.

collaboration in the promotion of social justice, moral values, peace, and freedom.

Equally remarkable is the new vision that the Council opens toward Judaism. The Document declares that the Church recognizes and shares with the Jewish people the same faith in the mystery of divine salvation, manifested in the history of the Patriarchs, of Moses, and of the Prophets; this, in fact, was Jesus' faith. Christian faith is therefore nourished by the root of the good olive tree, while believing that Christ has reconciled and united Jews and Gentiles through His death on the cross, so that the election of the Jewish People is, at the same time, shared by the new Peoples who embrace faith in Jesus of Nazareth.

By sharing, therefore, with the Jewish people an immense

spiritual heritage, the Church holds that they remain a People "most dear to God": an election, consequently, never revoked nor rejected by Him. In condemning every form of past and present persecution and discrimination, the Church asks all her children to adopt a new way of relating to them, without, however, failing in the duty to proclaim the cross of Christ the Redeemer, the sign of God's universal love for all and the source of every grace.

Therefore, in order to be faithful to this vision, the Order supports education in the Holy Land through the schools of the Latin Patriarchate, which are open to Christian and non-Christian students alike, as well as the social works that do not discriminate against anyone who turns to them.

Nostra aetate is therefore a document we must know and hold dear if we are to understand fully the mission entrusted to us by the Pontiffs and recently recalled by Pope Leo XIV. "I think of the considerable help you provide, without fuss or publicity, to the communities of the Holy Land, supporting the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in its various activities, including: the seminary, schools, charitable and welfare works, humanitarian and educational projects" (*Address To The Participants in the Jubilee of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem*, 23.10.2025). This is the path toward universal fraternity that the Order hopes for and promotes.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

The Relationship between Jews and Catholics

The Origin of Nostra aetate from 1965 to Today

In June 1960, a personal and historic meeting took place in the Vatican between Pope John XXIII and a great scholar of Jewish history who had worked extensively on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism, Jules Isaac. Isaac, who had tragically lost his family at Auschwitz, yet with remarkable strength and intellectual clarity, after the war he decided to devote himself to making Jesus known to Jews and Israel known to Christians. It was thanks to a woman, Maria Vingiani, founder of the Secretariat for Ecumenical Activities, that this meeting between two men – who truly wanted and knew how to listen to one another – took place and effectively changed the history of Jewish-Catholic relations. Isaac handed Roncalli the pages that would become the basis of what is now paragraph 4 of the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra aetate*.

There were four drafts of the document we know today as *Nostra aetate*, which had originally been conceived exclusively to address the relationship with the Jewish world. Cardinal Augustin Bea, a German Jesuit, friend of the Chief Rabbi of Rome and President of the newly

established Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, was entrusted with coordinating this text.

In later versions, which incorporated the reactions of the Council Fathers, it gradually integrated elements that broadened the reflection more generally to non-Christian religions, while still maintaining, as the text itself shows, particular attention to the relationship with Judaism (the longest paragraph of the Declaration).

For the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy

Sepulchre, whose specific focus is the land of Jesus and the communities, whom we call the “living stones”, who inhabit it, this text has crucial importance. It should be reread as a new starting point in interreligious relations, especially with the Jewish world, which is called to be marked by greater mutual knowledge, deeper respect, and attentiveness to the other. With an explicit condemnation of antisemitism, – the tragic consequences of which were before everyone’s eyes in the horrors of the Shoah – *Nostra aetate* sought to make clear the close bond with the Jewish people, who “should not be

Leo XIV greeting a rabbi during an Audience.



presented as rejected or accursed by God," (*Nostra aetate*, no. 4), and it urged care in catechesis and pastoral work in this direction.

Since then, many further steps have been taken to dialogue with the Jewish world, whose religion, as John Paul II said during his historic 1986 visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome, "is not 'extrinsic' to us, but in a certain way [...] is 'intrinsic' to our own religion."

From Paul VI to Francis – and already Leo XIV has referred to a "Jerusalem 2033" – all the Popes have made pilgrimages to the Holy Land. In particular, we cannot forget those images that travelled around the world, far beyond Christian circles, of an elderly John Paul II standing before the

remains of the Western Wall of the Temple of Jerusalem (known as the Wailing Wall), as he left his prayer, according to Jewish tradition, between one stone and another. That prayer of forgiveness still resounds powerfully:

*God of our fathers,
you chose Abraham and his
descendants
to bring your Name to the
Nations:
we are deeply saddened by the
behavior of those
who in the course of history
have caused these children of yours
to suffer,
and asking your forgiveness we
wish to commit ourselves
to genuine brotherhood
with the people of the Covenant.*

Ten years ago, in the *Jerusalem Cross*, we published an interview with David Rosen,

who stated "If this relationship [between Jews and Catholics, ed.], which was once so chronic and serious, has been able to become so positive and constructive, then there is no relationship – no matter how negative – that cannot be transformed." Today, after more than two years of war, tens of thousands of deaths and so much suffering in Israel, in Gaza, and across the various Palestinian territories, these words take on the flavor of a promise steeped in hope at the conclusion of the Jubilee we have experienced in the light of this theological virtue. There is hope that listening, respect, dialogue, and encounter will never fail, and that they will continue to nourish, in faith, relationships lived in charity.

Elena Dini

The relationship between Muslims and Catholics

Nostra aetate no. 3: a path of fraternity in dialogue

On October 28, 2025 in the address "*Walking Together in Hope*" for the sixtieth anniversary of *Nostra aetate*, Pope Leo XIV described this Declaration as an innovative document and a seed of hope, "Today, your presence bears witness that this seed has grown into a mighty tree, its branches reaching far and wide, offering shelter and bearing the rich fruits of understanding, friendship,

cooperation and peace."

Leo XIV recalled the words of Saint John Paul II that he had delivered October 27, 1986, during his closing address at the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi: "If the world is going to continue, and men and women are to survive in it, the world cannot do without prayer." The Holy Father continued by inviting each of us "to pause for a moment in silent prayer. May peace come

down upon us and fill our hearts." Thus, rekindling a spirit of hope and love: prayer transforms hearts, and in doing so, renews humanity. The Declaration states that Muslims "take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God" and that "they value the moral life and worship God

especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting,” some of the pillars of Islam. The Church “regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men” (*Nostra aetate* no. 3).

On November 6, at the Pontifical Institute Notre Dame in Gerusalemme, leaders of the Interreligious Encounter Association, which brings together 35 groups of residents of the Holy Land, recalled that dialogue enables people to know one another by appreciating the other, welcoming differences, and developing the capacity to disagree in friendship. The Declaration *Nostra aetate* urges people to forget the past and to practice mutual understanding,

while encouraging collaboration in promoting social justice, moral values, peace, and freedom. To do so is decisive for healing, connection, and building unity, and restores to religions their fundamental role of generating peace, love, and authentic relationships with God and with others. Most Christians in the Holy Land are Arab, and it is they who play a decisive role both as a minority and as mediators among Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

Nostra aetate no. 3 specifies that Muslims, “though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion,” and they await the Day of Judgment. They are called to distinguish between the cultural, legal, economic, and political aspects of an institutional Islam and the spiritual and devotional aspects of an Islam marked by trusting submission to God.

This poses a spiritual challenge for Christians, who must “account for the hope that is in them” (1Pet 3:15). The Vatican II texts can clarify this aspect. Islam has enabled the naturally religious conscience of Muslims to approach the mystery of the transcendence of the living God by serving Him, yet it forbids access to this same mystery by rejecting any

communication or communion between Creator and creature and denying Jesus Christ His role as mediator and redeemer.

Christians and Muslims have much to say to one another about the “mystery of God”: without opposing the Most High God of some to the God-Love of others. They know that a certain “exchange of divine attributes” is possible and can reflect on the “gift of the Word,” the “role of the Prophets,” and the “presence of Communities,” which are all important for realizing worship “in spirit and truth,” as mentioned by Pope Leo XIV in his audience of October 29.

As many dialogue meetings have sought to do for more than sixty years, the organization of the “city of humanity” requires us to promote together: the dignity of marriage and the mission of the family; the development of arts and culture with respect for specific identities; economic and social balance in the name of the common good; and, harmony among political communities in the name of an international order that guarantees peace and justice with full respect for all freedoms.

In light of all this, it is not surprising that many Muslim families today desire to educate their children in Catholic schools, as we see in those of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is a recognition of Christians’ respect for freedom of conscience, while esteeming Christian ethics.

Livia Passalacqua



This miniature depicting the Virgin, mentioned in the Qur’an (Surah Maryam), expresses Muslim devotion toward the mother of Jesus, whom they invoke in prayer, particularly in the important shrines dedicated to her.

The 1,700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea

Interview with Mons. Flavio Pace,
Secretary of the Dicastery
for Christian Unity

Pope Francis, who traveled to Turkey in 2014, had expressed his intention to return there for the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. His successor, Pope Leo XIV, fulfilled this wish in November 2025. On July 17, at Castel Gandolfo, he received an Orthodox–Catholic delegation from the United States, led by Cardinal Tobin and Metropolitan Elpidophoros, he reaffirmed his intention to go to Nicaea for an ecumenical celebration, while expressing joy that in 2025 the two calendars used in our Churches coincided, thus allowing the Easter Alleluia to be sung in unison.

The Council of Nicaea was the ecumenical assembly of bishops that formulated the Creed, the central pillar of Christian identity. We have recently celebrated its 1,700th anniversary. What did this anniversary mean in its profundity for Christians?

We can rightly affirm that at the time, the need for the Council arose in order to clarify in whom we believe, since interest in the person of Jesus – with the theories of Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria – risked emphasizing His humanity more than His divinity. A divergence regarding the nature



of Christ endangered the unity of Christianity. The question at stake was whether Jesus was at the same time both man and God. In that context, Jesus was at the center of the discussions.

Today, this concerns us as Christians in the sense that we must place Jesus back at the center of our lives. This is not as we might personally wish him to be, but as he is presented to us in the Gospels and according to what has been handed down through the Church's tradition. It is not a matter of inventing something new about Jesus, but of expressing, in the language of our time, the mystery of the Word made flesh for our salvation.

The Jesus as a champion or a hero who we sometimes construct has nothing to do with the Son of God, true God and true man, who became incarnate. From that event onward, he himself invites us to recognize and serve him in every human being, beginning

with the smallest and most humble, as indicated in chapter 25 of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Popular tradition places the Grotto of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, where the Apostles are said to have written the articles of the Creed. Some pilgrims have borne witness to this in their accounts over the centuries, such as Francisco Guerrero, a priest from Seville and a Spanish musician, in the 16th century. At Palazzo della Rovere, on Via della Conciliazione in Rome, a fresco dating back 500 years evokes this tradition by attributing each article of the Creed to an Apostle. Does this tradition perhaps suggest that the Council of Nicaea merely officially reformulated and adapted the Apostles' Creed, which was already known to the faithful and had been recited by them since apostolic times?

It is very interesting to consider the accounts of pilgrims who have traveled to the Holy Land over the centuries, such as Egeria in 380, or the Spanish pilgrim you mentioned. Even if this popular tradition has no scientific foundation from a historical point of view, it shows how faith has been handed down

through the people, through the community.

I particularly enjoy going to contemplate in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, to a specific place where, according to tradition, the Virgin Mary is said to have seen the risen Christ before anyone else. It is beautiful to imagine that she who gave flesh to the Word was the first to welcome him alive for eternity in the light of the Resurrection.

As for the grotto of the Apostles where they are said to have composed the Creed, we can neither confirm nor deny this tradition. However, it clearly expresses that the essential faith, the baptismal faith, is handed on as a gift received. The Apostles invented nothing. Proof of this is that in the Gospels they confess their weaknesses, their denials, and their flight. They have nothing to offer but the grace of God, and not their courage! As Saint Paul affirms, “we hold this treasure in earthen vessels,” and it is undeniable that the Apostles were earthen vessels.

This challenges us because, not being better than they were, we too have the task of transmitting what the Apostles handed on to us. The Council of Nicaea completed the Apostles’ Creed, which had been the baptismal profession of the first

Christians. Originally, the Greek term *symbolon* referred to a piece of terracotta broken into two parts. It indicated an “object of recognition”, split in two, each half enabling messengers or bearers to recognize one another by fitting them together. The “symbol of faith” is therefore a sign of recognition and communion among believers.

Without altering its meaning, though by using different words, the Council of Nicaea took up the Apostles’ Creed. Later, in 381, there would be a further completion at the First Council of Constantinople during which the bishops affirmed that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son, and share the same divine nature.

The liturgy foresees the recitation of two different Creeds: the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Missal establishes that, in place of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, particularly during Lent and the Easter season, the baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome, known as the Apostles’ Creed, may be used. The choice of which Creed to recite on Sundays belongs to the priest and the local bishop.

There are other Christian professions of faith too, which have their own linguistic

variations. One may think of the so-called “Athanasian Creed”, which in the Ambrosian liturgy continues to be recited in place of the *Te Deum* on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, whereas in the Roman tradition, in which it was once present in the Divine Office, its use has been abandoned.

The Sources of Catholic Dogma Manual, commonly known as the Denzinger, after the German theologian Heinrich Denzinger, is a collation of these texts of profession of faith and therein has situated them within their historical and compositional context. In doing so, it enables us to perceive, on the one hand, the existence of a *regula fidei*, and on the other, the flourishing around it of different expressions of the same faith. These expressions however do not contradict its central core.

Christian unity is sometimes realized before our very eyes in unexpected ways, as in Gaza July 17, 2025, when Catholic and Orthodox faithful endured an Israeli bombardment that caused three deaths and around a dozen injuries. The following day, the Latin and Orthodox Patriarchs of Jerusalem went to Gaza to visit their communities together, united beneath the sign of the cross of the Church of the Holy Family, which remained standing despite the damage inflicted on the building. How do you interpret these events?

The unity of Christians must be a unity in faith, as established by the Second Vatican Council, and for this reason, we must



A moment of ecumenical prayer during the Pope's trip to Turkey for the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.



The Latin Patriarch and the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem walk side by side among the ruins in Gaza during the summer of 2025.

continue to dispel doubts and misunderstandings through dialogue and encounter. Yet the true protagonist of unity is certainly not an office, but the Holy Spirit. The fact that, in Gaza, the Catholic parish has for months welcomed Orthodox faithful; the fact that among the victims in July there was one Orthodox Christian and two Catholics. The fact that the Latin Patriarch and the Orthodox Patriarch waited for four hours at the checkpoint in order to enter and visit their faithful is the message for the world and for the Churches. Under the sign of suffering and the cross, unity advances, mysteriously. The shared martyrdom in the Middle East draws us to sit at the same table, which is not yet the sacramental Eucharistic celebration but is the celebration of the mystery of the cross, the sole source of the unity so deeply desired by Jesus during the Last Supper: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

To conclude, what guiding thread do you discern in your mission in the service of the Church?

Having been ordained a priest in Milan by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, I was

deeply marked by his teaching, especially by what he affirmed regarding our spiritual roots, which are founded in Jerusalem's soil, and the need to serve the unity of Christians by returning to our origins. I breathed in this teaching, which he himself embodied, and as a young priest, I travelled for the first time to the Holy Land, and went to visit him in Jerusalem, where he had chosen to live after his retirement.

The unity that the Council of Nicaea offers us through the Creed must not, however, be confused with uniformity. In my diocese of Milan, the liturgy is not of Roman tradition but Ambrosian, and this experience prepared me for the service I later rendered at the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches. To be Catholic does not necessarily coincide with the Roman and Latin tradition. Diversity does not harm unity; instead, it manifests it, insofar as the center is Jesus Christ. The Eastern Catholic Churches have much to teach us in this regard, which is how to live the bond with the

Bishop of Rome as a bond that promotes communion while respecting their own legitimate liturgical, disciplinary, and spiritual traditions.

In essence, Pope Leo XIV recalled this when he addressed the Orthodox-Catholic delegation from the United States in July. If we start arguing by understanding primacy only on a human level, we are like the apostles who, while Jesus was explaining that he would go to Jerusalem to give his life, were behind him debating which of them was the greatest. Since Peter and Andrew came from Jerusalem, we must all make the experience of returning spiritually to Jerusalem, in order to rediscover the heart of the faith that unites us.

On my episcopal ring, there is a depiction of a pelican as a sign Christ's charity and sacrifice, who pours out his blood for the salvation of humankind. This is the very same symbol that remains as the only Christian image represented in the Cenacle in Jerusalem. In this spirit, it is time for us to return to Jerusalem! My motto, taken from a hymn of Saint Ambrose to the Trinity, evokes the warm divine tenderness that protects and generates life. It reads, *Fove precantes Trinitas*, which is, "O Trinity, protect or warm those who pray to you". This signifies that the path toward unity is above all a supplication addressed to God, with our hearts open to one another so that we may receive the gift He desires to give us together. That gift? A new life generated by Him.

Interview by François Vayne

The canonization of Bartolo Longo

It was during World Mission Sunday, on October 19, 2025, that Pope Leo XIV canonized Bartolo Longo, who was Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and Apostle of the Rosary.

“When we hear the cries of those in difficulty, let us ask ourselves, are we witnesses to the Father’s love, as Christ was to all?” the Holy Father asked at the close of his homily. He highlighted Bartolo Longo’s fervent heart of devotion and described him as a benefactor of humanity. Numerous Members of the Order were present at the celebration in St Peter’s Square, led by their authorities. The

Grand Master concelebrated the Mass with the Holy Father. In the following article, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, Governor General of the Order, retraces the life of this great witness of faith.

On February 25, 2025 devotees of Our Lady of Pompeii around the world rejoiced at receiving a long-awaited announcement: from his hospital bed, Pope Francis had approved the canonization of Bartolo Longo,

who had previously been beatified by Pope John Paul II on October 26, 1980.

Bartolo Longo was laid to rest in the Shrine of Pompeii, in a chapel dedicated to him. He was adorned in the cloak and insignia of a Knight Grand



Cross of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. That said, who was this extraordinary man?

Bartolo Longo played a pivotal role in the founding of “New Pompeii,” the city that grew around the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary. In 1872, Longo went to Pompeii Valley and was deeply struck by the spiritual and material poverty of the population. Convinced of the need for a religious and social rebirth, he began to promote devotion to the Rosary. In 1875, with the arrival of the painting of Our Lady (November 13), he started the construction of a shrine dedicated to the Virgin, the first stone of which was laid on May 8, 1876 and consecrated a year later on May 7, 1891.

Around the shrine, Bartolo Longo established a network of charitable and educational institutions. These included orphanages for girls, homes for the children of prisoners, a printing press to publish religious materials and promote devotion to the Rosary, housing for workers, and a music school.

These religious and social initiatives laid the groundwork for the development of other essential infrastructure such as a railway station, post and telegraph offices, roads, aqueducts, and electrical networks.

Through his tireless efforts, Bartolo Longo helped establish the Shrine of Pompeii as a major Marian pilgrimage site. In addition, he became the driving force behind the birth

and growth of the modern city of Pompeii, transforming a once desolate valley into a vibrant center of faith, charity, and social progress.

Pope Francis’ decision to canonize Bartolo Longo is a tribute to a modern saint and a visionary ahead of his time. With a prophetic outlook that united faith and charity, Bartolo Longo anticipated the themes of Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* and embodied the Church’s concern for the most vulnerable. He stands as a shining example of lay holiness in action.

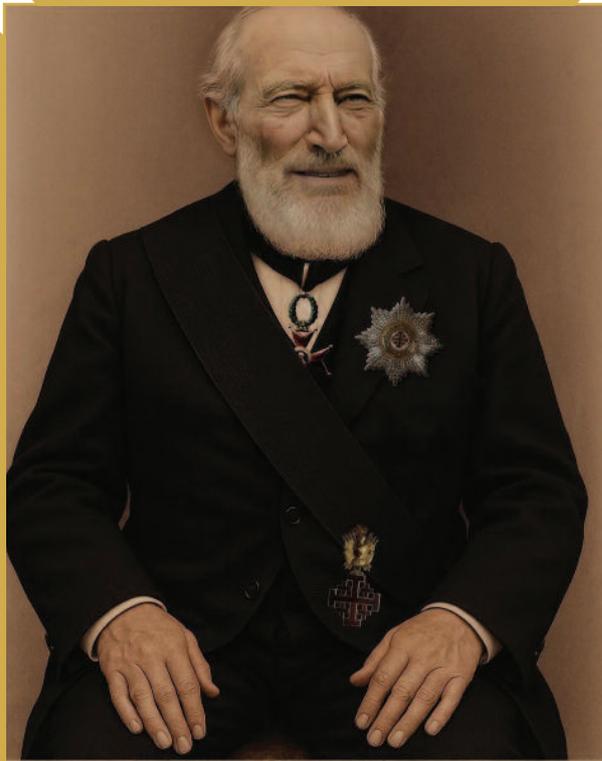
Bartolo Longo’s faith, born of a profound conversion from

secularism and atheism, was both strong and sincere, as reflected in the intensity of his prayers. In his *Supplication to the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary*, composed in 1883, we find deeply moving expressions of devotion, for example, “[...] with the confidence of children we expose our miseries to you [...]”; “we will not part from your knees until you have blessed us”; and, “you will be our comfort in our hour of agony: to you the last kiss of life as it fades away.”

Moreover, his faith was expressed above all through a profound commitment to charity and love for the marginalized. This was most evident in the creation of innovative initiatives for the care and education of orphans,

The Members of the Order joyfully participated in the canonization of Knight Bartolo Longo October 19, 2025.





Comm. Avv. BARTOLO LONGO

Saint Bartolo Longo proudly wore the insignia of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

help to the most vulnerable and less fortunate. He took in orphans, founded kindergartens, supported the rehabilitation of prisoners and cared for their children, while promoting both evangelization and social progress in a land still marked by poverty and neglect.

He showed remarkable courage, commencing as he did with nothing and

resolutely bringing the “New Pompeii” project to life. This work became his true miracle, and one that was well ahead of its time.

He stood in solidarity with the Church’s charitable initiatives, in harmony with saints such as Ludovico da Casoria (the poor friar through whose hands Providence made treasures flow), whom he regarded as a teacher, and Caterina Volpicelli, the architect of his conversion and the inspiration behind the foundation of the Sanctuary.

He was deeply committed to defending the rights of the Church during a turbulent era marked by conflict with the Kingdom of Italy. This period saw rising anticlerical sentiment and growing divisions within society, even among Catholics themselves. As he wrote in the *Supplication*,

“We implore mercy for our Italy, which God has enriched above all the nations of the earth, by allowing it to host within its bosom the Head of the entire Catholic World.”

He committed himself to the cause of universal peace, dedicating the inauguration of the new basilica’s façade to this ideal, and anticipated the appeals of Benedict XV against the senseless slaughter of the Great War.

He fostered collaboration with individuals who shared his ideals, some of whom, like him, were later raised to the glory of the altars. Among them were Father Giovanni Bosco, whose teachings inspired him to vigorously promote the principles of faith and charity, and Giuseppe Moscati, his personal physician. Moscati cared for him until his death on October 5, 1926, at the age of eighty-five, and generously treated orphans and the sick welcomed in Pompeii free of charge.

We joyfully welcomed Pope Francis’s decision, which was a significant gesture made before his departure, and a touching sign of affection for our Order. We see it as aligned with the social commitment first expressed at the beginning of Pope Leo XIV’s pontificate. To conclude, we embrace Bartolo Longo’s words when he said, “Charity without faith would be the greatest of lies. Faith without charity would be the greatest of contradictions.”

Leonardo Visconti di Modrone
Governor General

the destitute, disadvantaged minors, and the children of prisoners.

The canonization of Bartolo Longo, who was an illustrious member of our Order, honored with the distinction of Knight Grand Cross by Apostolic Brief of Pope Pius XI on March 5, 1925, is an event of extraordinary significance for all of us, Knights and Dames.

If we look at Art. 4 of our Constitution, which outlines the commitments of a member (personal renunciation, generosity, courage, solidarity, concern, involvement, and cooperation) we can clearly see how Bartolo Longo exemplifies each of these virtues.

He undoubtedly renounced personal interests for the common good, dedicating his energy and resources to the marginalized and the needy.

He was generous, offering



GUCCIONE

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

The new Pope's first audience with the Grand Master

On June 24, 2025, Pope Leo XIV, who had been elected just one month before (May 8, 2025), received the Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, His Eminence Cardinal Fernando Filoni, accompanied by the Assessor, His Excellency Monsignor Tommaso Caputo. The private audience took place in the library of the Apostolic Palace. The Grand Master presented to the pontiff an update on the Order's work, its objectives in the Holy Land, the spiritual commitment of the Knights and Dames, and several aspects related to the Order's ecclesiology, both at the level of the universal

Church and of the local Churches. Leo XIV listened with great attention and recalled that a few days earlier, during the *Corpus Christi* procession in Rome, he had noticed the presence of several Knights carrying the canopy under which the Blessed Sacrament was being borne. Monsignor Caputo, for his part, emphasized the importance of the Order in the local Churches, recalling in particular how Bartolo Longo, whom the Pope canonized in October 2025, is an essential

Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master, and Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, Assessor, are received by Pope Leo XIV to speak about the future of the Order.

spiritual model for the Knights and Dames. In addition to encouraging the Members of the Order to continue generously the commitments they have undertaken, the Holy Father expressed his support for broadening participation to other laymen and laywomen. The form of inclusion, in a space called "Friends of the Order", is to be extended to those who share in the Orders' mission and experience its spirituality, while not able to become Members. At the conclusion of the audience, the Holy Father imparted his apostolic blessing to all the Members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre throughout the world and to their friends.



The Jubilee of Over 3,600 Knights and Dames from Around the World

Three Days in Rome Following in the Footsteps of the Apostles Peter and Paul

From October 21 to 23, 2025, the international jubilee pilgrimage of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre brought together more than 3,600 Knights and Dames from every continent. The Governor General, the four Vice Governors General (Europe, Asia-Pacific, North America, and Latin America), along with numerous Lieutenants, led the Order's pilgrims throughout the three days of the Order's pilgrimage. On behalf of all the Order's Knights and Dames, the Grand Master presented the Holy Father with an icon of Our Lady of Palestine, specially crafted for him in the Holy Land.

You have come to Rome from various parts of the world, and this reminds us that the practice of pilgrimage is at the origin of your history. You were born, in fact, to guard the Holy Sepulchre, to take care of pilgrims and to support the Church of Jerusalem," said Pope Leo XIV to the over 3,600 Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre who came on a jubilee pilgrimage to Rome.

(The Pontifical Audience took place on October 23, 2026.

The full text of the Pope's address is available on our website at www.oessh.va)



On behalf of the 30,000 Members of this pontifical institution, who are the men and women, mostly laypeople, spread across more than 40 countries, and represented by pilgrims from all continents, Cardinal Filoni presented the Pope with an icon of the Order's patron, Our Lady of Palestine (whose feast is celebrated annually October 25). The icon was specially crafted for him in the Holy Land by a religious sister of the Congregation of the Monastic Sisters of Bethlehem.

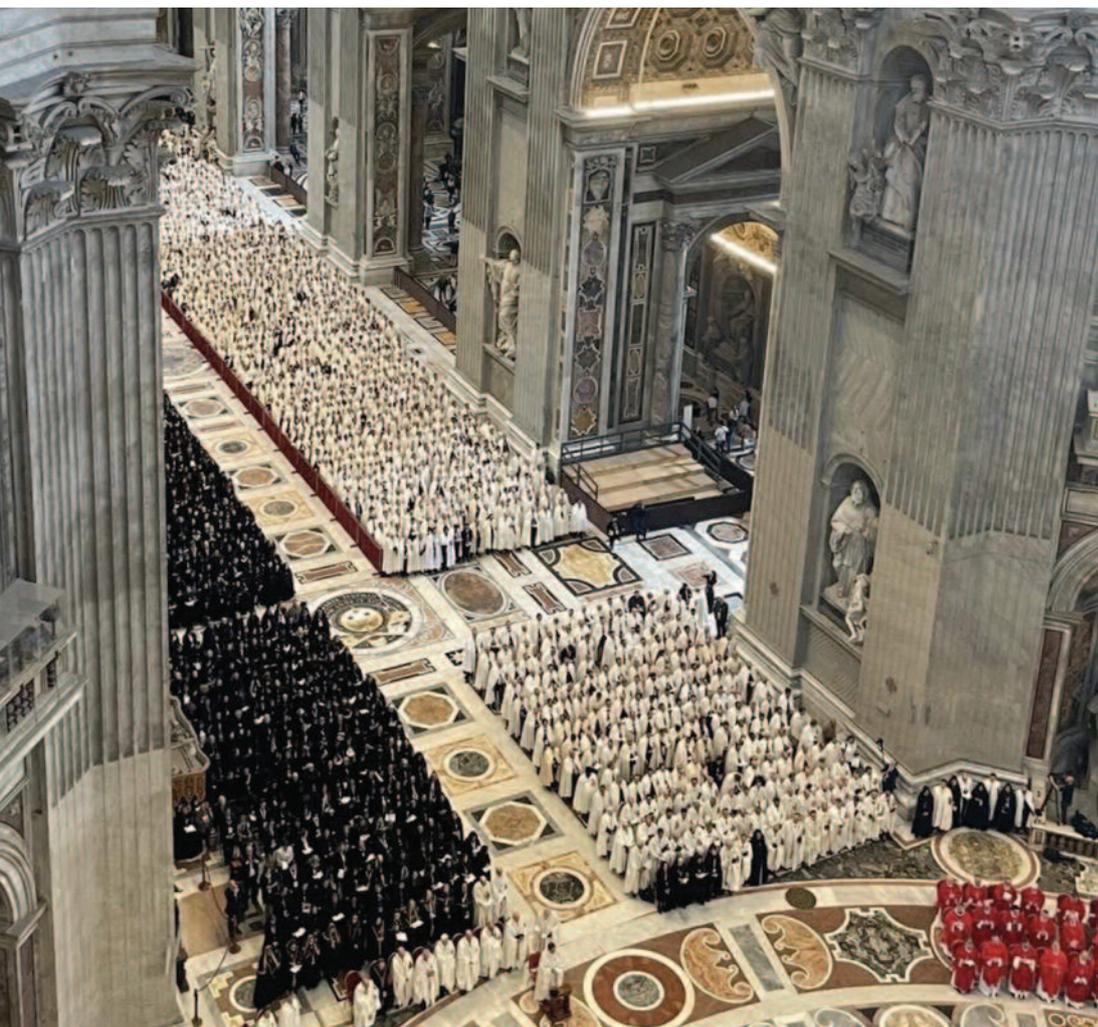
The pilgrims were welcomed at their accommodation in Rome on Tuesday, October 21, by members of the Grand Magisterium's staff. Then, the participants in the jubilee pilgrimage took part that same afternoon in the opening Mass of the pilgrimage at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, which was presided over by the Grand Master. As the pilgrims passed through the Holy Door, they reflected on the meaning of their commitment in this basilica, where the relics of Saint Paul's chains are venerated. It was he who held dear the mission among peoples and the support of the Church in Jerusalem. During the celebration, as they listened to Cardinal Fernando Filoni's homily, each pilgrim was able to renew their personal encounter with the Lord, in order to continue serving as apostles of peace, reconciliation, and compassion.



Wednesday October 22, the pilgrims of the Order passed through the Holy Door of the Basilica of St John Lateran. According to tradition, this basilica houses the wooden altar of the Apostle Peter. Following his profession of faith and Christ's affirmation of the Petrine primacy (Mt 16:13-19), the prince of the apostles offered his life for the Church, who – as Cardinal Filoni recalled in his homily – is “a communion of persons united by faith in Jesus and in his revelation, the space where the transcendent mystery of God meets each one of us and encounters our world.”



On the afternoon of October 22, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre's jubilee pilgrimage continued with the passage through the Holy Door of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. This Basilica was built in the 4th century in accordance with the will of the Virgin Mary, as expressed to Pope Liberius. It was consecrated for worship by Pope Sixtus III following the Council of Ephesus in 431, which affirmed Mary's divine motherhood, signifying that the mystery of the Incarnation opens the way to salvation. According to tradition, the relic of the Holy Crib is preserved in this basilica, earning it the title "the Bethlehem of the West". In procession, behind the Grand Master and the Governor General, the pilgrims prayed the Rosary in silence, pausing for a few moments before the icon of Salus Populi Romani, attributed to Saint Luke and so dear to the heart of Pope Francis, whose mortal remains now rest in this basilica.



On October 23, more than 3,600 Knights and Dames, having attended the papal audience granted to them by Pope Leo XIV, walked in procession from the Paul VI Hall to the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica, before taking part in the Eucharistic celebration presided over by the Grand Master. "Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia" – "Where Peter is, there is the Church" – : with this phrase from Saint Ambrose, Cardinal Filoni once again affirmed the active participation of the Order's Members in the Pope's concern for supporting the Church in the Holy Land.

Before the taking of a group photo, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, Governor General and chief organizer of this historic event, addressed all participants, confrères, and friends of the Order. “I thank you for the devotion with which you took part in the various stages across the four Roman basilicas, and also for the patience with which you faced a few inconveniences. Coordinating the participation of almost 3,700 pilgrims from around the world was no easy task, but I hope you will carry with you fond memories of these days in Rome, which have strengthened us in our faith and in our love for the Holy Land.”



The Order of the Holy Sepulchre’s Communications Service has produced a short video to illustrate the Knights and Dames’ Jubilee pilgrimage. It is available on the Grand Magisterium’s YouTube channel. In addition, on the Order’s international website www.oessh.va it is possible to read and reread the full article on this historic pilgrimage, during which Pope Leo XIV encouraged the entire Order in its mission and in its work in service of the Church in the Holy Land.

Living the Mission Together: A Family's Journey with the Order

The testimony of Nicole and Scott, Knight and Dame from the United States. The married couple and who are parents came to take part in the Order's international pilgrimage.

Our journey with the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem began in 2016, during the Jubilee Year of Mercy. While processing through our local cathedral's Holy Doors in Phoenix, Arizona, we noticed several friends wearing the magnificent mantle of the Order. Their quiet strength, reverence, and joyful witness immediately drew our attention. We asked them what this was all about – and that simple question opened a door of its own.

Through research, conversation and prayer, we learned more about the Order's history, spirituality, and mission. Later that same year, our family made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and it was there that our hearts were truly moved. Walking through both the Old and New Testaments – celebrating Mass where Jesus was born, preached, performed miracles, died, rose, and ascended – made Scripture come alive in ways we had never

experienced. To stand where Mary and the apostles nurtured the early Church was profoundly humbling.

We were especially touched by the Christians who remain



in the Holy Land, striving to live with dignity amid many challenges. It was then that we understood the Order's mission at our very core: to protect not only the sacred places of our faith, but also the *living stones* – the people who continue to bear witness to Christ in His homeland, which is our homeland too as Catholics.

In 2017, we joined the Order. From the beginning, it has been a mission we live as a family. Our two children were present for our investiture and promotion ceremonies, and they often join us at annual Lieutenancy gatherings. Living this vocation together strengthens our marriage and deepens our prayer life. It allows us to serve as one – united in faith, charity, and purpose.

Through the Order, we have discovered the beauty of living the Beatitudes and responding to Christ's call for works of mercy, both corporal and spiritual. The Order keeps us grounded in prayer and connected to a global community of believers striving to bring hope and aid to the people of the Holy Land.

Participating in this Jubilee Year of Hope in Rome alongside thousands of fellow Knights and Dames was a deeply prayerful and unforgettable experience. To enter the Holy Doors together,

celebrate Mass in unity of spirit, and hear so many languages lifted in praise was a reminder that faith shared multiplies its joy. As St. Augustine of Hippo wrote, “When many rejoice together, there is a richer joy in each individual.”

We are continually inspired

by the words of the recent Mass Collect: “O God, who from living and chosen stones prepare an eternal dwelling for your majesty, increase in your Church the spirit of grace you have bestowed, so that by new growth your faithful people may build up the heavenly Jerusalem.”

That is the mission we hope to live each day – building up our heavenly Jerusalem by supporting both the sacred land of our faith and the people who still call it home.

With gratitude and warm regards.

Scott and Nicole Fleckenstein
Diocese of Phoenix, USA

The Youth Pilgrimage

The Grand Magisterium decided to organize a small pilgrimage to Rome from 27 to 30 November 2025 for young people (aged 18-24) close to the Order. Ten young people from Spain, France, Portugal, and Australia came together for four days of prayer, walking, mutual acquaintance, and a closer introduction to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

The pilgrimage began on November 27 with a moment of reflection led by the Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, followed by a shared dinner with the authorities of the Order and the leaders of the Lieutenancy for Central Italy, who shared their experiences as Knights and Dames.

The following day, the young participants visited the offices of the Grand Magisterium and met with the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, who spoke to them about the concrete work of the



Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre in the Holy Land and the various fields in which the Order is involved.

The young participants made full use of their time together to get to know one another, build community, pray, and fully experience the Jubilee by passing through the Holy Doors of three papal basilicas: Saint John Lateran, Santa Maria Maggiore, and Saint Peter’s, where they also had the opportunity to visit the Vatican Excavations and see Peter’s tomb.

On Saturday, November 29, the young participants had the opportunity to attend Holy Mass celebrated by the Grand Master in the Vatican grottos. This was a moment of deep spirituality that moved them profoundly.

Upon departing from Rome, they said their affectionate goodbyes and sent a long letter of thanks to the Cardinal Grand Master and the Governor General, fully aware of the significance of the event they had enjoyed.

Elena Dini

The General Regulations of the Order



As of January 1, 2025, the new General Regulations of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem came into force. This central document is a foundational tool for the daily life and management of both the Grand Magisterium and especially the local entities of the Order. In recent years, many Lieutenants and Members of the Order have expressed the need to update the previous Regulations. Consequently, an *ad hoc* Commission was established at the Grand Magisterium, which worked for several months to produce this document.

A letter was signed by the Cardinal Grand Master and the Governor General on the occasion of the Feast of Our Lady of Palestine (October 25, 2024). The letter states, “The General Regulations are intended to support the life of the Order in its organic dimension and participation in order to sustain that ‘project of life, of convictions, of values, of choices proper to a Knight and a Dame.’” This essential tool for the orderly life of the Order is included among its foundational Documents. The others include the Constitution; the Book on Spirituality; the Ritual for Celebrations; and, the Document on Formation. With the publication of the General Regulations, the beautiful analogy proposed by the Governor General in the *Newsletter* No. 74/10 (pages 1-2), of the five fingers of a hand is completed.

The Regulations include various sections, such as Organization and Central Governance, Territorial Organization and Management, Members of the Order, and Disciplinary Provisions and Procedures. In addition, the document includes appendices concerning admissions, promotions, and the spiritual benefits granted to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre by the Supreme Pontiffs. Due to its significance, “The Regulations, alongside the Constitution, must be known by both the Leaders and every Knight and Dame, together with the documents on Spirituality and Formation.” It has been approved *ad biennium*.

The Historical Committee of the Order



In fulfilling its mission to “animating zeal in the ecclesial community towards the Land of Jesus and sustaining the Catholic Church and the Christian presence there” (Constitution, Art. 1), the Order is not unfamiliar with the cultural dimension and historical research that consolidate its roots. Due to the historical complexity of our Pontifical Institution, a request to establish an *ad hoc* Committee had been raised years ago. This request was received once again by the Order’s Consulta in November 2023 and subsequently confirmed by the Grand Magisterium at its meeting in April 2024. Thus, on January 12, 2025, the Historical Committee of the Order was formally established. Among its various tasks, the Committee will promote historical studies regarding the Order, provide consultancy on relevant matters as needed, and, when requested, oversee the organization of specific cultural activities or publications. Its president is Tomás Parma, Lieutenant of the Order for the Czech Republic and author of the historical study in book form *Knights, Dames, and Pilgrims* (in this regard, see our *Newsletter* No. 62/7 pages 23-24).

A Compendio for the Ecclesiastics of the Order



During 2025, the Cardinal Grand Master devoted particular attention to the role of ecclesiastics within the Order. As a result, a *Compendium* that brings together all those previously published documents has been approved. The documents that make up the *Compendium* deal with the presence and activities of ecclesiastics within the Equestrian Order

THE FUTURE OF THE ORDER

of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The motivation behind the production of the *Compendium*, is that there are many ecclesiastics who seek clarification regarding their role within a lay chivalric Order, or are unfamiliar with the place of the Order within the Church. Through this text, it is therefore hoped to respond to the needs of ecclesiastical or religious Knights, as well as of religious Dames and of those interested in these matters. The text is also useful to Lieutenants and other Leaders in their contacts with ecclesiastics who become Members of the Order, as well as with the Bishops of the dioceses in which the Order is present.

The new Foundation of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

 On October 27, 2025, a Foundation of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem – Third Sector Body, under Italian law was established by notarial deed. It carries out activities to support the Order's projects of an economic and commercial nature. It was deemed appropriate to establish the Foundation and distinguish the Order's competences for fiscal reasons and for ease of management. However, the Foundation will be able to carry out, with legal autonomy and on a non-profit basis, activities of a commercial nature, such as the management of the museum at Palazzo della Rovere, the publication of editions, the promotion of cultural, social, and outreach activities, and the organization of charitable and representative events. In addition, it is going to benefit from the tax incentives and advantages offered by the Italian legal system for Third Sector activities. For example, in Italy, there is something called the 5x1000 regulation that makes it possible for residents to allocate a percentage of their income tax to non-profit organizations, including, in this instance, the Foundation of the Order.

Friends of the Order

An Area for Those Wishing to Participate in the Life of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

 For some time now, various Lieutenancies have been asking the Grand Magisterium whether men and women who are not Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre might nevertheless be associated with the mission entrusted to it by the Supreme Pontiffs. These men and women may be drawn, and even inspired, by the Order's spiritual aims or by its concrete initiatives in support of the Holy Land.

In order to address the needs of the Lieutenants, the Magistral Delegates, and local Leaders (both lay and ecclesiastical) on this particularly sensitive matter, the issue was submitted to Pope Leo XIV on the occasion of the Audience granted to the Grand Master and the Assessor of the Order on June 24, 2025. After taking note of the reasons presented, the Supreme Pontiff gave his assent to the establishment of an area of the "Friends of the Order", in which those who, without becoming Members, wish to participate in certain aspects of its life may gather. A Letter from the Secretariat of State confirmed this assent.

The project, for which a specific document has been drawn up, falls within the framework of Art. 4, no. 7 of the Constitution of the Order, which speaks of collaboration with those who share "similar goals and objectives" with regard to the Holy Land, as well as of "to call to the attention of Catholics, other Christians, the Members of other religions and men of good will of the whole world the good works in which the Order is involved in the Holy Land, as well as the promotion of the union of Christians and inter-religious understanding and cooperation." With this document, therefore, a broad new perspective now opens up within the Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations.

Eight Years in the Service of the Order: A Path of Dialogue and Innovation

On June 30, 2025, in accordance with Art. 11 of the Constitution of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the Grand Master, Cardinal Filoni, signed a decree renewing “donec aliter provideatur” [until otherwise provided] the mandate of the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone.

The Governor General holds the highest lay office within the Order and, as stipulated by the Constitution, serves as the central administrator responsible for its financial and economic management. The Governor, as the principal collaborator of the Grand Master – who is appointed by the Pope and leads and governs the Order – meets daily with His Eminence, presenting the needs of the Holy Land and reporting on his interactions with the Lieutenancies and the directives issued. In this article, Ambassador Visconti di Modrone reflects on the key milestones of his tenure during his first two terms. He also highlights the importance he places on dialogue as a source of strength and consensus, supporting innovative decisions aimed at adapting the Order’s governance to today’s needs and anticipating those of tomorrow.

The most rewarding aspects of my eight years serving as Governor General of the Order has undoubtedly been both the

daily contact with the two Grand Masters who have held office during this period, Cardinal O’Brien and Cardinal Filoni and the ongoing dialogue with Members in every corner of the world. I am deeply grateful for the kindness they have consistently shown me in supporting my initiatives.

I still remember the day I took on the role as Governor General. At the close of the Grand Magisterium meeting, I

The Governor General here inaugurates a completed project in the Holy Land.

delivered my inaugural speech in which I expressed my desire to base my actions on continuous contact with all my confreres. This spirit of dialogue, even when it meant overcoming certain obstacles, has guided me from that first day on.

The Initial Challenges and the Strength of Dialogue

I was fully aware that I was succeeding the distinguished late Professor Agostino Borromeo, a Church historian of great renown. I did not share



his academic background, nor his extensive experience within the Order or his familiarity with ecclesiastical circles. As a nervous newcomer stepping into a new role, I was nonetheless reassured by his support and encouragement.

I recognized that my most valuable asset was the experience gained over more than forty years in diplomatic service, along with a natural inclination for negotiation. I therefore sought to place this experience at the service of the Order, in continuity with the work of my predecessor. The two Vice Governors at the time, Giorgio Moroni Stampa and Patrick Powers, shared my approach. In a private conversation shortly after my appointment, they jointly encouraged me to embrace ever greater openness.

I began immediately with a visit to the Holy Land, joining the Commission then led by Professor Thomas Mc Kiernan, who regularly oversaw the projects and reported to the Grand Magisterium. From that moment on, direct contact with the Patriarchate and those responsible for the various operational areas has remained one of my priorities. I was – and remain to this day – keenly aware not only of the requirements set out in the Constitution, but also of the undeniable reality that those working on the ground are best placed to assess priorities and respond to emergencies.

During those months, preparations were also underway for the Consulta, with the principal topic under



discussion being the reform of the Constitution and the drafting of guidelines for Lieutenants. The complexity of the subject matter, combined with the absence of a truly dialogical approach, meant that no immediate outcome was achieved. Nevertheless, that work laid the groundwork for the drafting of the General Regulations, which would only come to fruition later. These Regulations then served as a key reference point for shaping the subsequent Consulta, which – thanks to the inspired foresight of Cardinal Filoni – was opened to the participation of the Grand Priors as well.

Overcoming Difficulties and Strengthening the Structure

One major issue cast a shadow over those early days: the internal division within the Lieutenancy of France. Its resolution had been entrusted to the patient efforts of Monsignor Bernard-Nicolas Aubertin, with whom I had a long conversation at Santa Marta, where he was residing, the day after I took office. Only through dialogue and a spirit of reconciliation – even in this

The Governor General's visit to one of the children's reception centers managed by the Latin Patriarchate and supported by the Order.

delicate matter – was it possible, thanks to him and the individuals he selected, to gradually reach a resolution.

On the administrative front, a significant challenge loomed: the dispute with the tenant occupying part of Palazzo della Rovere, namely the company managing the Hotel Columbus. We were faced with a choice – either to settle the dispute and continue with a modest, low-yield hotel operation, or to turn the page entirely by changing the hotel management and undertaking a proper renovation and restoration of the Palazzo. I proposed the latter course to the Grand Master at the time, Cardinal O'Brien. Despite some internal disagreement, I secured the support of an international commission of experts to assist in the decision-making process. I remain firmly convinced it was the right choice.

By coincidence, the timing of my appointment also coincided

with the transition of several Lieutenants whose terms were coming to an end. Their renewal had to be considered, often on the basis of limited information. This gave rise to the need for confidential and, by their nature, delicate enquiries, particularly with members of the clergy. I had to learn to interpret the sophisticated language of the Church, to which I was unaccustomed: a language of subtle nuances, of things said and unsaid.

Dialogue at the Core of Action

Indifferent to criticism, I have always placed dialogue – conducted with the utmost transparency – at the heart of my approach. I began attending Investiture ceremonies, particularly in countries with the largest number of Members and the most significant contributions. At my first such ceremony in Bordeaux, I sensed that the gathering following the Investiture could serve as an ideal occasion to outline, in a brief address, the direction of my work and the Order's projects. With the encouragement of Grand Master Cardinal Filoni, I introduced this practice.

Over time, I added a request to meet with Members of the Lieutenancy and with the candidates. This initiative gradually became customary and has been enriched by the distinguished presence of the Grand Master himself.

From the outset, regional meetings struck me as an important opportunity to strengthen dialogue among the

Exchanges with Lieutenants from around the world mark the long working days of the Governor General, who is a volunteer like all those responsible for the Order in Rome and throughout the world.



Lieutenants. After the European meeting in Rome, I attended the Latin American meeting in Buenos Aires and the North American one in Toronto. Most recently, in May of this year, I fulfilled the long-held wish of meeting in person, rather than remotely, with confreres from Australia, Asia, and the Pacific in Perth.

Among European Lieutenancies, I found it more constructive to hold smaller regional meetings between similar jurisdictions. I therefore promoted such gatherings in Madrid, Paris, Stockholm, Vienna, London, and Prague, and encouraged the establishment of a semi-annual meeting for Italian-speaking Lieutenants. These meetings have enabled valuable exchanges of experience and fostered a shared understanding of commitments and a spirit of brotherhood in prayer.

To encourage broader participation in decision-making, I asked Grand Master Cardinal O'Brien to establish three new Commissions: the first for Economic Affairs; the second for Spiritual Affairs; and a third for the Revision of Protocol Rules. The first two were confirmed as permanent and incorporated into the new

Constitution. The third was effectively included into the temporary Commission that, under the guidance of Cardinal Filoni, drafted the new General Regulations.

Recent Challenges and New Opportunities

COVID-19 posed a serious obstacle to the progress that was underway. During that dark period, all visits were suspended for a year, and meetings had to be coordinated electronically. This inevitably reduced the bonding effect of informal conversations during ceremonies, which had previously fostered a strong sense of familiarity. Pilgrimages came to a complete halt, with serious consequences not only for the Holy Land's economy but also for its spiritual life.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, the outbreak of war has proved an even more dramatic tragedy. Since its onset, the Order has been compelled to seek new forms of assistance for the Christian community in the Holy Land, which is increasingly under pressure and at risk of extinction. Additional contributions – through appeals, targeted campaigns, and specific projects beyond the usual ones – have been

encouraged, as they form the backbone of our charitable commitment.

Meanwhile, the Palazzo della Rovere project was taking shape. The courage to choose the path of innovation was rewarded, following a long and patient negotiation (and not without controversial moments, media interference, and timely changes in consultants), which led to the selection of a prestigious tenant. This new partner, having assumed responsibility for the renovation costs of the Palazzo, has enabled us to preserve the Order's resources and offers strong assurances for the future.

The temporary relocation of the Order's offices to allow the works to proceed has not diminished the efficiency of the Grand Magisterium, although it has inevitably curtailed its promotional activities. In the preceding months, various events and visits were organized in the prestigious Pinturicchio-frescoed halls to promote the image of the Order and raise awareness of our charitable work. This has included a concerted effort in external relations, accompanied by a parallel strengthening of

our information and communication channels, now carried out in six languages for the benefit of an ever-wider audience.

By fortunate coincidence, excavation works in the garden of the Palazzo della Rovere also uncovered important archaeological finds. Following agreements with the relevant cultural heritage authorities, these artefacts will be displayed in a small museum managed by a Foundation. An esteemed Scientific Committee, chaired by Cardinal Ravasi, is overseeing its operations.

Even in these endeavors, the dialogue between representatives of the various authorities involved, both Italian and Vatican, expert consultants, and the tenant's representatives has been key. Weekly meetings of the Steering Committee, held every Tuesday, have enabled harmonious coordination of the renovation works and the development of an exhibition and educational project that will greatly benefit the Order.

The Lieutenants for Asia and for the Pacific gathered around the Governor General during one of his visits to their vast region.

The strong relationship established with the leadership of the Vatican Museums will also allow us to recover fragments of frescoes that were removed from the Palazzo della Rovere during restoration work carried out in 1950.

Conclusion: Looking to the Future

Throughout all these endeavors, I have been sustained by the constant support of the Grand Master – appointed by the Supreme Pontiff – and who rules and governs the Order. He has been kept informed of every step along this journey, while the principles of dialogue and transparency with all those involved have remained the guiding force behind my actions. This has enabled me to introduce innovation, take initiative, and share responsibility with individuals driven by the same spirit, alongside competent professionals.

Today, after eight years in office, I am deeply grateful for the trust placed in me by the two Grand Masters who have served during this time: Cardinal Edwin O'Brien and, currently, Cardinal Fernando Filoni. I entrust to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, Patroness of the Order and Queen of Palestine, the work that still lies ahead – work I intend to continue with the same spirit of service that led me to accept the role of Governor General eight years ago.

Leonardo Visconti di Modrone
Governor General



The Order is strengthening its action in response to the tragic situation of the Christians in the Holy Land

The Jerusalem Cross reviews here the essential parts of the two annual meetings of the Grand Magisterium (full reports are available on our international website: www.oessh.va)

The spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium was held on April 29, 2025, and chaired by the Assessor of the Order, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, Archbishop-Prelate of Pompeii, in a spirit of gratitude for the pontificate of Pope Francis – who cared so much for the Holy Land – and in the absence of Cardinals Filoni and Pizzaballa, Grand Master and Grand Prior of the Order, who are participating in the General Congregations prior to the start of the Conclave.

During the meeting, the Treasurer, Saverio Petrillo, pointed out that we reached more than 18 million euros of ordinary contributions in 2024, 2.3 million more than in the previous year, demonstrating an extraordinary mobilisation of the Members given the tragic situation in the Holy Land.

During his moving address, the CEO of the Latin Patriarchate, Sami

El-Yousef, bore painful witness to this tragedy, speaking of the “broken trust” between Israelis and Palestinians, and referring to the beginning of instability in Jordan too, where 2.4 million Palestinian refugees live, as a result of the decision to put an end to financial aid from the United States to them through UNRWA. In a spirit of hope, noting that the Patriarchate is the leading employer of

Christians in the Holy Land, he stressed the importance of the North American campaign in support to the Patriarchate’s 44 schools, in particular to help families pay school fees.

In keeping with the agenda,

Members of the Grand Magisterium sometimes participate in meetings virtually, but their presence is no less active. The pandemic period fostered other useful means of communication.





each of the four Vice-Governors spoke during the day, demonstrating the efforts being made on every continent to develop the Order, particularly in Latin America and in the vast Asia-Pacific.

At the beginning of the Grand Magisterium’s autumn meeting on November 11, 2025 held at the Order’s temporary headquarters near Piazza Cavour in Rome, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master, opened the session by referring back to **the address delivered by Pope Leo XIV to the Order’s pilgrims** who had come to Rome for the Jubilee, stressing that this important text will serve as a point of reference for the years to come.

The Governor General then welcomed a new Member of the Grand Magisterium, Michael Byrne, Lieutenant of Honour for England and Wales, who – after two distinguished terms at the helm of his Lieutenancy – has been called to join this supreme body which, as stated in Article 8 of the Constitution, “assists the Cardinal Grand Master in

the governance of the Order.”

The Governor General then emphasized that the tragedy that has struck the Holy Land has had extraordinary repercussions on **the generosity of the Order’s Members**, whose donations have increased – both in the form of the regular contributions provided for by the Constitution and in extraordinary contributions responding to humanitarian appeals, along with special donations and fundraising campaigns. “Over the course of this year, we have surpassed a total of **more than 20 million euros** sent to the Holy Land.”

Among the new initiatives launched by the Order, the Governor General highlighted in particular the establishment of a **Foundation of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem**, under Italian law, created by notarial act on October 27, 2025. Inspired by the principles of the Third Sector, it will support the Order’s projects of an economic and commercial nature – activities that, for tax and

management reasons, were suitably removed from the Order’s direct competence. It will be able, with full legal autonomy and without profit, to carry out commercial-type activities such as managing the museum, overseeing publications, promoting cultural, social and outreach activities, and organizing charitable and representative events,” added Ambassador Visconti di Modrone.

He also informed the assembly that “work on the restructuring and restoration of the **Palazzo della Rovere** has begun, after the laborious process of securing all necessary permits, and is progressing in parallel both for the Museum area – which will be completed first – and for the hotel and office areas, expected to be finished in 2027.”

As scheduled, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa addressed the meeting via live connection from Jerusalem, first thanking the Order, whose regular and constant financial support – along with the visits and messages of its Members –

brings confidence and serenity to the Latin Catholic Church in the Holy Land, on behalf of the Holy See and the universal Church. Regarding the situation in Gaza, he reported the creation of an **intervention office** (the *Jerusalem Response Hub*) dedicated specifically and long-term to the deeply afflicted population of this devastated territory.

“The first task is to organize and coordinate aid,” he stated realistically.

In Gaza, priorities include rebuilding schools, distributing medicines, and creating a canteen for meal distribution while awaiting the reconstruction of the city and homes – a process that will take years. The Patriarchate intends to address these emergencies through logistical and legal support (the *Response Hub*) in view of reconstruction and the resumption of activity.

As for the West Bank, where Christians and Muslims share the same suffering, suffocated by lack of work and resources and confronted with continual aggression by Israeli settlers, the Patriarch expressed alarm at the absence of pilgrims – the only ones capable of reviving the economic activity of Palestinian Christian families, especially in Bethlehem.

The Patriarch emphasized the importance of strengthening pastoral activities. He also spoke of the need for the **formation of adult faithful** who require spiritual assistance. This is a decisive issue for future generations, especially in Israel, for example in Nazareth,

where religious vocations are dramatically scarce. To this end, the Patriarch stressed the importance of **Catholic education** and highlighted the need to train religion teachers and formally recognize their mandate in the form of a *missio canonica*.

In Gaza, more than 250,000 people have benefited from emergency aid funded by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

Treasurer Saverio Petrillo presented the projected budget for 2026, with more than 15 million euros in revenue, and – taking into account the monthly transfers to the Latin Patriarchate and the Order’s expenses – a projected surplus of 800,000 euros that will allow continued support for the Holy Land.

Sami El-Yousef, Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate, speaking from his office in Jerusalem, described in detail the local situation and the needs of the Christian community. After outlining the sad effects of the war on the region, he explained how **in 2025 requests for humanitarian aid had quadrupled**, including medical care for elderly people with chronic illnesses, medical emergencies for those without health insurance, school tuition

aid, and the growing demand from youth and women to enter the Empowerment Program to find a place in the labor market.

In Gaza, where emergency assistance has mobilized the Patriarchate’s services, the number of beneficiaries is estimated to have exceeded 250,000 people. Since the ceasefire was declared, attention has shifted to education, housing, job creation, and health.

Jobs have been created in the West Bank, but in Jerusalem priority has been given to social assistance (food vouchers, financial aid, help with paying rent, water, electricity, and overdue municipal taxes) and to job creation in the form of daily work on projects, 3- to 6-month internships, and measures to support small business development.

The Patriarchate pays school fees for numerous families, thanks in particular to the **North American Lieutenancies’ school campaign**, with around 19,000 students enrolled, about 58% of them Christians. “Relieving despair,” in his words, is the work to which the Patriarchate is committed both in Gaza and the West Bank, while in Jordan and Israel it seeks to strengthen pastoral support for Christians who are often tempted to emigrate. **Pastoral activities have significantly increased**, for example, summer camps, youth chaplaincy activities, and scout troop programs.

The President of the Holy

Land Commission, Bart McGettrick, recounted the Commission's visit to Jordan, stressing the **importance of physical and human reconstruction** for people.

The Vice-Governors –Tom Pogge from the United States, John Secker through a written report, and Jean-Pierre de

Glutz and Enric Mas in person – then addressed topics still under internal study before presenting their views on the **development of the Order in their respective geographic areas**, where significant progress is evident everywhere, especially in Latin America, where Ecuador and

Chile may soon see the formation of groups of Knights and Dames.

In closing the meeting, the Grand Master announced the publication of a book on Saint Bartolo Longo, written by Archbishop Tommaso Caputo, Prelate of Pompeii and Assessor of the Order.

The meeting of North American Lieutenants

On February 28, 2025 the Governor General of the Order, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, met the North American Lieutenants in Miami.

At the encounter, he expressed his profound belief in the value of such meetings, which are a source of inspiration for new ideas, and encouraged everyone present

to strengthen dialogue and visit exchanges. He also welcomed the generous contributions of all North American Members, but emphasized, "The charity of a



Member of the Order is characterized by a continuous commitment to the Holy Land, which must be like a father's love for his children – constant and daily.”

When speaking about the universality of the Order, the Governor General mentioned efforts to expand its presence in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. He also touched on the ongoing renovations of Palazzo

della Rovere, which, through the rental of the building, will cover the costs of the Grand Magisterium, thus enabling the Order to send all the contributions received to the Holy Land.

Finally, in light of the current situation in Gaza and the broader region, Ambassador Visconti di Modrone emphasized that the apolitical nature of the Order

and its commitment to education make it a suitable interlocutor in this phase, where reconciliation is being pursued.

The next meeting of the North American Lieutenants is scheduled for Green Bay in June 2026, while the meeting of the European Lieutenants, which has not been held for several years, will take place in Pompeii in October 2026.

The Governor General's visit to the Asia-Pacific region

Geographically distant but very close in mission and spirit

At the end of May 2025, the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, accompanied by Father Maxim Baz, visited the Asia-Pacific area. This is a region that, while geographically very distant from the offices of the Grand Magisterium in Rome and from the Holy Land, is very close to the mission and spirit of the Order. Moreover, it has proven to be highly active and in a phase of expansion.

Upon his return, the Governor General commented, “I found great devotion and a clear understanding of what the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is and of its development, especially in recent years. All the Members have read and delved into the main documents that have

been recently circulated and are up to date and eager to learn more.”

In an evocative ceremony that was held at the Bishop's residence in Penang, Malaysia, an Asian country with a Muslim majority, Cardinal Sebastian Francis was invested a Member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre by the Archbishop of Taipei and Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Taiwan, Monsignor Thomas Chung An-Zu. Cardinal Francis was subsequently appointed Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Malaysia-Penang.

A Prayer Vigil on Saturday, May 24, which was attended by the Apostolic Nuncio, Monsignor Wojciech Załuski, preceded the Investiture. The next day, the Investiture

ceremony for Knights, Dames, and ecclesiastics of the Lieutenancy for Malaysia-Penang took place with the participation of numerous Members of the Order from Australia and Taiwan.

The event marked the conclusion of a long process of preparation towards the autonomy of what until then had been a Section of the Lieutenancy for West Australia. Governor General Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone was present and conveyed a message of congratulations for the new Lieutenancy on behalf of the Cardinal Grand Master.

After the ceremonies in Penang, the Governor General travelled to Australia, where the Order has five Lieutenancies and is celebrating 40 years of presence



there this year.

The National Conference of Australian Lieutenants took place in Perth on Saturday, May 31. The Conference was preceded by a series of meetings between the Governor General and Monsignor Timothy Costelloe, Metropolitan Archbishop of Perth and Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for West Australia, as well as with all the attending Lieutenants. This regular gathering of the Order's leaders from the region was expanded to include representatives from across Asia and the Pacific, with the participation of the Lieutenants

Here we see the Governor General in the company of a group of Members of the Order in Penang, Malaysia.

from New Zealand, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Malaysia-Penang.

In conveying greetings from the Grand Master and the Grand Magisterium, the Governor General, in his address, highlighted the Order's increased initiatives in support of the Holy Land during this particularly tragic time. He also reaffirmed the commitment to ensuring a steady flow of funds for the humanitarian and pastoral work of the Latin Patriarchate.

"Saturday was entirely devoted to reflection and prayer," shared Ambassador Visconti di Modrone.

"Alongside the Lieutenants, more than a hundred Knights and Dames took part in the day's events.

The following day, Archbishop Costelloe celebrated the Sunday Mass for the Solemnity of the Ascension at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Perth. Speaking before a full congregation, he took the opportunity to introduce the Order and expressed his hope that many more of the faithful would be inspired to join."

Barbiconi

1825



CAPES - MEDALS - ACCESSORIERS

BARBICONI SRL - Via Santa Caterina da Siena 58/60 00186 Roma

www.barbiconi.it info@barbiconi.it



@barbiconi

Holy Land Commission: Report And Reflection For 2025

Professor Bartholomew McGettrick reviews here the two visits to the Holy Land carried out in 2025 by the Commission he chaired, which had been tasked with overseeing the implementation of the various projects of the Latin Patriarchate supported by the Order.



The Holy Land Commission (HLC) operates on behalf of the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, with the mission of supporting and strengthening the Christian presence in the Holy Land through education, humanitarian aid, pastoral care, and cultural projects. It works in close coordination with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (LPJ) and other Church institutions across

Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Cyprus.

The work of the Commission in 2025 has taken place in an environment of unprecedented difficulty in The Holy Land. It has been faced with serious challenges especially associated with conflict in Gaza and the advance of “settlements” in the West Bank. These impose pressures especially on Christian communities, including schools, parishes, and vulnerable families. The

Members of the Holy Land Commission of the Grand Magisterium are seen here visiting a school of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

economy in Palestine has collapsed and the temptation to emigrate is very real.

The Commission believes it is vital to have face-to-face engagement with the people of The Holy Land, so that it is a presence of hope and a spirit of solidarity with those most in need. The Order is not a remote

entity but part of the living universal Church and as such thrives on its connection with those most in need. In 2025, there were more people than ever who were struggling with unemployment, loss of housing, ill-health, loneliness, and other fracturing of the

present and meeting people where they are. In **March 2025**, the HLC made its semi-annual visit to the Holy Land visiting schools, parishes, the seminary, youth centres, and community institutions in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Galilee. The work in job

completed and hear of future needs. The work of the Church with refugees; with children with disabilities; with families who cannot afford fees for government schools were very impressive. The growing positive reputation and activities of the American University of Madaba, the work with youth, the attention to quality education and parishes, collectively contribute to a vibrant society led by the new Bishop in Jordan, Bishop Iyad Twal.



human spirit. It would have been easy to see despair and helplessness as the consequence of what has been happening. Yet the Commission also saw the hope in the lives of those supported by the Church, understanding that despair is a luxury of the Western mind. Even in the most destructive times and under the most heart-breaking of conditions The Lord is always present. This seemed especially true in schools where teachers and priests invariably brought “the Good News.”

The Commission Members are witness to the work of the Order. There is a deep sense of evangelisation through being

A working meeting with the staff of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem to inform Members of the Commission for the Holy Land of the Grand Magisterium about future projects that the Order may be called upon to support.

creation – especially for women – is a clear sign of the practical support that the Order gives across The Holy Land.

In **September-early October 2025**, the site visit focused more specifically on the needs of Christians in Jordan. Numbers of Catholics are small (1.5% of the population) but spirits are strong. During this visit, HLC reviewed existing projects overseen by the LPJ, especially, to assess progress of projects

Conclusion

The Holy Land Commission in 2025 is deeply engaged in both immediate humanitarian relief and long-term support of Christian life in the Holy Land. Education remains central: as best it can keeping schools functioning, safe, and resilient. (The “North American Campaign” has been helpful in this.) Pastoral and infrastructure works help community cohesion. Nevertheless, the challenges are huge, whether that be conflict, economic hardship, and/or emigration that threatens the vibrancy of local Christian communities. The Order’s solidarity, gathered through its network of Lieutenancies, is making vital contributions – yet its success will depend on sustained commitment, flexibility in the face of changing conditions, and resource availability.

Bart McGettrick
*President of the Holy Land
Commission*

“The Holy Land is not merely a place to be supported, much less a problem to be solved: it is a source”



An interview with Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa

Your Eminence, the constant conflict in the Holy Land seems almost perpetual. In such a context, how can we continue to believe that peace will one day be possible without appearing idealistic or naïve? In what way can Jesus’ parable of “the wheat and the weeds grow together” (Mt 13:24-30) help us to work for peace, knowing that conflict is almost intrinsic to human interactions in the Holy Land?

The presence of evil, the weeds, will come to an end only with the second coming of Christ. All of us would like evil to be overcome as soon as possible and to disappear from our lives. However, this is not so. We know this, yet we must learn time and again to live with the painful awareness that the power of evil will continue to be present in the life of the world and in our own lives. This is a mystery, however harsh and difficult, which belongs to our earthly condition. It is not a matter of resignation. On the contrary, it is an acknowledgment of the

Grand Prior of the Order, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem is often invited to celebrate at events held in the Lieutenancies on all continents.

dynamics of life in the world, without any form of escape and without fear, without sharing in them and yet without concealing them either.

Peace, therefore, must not be confused with the disappearance of evil, with the end of wars, or with all that evil, that is Satan, instills in the hearts of human beings. We all desire that this situation of war, together with its



Cardinal Pizzaballa on a pastoral visit to Gaza.

consequences for the life of our communities, may come to an end as soon as possible, and we must do everything possible to bring this about. Yet we must harbor no illusions. The end of the war would not, in any case, mark the end of hostilities or of the suffering they would continue to cause. From the hearts of many there will still arise desires for revenge and anger.

The evil that seems to govern the hearts of many will not cease its activity, but will remain constantly at work, I would even say in a creative manner. For a long time to come, we will have to deal with the consequences that this war has had on the lives of people.



Yet precisely in this context, to believe in peace means not to serve the power of evil, but to continue to allow the seed of the Kingdom of God to grow,

that is, to plant a seed of life in the world. In this context of death and destruction, we wish to continue to place our trust, to join ourselves to the many

people here who still have the courage to desire what is good, and together with them to create contexts of healing and of life. Evil will continue to manifest itself, but we will be the place, the presence that evil cannot overcome, a seed of life, in fact.

Among all the biblical names attributed to Jerusalem, which ones inspire you most in light of



The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem brought to Gaza not only humanitarian aid funded by the Order, but also his spiritual support to the small, fragile and courageous Catholic community, in solidarity with all the other inhabitants in difficulty.

the present situation? Could you comment on them for us from the perspective of an invincible hope?

Two names are especially significant to me in the present context: “City of Peace” (one of the etymological meanings of *Yerushalayim*) and “Bride” (or “the Promised Bride”), especially as she is described in the Book of Revelation as the Bride of the Lamb.

“City of Peace”: today this

name appears as a painful oxymoron, literally a *contradictio in terminis*. Yet this name remains a prophecy, an unfulfilled vocation. It reminds us that peace is not merely the absence of war, but the fullness of life, reconciliation, and justice. Despite the deep wounds, this name keeps alive the hope that God has not abandoned His plan for this city.

“Bride”: in the Book of Revelation, Jerusalem is also

presented as a bride “adorned for her bridegroom” (*Rev 21:2*). This image evokes intimacy, covenant, and the beauty intended by God. Today Jerusalem is torn, divided, and wounded, yet the image of the bride reminds us that her true identity is given to her from above, that she is loved and awaited. This vision allows us not to reduce Jerusalem to her present conflicts, but to see her with the eyes of faith, as a reality still unfolding, called to communion. These names inspire an invincible hope because they point beyond visible reality toward God’s promise. They invite us to work, even in the darkness, so that these names may gradually become a reality lived by all.

The New Jerusalem, as described in the Book of



Revelation, is presented as the Bride of the Lamb (Rev 21:9). Is it already possible to discern signs of the New Jerusalem descending from heaven within today's torn Jerusalem, where communities scarcely communicate with one another? What are these eschatological signs, and, more broadly, how can we hasten, through our actions, the coming of the New Jerusalem in the midst of this world marked by evil and violence?

Yes, certainly. Even if only to a modest extent, signs of the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb, can be discerned within today's torn Jerusalem:

The presence of "wounded healers": there are people—believers from different communities, humanitarian workers, artisans of dialogue—who, though themselves wounded by the conflict, continue to weave relationships, to heal, and to listen. These people already embody a style of relationship

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem with the priests and altar servers of the parish of Gaza, after the bombing of the Church of the Holy Family.

inspired by the New Jerusalem: a style in which one is not defined by hatred, but rather by steadfast love and hope;

Fragile spaces of encounter: despite prevailing distrust, there are still spaces (churches, local initiatives, universities) where interreligious and inter-community encounters take place. These places are like the first stammerings of the open city described in the Book of Revelation, where the gates are never closed;

The prophetic courage of certain religious leaders: when voices, even if isolated, refuse the language of hatred and call for compassion and justice for all victims, they bear witness to the light of the Lamb that illuminates the city.

How can we, through our actions, hasten the coming of the New Jerusalem into the midst of this world marked by evil and violence? By being "artisans of peace" in daily life,

in both words and deeds. By cultivating prophetic listening: listening not only to one's own community but also to the suffering and aspirations of others. By investing in education for peace from the earliest years, in order to break cycles of violence.

In your view, what could be the means by which to learn a new language to speak of peace in the Holy Land?

Moving from an exclusive to inclusive language: instead of using only the words of one's own narrative, one should seek a vocabulary that acknowledges the realities and wounds of both sides, without denying them. We must reject dehumanizing language and work toward a language that is inclusive and that recognizes the suffering of others. Purifying memory: this means acknowledging the suffering that has been inflicted and that which has been endured, naming it truthfully, yet without letting resentment have the final word. A language of peace must integrate truth, justice, and forgiveness – not as alternatives, but as complementary dimensions. Training religious leaders and the media: they have a crucial role in guiding public discourse toward hope rather than fear or hatred. Practicing an embodied language: beyond speeches, this involves words that create closeness, console, and open horizons. In the face of images of suffering, one must respond with words and images of hope. Fostering

spaces for narrative dialogue: where Israelis and Palestinians may share their stories – not to persuade, but to be heard. This allows one to move beyond stereotypes and to restore empathy.

What is your secret for remaining steadfast despite the tragedies endured by your people in Gaza and the occupied West Bank?

I would not speak of a secret, but of a deep-rooted grounding. What enables one to persevere is, first and foremost, daily faithfulness: remaining there, physically and spiritually, without fleeing reality, yet without being overcome by it. The Holy Land compels a faith stripped to its essentials. One cannot take refuge in abstractions: each day one is confronted with tangible suffering, with its faces, names, and stories. This demands a sober, sometimes silent prayer, which seeks not to explain God, but to stand before Him.

There is also the certainty that the Church is not called to “succeed” by worldly standards, but to endure. To persevere means accepting that immediate solutions may not be apparent, yet refusing to succumb to despair. Finally, it is the people themselves, their dignity, their capacity for endurance, and their humble faith, who sustain the shepherd more than the shepherd sustains them.

Agencies that periodically assist the Holy Land sometimes take advantage of the situation to seek

publicity. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, of which you are Grand Prior, operates with great discretion through the regular support provided to the Latin Patriarchate by its 30,000 Members worldwide. Would you say that the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre and the Latin Patriarchate constitute a single family? How does this profound, one might even say “visceral”, bond manifest itself in the life of the Diocese of Jerusalem, of which you are responsible?

Yes, one can truly speak of a family, even of an organic bond. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre does not stand alongside the Patriarchate as an external benefactor; it shares in its life, its weaknesses, and its mission. This bond is expressed primarily through enduring fidelity. The Order’s support is neither occasional nor dependent on media attention: it is regular, discreet, and rooted in a profound ecclesial communion.

Concretely, this means supporting what is essential: schools, parishes, the formation of seminarians, and pastoral presence in places where, from a human perspective, it would be impossible. Yet even more, the Order offers the Patriarchate something invaluable: the awareness that it is not alone, and that it carries a universal mission. This silent solidarity is a profoundly evangelical expression of charity.

Everyone wishes to “help” the Holy Land, but should we not, once and for all, change our perspective and understand that we must first receive humbly a treasure from the Mother Church of Jerusalem? How, in your view, can this change of perspective be fostered, and what is this treasure, and where is it found?

Indeed, this change of perspective is essential. The Holy Land is not merely a place to be supported, much less a problem to be solved: it is a source. The Church of Jerusalem is not ‘poor’ merely in material means; it is rich in a living memory of the Gospel.

The treasure is found in a faith incarnate, marked by patience, coexistence, and the cross accepted without ideology. It is a Church that lives the Gospel without protection, often without recognition, yet with profound authenticity. Fostering this change of perspective requires, above all, attentive listening: listening to the local communities, their stories, their wounds, and their hope. It is necessary to move from a logic of projects to a logic of communion.

To receive from Jerusalem means accepting that the Christian faith is born in fragility, and is never to be confused with power, and is passed on, above all, through fidelity in times of trial. Ultimately, this is the true treasure.

Interview by François Vayne

THE ORDER'S CONCRETE SOLIDARITY WITH

2025 Financial Report on emergency humanitarian aid, specific projects, and support for education

EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN AID

The escalation of the conflict that broke out in October 2023 has led to a series of inhumane atrocities. These include the massacre of innocent civilians, extremely high unemployment rates, mass displacement, the deterioration of health and nutritional conditions, severe restrictions on access to essential resources such as food, water, and medical care. In addition, major limitations on the freedom of movement have been introduced. In this dramatic context, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem launched an urgent appeal to address these hardships. With the support of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, it has been able to intensify its

commitment, which has translated faith into coordinated action to preserve life and maintain the cohesion of communities.

In 2024 and 2025, the Members of the Order throughout the world contributed more than US\$2.9 million in emergency humanitarian aid for their brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.

This article outlines the interventions carried out from the end of 2024 and throughout 2025 in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and in refugee communities. These actions demonstrate the Church's commitment to serving the most vulnerable and marginalized people.



THE GAZA PARISH TRANSFORMED INTO A REFUGE

Six Specialized Emergency Committees Responding to the Consequences of War

The Gaza's parishioners' resilience was made possible thanks to the assistance provided by the many Knights and Dames who responded generously to the emergency appeal during the tragic context of a war that has caused the death of 72,134 Palestinians.

Since October 2023, the Church of the Holy Family has been transformed into an emergency shelter. This transformation demonstrates how compassion can prevail even in the midst of wartime devastation.

The situation in Gaza has presented a series of extremely serious challenges. These include the constant and unpredictable security threats; episodes of looting carried out by crowds attacking humanitarian convoys and seizing desperately needed supplies before they could reach those waiting for them; and, the closure of the border, which became a bottleneck of suffering that blocked aid while the population was left without resources.

When shipments finally did manage to arrive, the fresh fruit and vegetables were often spoiled by the heat, rendering these essential provisions unusable.

It is important to highlight the severe shortage of basic necessities, such as food, water, fuel, medicines, and construction materials, which has forced the population to be constantly inventive with what they had to hand and apply strict rationing with the insufficient resources available. Added to this were the damaged infrastructure, which has turned daily life into an ongoing struggle against deterioration.

To maintain compassion, hope, and



During the war, the Catholic parish of Gaza received much aid, which the faithful shared with their Orthodox and Muslim neighbors.





operational efficiency under relentless emotional pressure has required drawing on reserves of resilience that have seemed impossible to sustain. However, in one way or another, little by little, and day after day, parish leaders and members have succeeded thanks to the participation of each individual and the entire community as a whole.

Since the beginning of the war, October 7, when this tragedy began, the spaces of Gaza's Holy Family Church have been reorganized to manage the emergency. Some areas are being used as warehouses for storing and distributing food, blankets, and essential goods, while a specialized distribution center is extending aid well beyond the walls of the Holy Family Church, which is serving communities in the surrounding areas.

Meals are being prepared daily in an equipped kitchen, and in the adjacent bakery, which has been fitted out with wood-fired and gas ovens, where fresh bread is being baked every day. In addition, a small poultry farm is providing eggs for community residents.

A well has been dug near the church, and

Father Gabriel Romanelli, who is the parish priest of the Holy Family parish in Gaza, together with his collaborators, managed to foster on a daily basis resilience among a population subjected to relentless emotional pressure.

Cardinal Pizzaballa among the volunteers assigned to distribute emergency aid to the population of Gaza.

water storage tanks have been installed, which has allowed for the creation of laundry facilities with multiple washing stations.

Solar panels have ensured lighting and the operation of electrical equipment, which is essential especially for elderly residents and medical needs.

A medical clinic and pharmacy operated on-





The parish community's well was vital during the long period of war.

site, providing doctor's appointments, examinations, and medicines both to the shelter's residents and to members of nearby communities. The church clinic has remained open even when the hospitals were overwhelmed or damaged, when travel to medical facilities became dangerous or impossible, and when medicine supplies dwindled.

Security cameras have stayed active to protect people and property, and internet network connections have continued functioning, which is allowing the community to remain in contact with distant family members.

Some improvised classrooms have been enabling children to continue attending school.

To support all these activities, six specialized emergency committees were established, with each one responsible for essential operational areas. These include: daily management and coordination; supply logistics and warehousing; meal planning and food preparation; electrical

and energy systems; facility maintenance; and, external relations.

From 15 employees at the beginning of 2024, the Holy Family Church has gradually increased the number, and was **employing 200 people** by 2025. These positions include security personnel, water-system operators, laundry technicians, kitchen and bakery staff, agricultural workers, children's activity coordinators, and maintenance teams. Each role has met operational needs while also providing income to families who had lost all other means of livelihood.

Employment opportunities have also offered to members of the Sisters of Charity shelter community, who assist children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Looking ahead, the priorities of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem include rebuilding destroyed homes and infrastructure, as well as strengthening the Holy Family Church complex as a center of resilience.

The concrete goals for the coming months aim to help people regain control of their lives. These include providing housing, reopening at least one more school, and ensuring medical assistance. Investments in education, psychological support, and job-creation programs will continue, with the aim of restoring stability and dignity to traumatized families.



A kitchen transformed into a classroom in the Holy Family parish.

WEST BANK and EAST JERUSALEM

FOOD VOUCHERS, BABY SUPPLIES, AND WINTER ASSISTANCE

In Jerusalem and the West Bank, **15,600 food vouchers** were distributed in 2025, which provided essential support to families in need. This initiative also helped sustain the activities of local shopkeepers affected by the economic downturn.

In addition, targeted assistance was provided to meet the specific needs of newborns and infants through the distribution of diapers, infant formula, clothing, and blankets. Over the course of 2025, more than **3,000 children** in the **West Bank** and Jerusalem benefited from this help.

To this assistance, heavy clothing, shoes, blankets, and heaters were also distributed to more than **6,000 vulnerable people** in 2025 to face harsh winter conditions.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES IN NEED

In the Holy Land, access to healthcare varies significantly depending on the region and the population group. The residents holding a Jerusalem identity card could benefit from full medical coverage through the Israeli healthcare system, which provides access to advanced medical facilities and subsidized care.

The situation is different in the West Bank, where health insurance is reserved principally to those employed by government institutions or international organizations. As a result, many Palestinians are left without adequate health coverage and are forced to bear prohibitive costs for essential medical services and

medications.

In this context, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, with thanks to the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre's support too, was able to launch once again in 2025, an initiative for Christians facing economic hardship, which assisted more than **2,000 people**.

The beneficiaries included patients suffering from chronic illnesses (such as heart conditions, cancer, kidney diseases, etc.), visual or hearing impairments (requiring specific assistive devices), respiratory difficulties, and mobility issues (requiring wheelchairs or walkers). Support was also provided to individuals needing daily medical care, as well as bedridden patients requiring medical mattresses. Priority was given to the elderly, families with children affected by chronic illnesses, and people with disabilities.

JOB CREATION FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

As is now well known, the consequences of the events that began in October 2023 created severe employment difficulties for Palestinian workers. The war has led to mass layoffs of Palestinians employed in Israel, the suspension of work permits for laborers and residents of the West Bank, and significant restrictions on mobility. These factors combined have caused economic hardship for Christian families in the region.

A percentage of the contributions coming from the Lieutenancies of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem enabled the Latin Patriarchate to create immediate job opportunities and to alleviate the



Jobs have been created thanks to the help of the Order.

Migrants and asylum seekers constitute a significant percentage of the Catholic community in the Holy Land.

financial difficulties of families affected by the conflict and the resulting loss of their livelihoods. **More than 4,000 work opportunities** were offered through *cash-for-work* programs and subsidized internships.

Thanks to this initiative, skilled workers from the West Bank were hired on daily contracts and were able to earn a salary. Among them, some specialized in infrastructure and maintenance were employed primarily for construction, electrical, and mechanical work, while others were assigned to support community services.

This initiative had a positive impact not only on the workers involved but also on their families and the wider community. It also helped preserve professional skills, prevented the loss of valuable talent and maintained a base of local know-how that is essential for building the future and development.

MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Due to the ongoing hostilities in the northern and southern regions of Israel, many Christian migrant families have been forced to relocate. Aware of the profound difficulties faced by these vulnerable communities, the Latin Patriarchate has provided them with accommodation in safer areas as well as food security.



SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Every year, and throughout the world, Members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre contribute with immense generosity to supporting Christians in the Holy Land. They do so through the Grand Magisterium, which provides the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem with a regular monthly financial contribution to cover institutional expenses, education, the operation of the Beit Jala Seminary, pastoral activities, and humanitarian aid to people in need and marginalized groups. In addition to this support, contributions are made to Bethlehem University and to the annual projects of the

Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches (ROACO). The projects coordinated by ROACO are conducted in collaboration with the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches.

In addition, the Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations, again through the Grand Magisterium, may choose to fund specific projects proposed annually by the Patriarchate and aimed at improving the lives of the inhabitants of the Holy Land.

Here follows a summary of the results of the specific projects completed in 2025, which were dedicated to the renovation of the living and prayer spaces of the Latin Patriarchate.

PALESTINE

■ BEIT SAHOUR

RENOVATION WORKS IN THE PARISH

In Beit Sahour, where according to tradition the shepherds heard the angels on Christmas Eve, a project was initiated aimed at creating modern facilities capable of effectively responding to the diverse educational, social, and cultural needs of a rapidly growing community. As part of this initiative, a photovoltaic system was installed on the roofs of the rectory, the parish hall, and the school. This has significantly reduced the buildings' dependence on the conventional electrical grid and has made it possible, where feasible, to move toward sustainable energy solutions with the use of renewable sources.

The project, which was made possible thanks to a contribution of approximately **US\$44,000** from the Knights and Dames of



the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, is of great assistance to the parish priest, the **413 students** of the Beit Sahour School, and the entire parish community.

■ TAYBEH

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BEIT AFRAM HOME FOR THE ELDERLY

In 2019, the Beit Afram retirement home, located in the village of Taybeh, received a communication from the municipality requiring the management to comply with the safety standards established by the Palestinian Civil Defense. These standards included fire safety measures, appropriate evacuation procedures, a comprehensive nurse-call system, and adequate insurance coverage. In response to this request, and thanks to a contribution of more than **US\$65,000** from the Knights and Dames of the Order, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem completed the project to enhance the home's overall safety in 2025, complementing the renovation work that had begun in 2021.

Another intervention for the Beit Afram retirement home involved the complete replacement of the old air-conditioning systems throughout the facility. The project included major structural, mechanical, and electrical upgrades required to accommodate the new modern infrastructure, while ensuring minimal disruption to the home's daily operations.

Thanks to a contribution of more than **US\$95,000** from the Knights and Dames of the Order, these interventions, which were completed in 2025, have made it possible to offer a better quality of life to the elderly residents and to the staff of the retirement home.

The Sisters of the Rosary's hall is an essential community space for exchange and rest for the religious sisters, who are engaged all day in missionary activities.

RENOVATION OF THE SISTERS OF THE ROSARY RESIDENCE

The Sisters of the Rosary's residence, which is also located in Taybeh, had fallen into poor state of repairs after years without proper maintenance. Before the intervention, the building suffered from an inadequate ceiling structure, an old and deteriorated bathroom, insufficient insulation that caused energy inefficiency, outdated electrical systems that requiring modernization, and degraded interior paintwork etc. that affected overall living conditions. The project addressed these critical shortcomings, directed at modernizing the bathroom and improving the general habitability of the residence. All renovation works were carried out in accordance with modern construction standards while preserving the architectural integrity of the religious house. With thanks to contributions from the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, the restructuring work, which amounted to **nearly US\$20,000** begun in 2023 and completed in April 2025, transformed an outdated building into a comfortable, efficient, and modern living space, in complete conformity with its function as a religious residence. The improvements, which include insulation, technical systems, and interior decoration, significantly enhanced the quality of life of the resident sisters while also reducing operating costs through improved efficiency of the spaces used there.



■ AMMAN

INTERVENTIONS AT THE OUR LADY OF PEACE CENTER

At the Our Lady of Peace Center (OLOPC), one of the two projects completed in 2025 involved replacing old prosthetic and orthotic devices with modern, high-performance ones; the introduction of silicone-based technologies; the promotion of hands-on training for university students in the field of prosthetics and orthotics; and a reduction in maintenance costs and resource consumption through upgraded equipment. The project included the purchase of state-of-the-art machinery for the production of prostheses and orthoses, the acquisition of silicone tools and equipment, their installation and calibration, and staff training. Thanks to a donation of more than **US\$84,000** from the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, the project was carried out between September 2024 and July 2025. These improvements benefited children with cerebral palsy (**150 per year in Amman, Zarqa, Anjara, and Mafraq**) and those who have undergone amputations (due to congenital conditions, accidents, war injuries, diabetes, or cancer).

The second project completed for the Center in 2025 focused on improving the facility's safety.

The intervention aimed at strengthening the building's overall safety through a range of upgrades and repairs. Thanks to a contribution of more than **US\$68,000** from the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, construction, plumbing, and electrical works commenced in 2023 and completed in March 2025. This intervention has allowed the **644 children with disabilities** who receive care at the Center, as well as the **20 staff members** who work there, to benefit from a safer environment.



The prosthetics workshop, which is intended especially for people who have undergone an amputation, has been completely modernized.

■ IRBID

INSULATION AND RESTORATION WORKS ON THE ROOF AND WALLS OF THE LATIN CHURCH

In the Latin parish of St George the Martyr in Irbid, which is located near the Syrian border, the church roof had been deteriorating over the years. This poor state of repairs had caused water infiltration and significant damage to the interior of the building.

Restoration work therefore became necessary. Launched in November 2025 and completed in December of the same year, the works involved the complete replacement of the roof covering and the thermal insulation of the building. Thanks to these interventions, which were made possible by a contribution of more than **US\$60,000** from the Members of the Order, the approximately **2,000 faithful** of St George's Church can continue to participate in pastoral, charitable, and educational activities in a safe environment.

■ BE'ER SHEVA

THE CREATION OF A SPACE FOR PILGRIM GROUPS

The parish house of the Catholic parish of Saint Abraham in Be'er Sheva, in southern Israel, had become too small to accommodate the growing number of pilgrims wishing to visit the church, attend Mass, or meet the local Christian community. While groups of fewer than 30 people could still be welcomed in the existing facilities, larger groups faced difficulties due to the limited available space.

Thanks to a contribution of more than **US\$67,000** from the Members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, a project was hatched to transform the unused garden area next to the church entrance into a multi-level



outdoor space designed for gatherings and meetings.

The project, which began in April 2022 and was completed in July 2025, allowed to create a welcoming area for pilgrims that is harmoniously integrated with the church's existing architecture while offering modern facilities suitable for large groups. Several concrete terraces connected by wide stone steps were built, to provide natural seating areas that can accommodate up to **65 people** in an environment well suited for group presentations, Mass celebrations, and dialogue.

THE ORDER'S ACTION IN SUPPORT OF EDUCATION IN THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM'S TERRITORY

■ TAYBEH

REDEVELOPMENT WORK IN A SCHOOL

In Taybeh, the last remaining village in Palestine with a 100% Christian population, the playgrounds of one of the two Latin Patriarchate schools had deteriorated over time, causing accidents and injuries among the children. This had raised concern among parents, teachers, and school administrators. With the support of the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the area was transformed into a modern, multi-purpose recreational space, including the installation of shock-absorbing surfaces to prevent injuries. In addition, there has been the creation of designated zones for different age groups, the

installation of innovative play equipment that encourages both physical activity and creative play, the implementation of drainage systems to prevent water stagnation, enhanced lighting for evening activities, and the installation of safety barriers and protective fencing. The redevelopment work, which was made possible with a contribution of more than **US\$74,000** from the Order, commenced in November 2023 and was completed in February 2025. In addition to serving the approximately **400 students** of the school and kindergarten, the upgraded playground also benefits local youngsters and parishioners, who can now enjoy a safe and well-equipped area for various social and sports activities. The school also functions as a community center, where it hosts a wide range of initiatives, including cultural

events and festivals, Scout training programs, religious gatherings and prayer services, sports tournaments, family recreational activities, youth development programs, and educational workshops.

■ RAMALLAH

CONSTRUCTION OF A MULTI-PURPOSE HALL AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AT AL-AHLYYAH COLLEGE SCHOOL

In the center of the West Bank, at the Al-Ahlyyah College School in Ramallah, the Latin Patriarchate identified the need to construct a 240-square-meter multi-purpose hall on land already owned by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The aim of the construction was to improve technological equipment and infrastructure, strengthen human resources, and enhance educational competencies. The project, which was launched at the end of 2023 thanks to a contribution of approximately **US\$177,000** from the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, was completed in February 2025. Today, it provides a modern and versatile space where **615 students and 47 teachers** can take part in academic and extracurricular activities. The center includes: a training hall for teachers' professional development activities; a secondary training room for small-group sessions; a hall and a catering area equipped for participants; with adjoining facilities that include a kitchenette, a server room, and restrooms. In addition, this new space represents an investment that will have a positive impact on the school's budget, as the hall can also be rented out for workshops and events.

* * *

During the ongoing crisis, support for education has become a vital source of stability and hope for **5,000 students** in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Jordan. Educational assistance has included the provision of scholarships, the coverage of school tuition fees, and the distribution of school supplies.

* * *

In addition, following the break out of the war in October 2023, the North American Lieutenancies launched a Capital Campaign, approved by the Grand Magisterium and dedicated to supporting education in the 44 schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

This initiative, entitled *Ensuring the Future*, aims to provide support for school tuition fees and teachers' salaries during the economic crisis caused by the military conflict, as well as to rebuild, renovate, and modernize all the schools in order to bring the buildings up to modern educational standards.

In practical terms, while awaiting the possibility of intervening in the schools of Gaza, **22 renovation projects** were completed in **19 schools in Jordan and Palestine**. These interventions improved the quality of the educational environment and strengthened essential infrastructure and resources, thereby creating safer and more conducive spaces for teaching and learning.

Support for education is a fundamental element of stability and hope for thousands of students.



The construction of the Church of the Baptism made possible with the support of a Jordanian Knight of the Order

Nadim Yusuf Muasher is a successful Jordanian entrepreneur with experience in various sectors, ranging from architecture to hospitality, and textiles to banking. As a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Jordan, he was the principal donor who helped raise the necessary funds for the construction of the Church of the Baptism of Jesus in Bethany Beyond the Jordan (al-Maghtas).

The Muasher family has a long tradition of supporting the Church in the Holy Land. Nadim's father had previously contributed to the construction of the Church of Saint Joseph in Jabal Amman, and Nadim has long assisted and helped the Rosary Sisters with their various needs.

However, the decision to financially support the construction of the Church of the Baptism is unfortunately to be traced to a tragic personal event "Twenty years ago, we lost our son in a car accident. He was 17," Nadim recounts. "We were travelling to a wedding; he was with friends in one car and we were not too far behind in another. When we saw the accident and I realized that the person they were pulling out of the car was my son, it was tragic. Words cannot express such a

traumatic event," Nadim continues, deeply moved. "As a family, we learned to grow in our faith to accept what had happened and to entrust ourselves to God's will. I began to ask myself if there was a reason related to the place where my son had died."

The place where the accident happened is at the intersection leading to the site where the Baptism Church stands elegantly today. On January 10, 2025, the Church was consecrated during an inaugural Mass presided over by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, and concelebrated by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order.

"In 1995, Pope John Paul II announced that this was a holy place and a site of pilgrimage, and introduced the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, the



Nadim Yusuf Muasher, a Knight in Jordan, generously funded the Church of the Baptism of Jesus in Bethany.

Baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan was the first. After the death of my son, in prayer, I felt that the land there wanted me to build something on this site. There was a special message in that place that just needed to be brought to light, and being an architect, I began to work on the project," Nadim recounts.

Following the accident, Nadim immersed himself in



We see Cardinal Pietro Parolin here at the inauguration of the Church of the Baptism of Jesus built in Jordan.



readings and prayer, and developed a proposal designed in the shape of a cross. The church is at the center with two monasteries – one for women and one for men – flanking it on either side “so that it would not just be a place to visit,” he explains, “but one where people could pray and feel accompanied by a praying community.” The main altar is dedicated to the Baptism, the first Luminous Mystery, while the other Luminous Mysteries are evoked in the adjacent chapels. The theme of light, both spiritually and physically, guides the steps of the faithful.

On the occasion of the consecration of the church and the inaugural Mass, the Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, recalled how it is here, one of the lowest points

on earth, where “all the suffering of conflict, inhumanity, and sin” is felt, that “heaven was opened,” and the “gift of peace, true peace, which is born in hearts and spreads throughout the entire social fabric,” is invoked.

It is this peace, this open heaven that speaks to Nadim and his family’s heart. Nadim has had the joy of being a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for several years now, and his commitment to supporting the living stones of the Holy Land is evident. The work he did for the Church of the Baptism of Jesus is part of a

personal and family tradition. “Being a Knight of the Order for me is linked to a commitment to do good, and goodness does not mean perfection but beginning to make and do with love. Here, in Jordan, there is a small group of Members of the Order and I have been asked to lead the meetings. I will do it for a year before leaving this responsibility to someone else. It is our church and our community and we are called to take care of it. In the Order it is good to be able to do this not as individuals but as a group.”

Elena Dini

Changes within the Lieutenancies of the Order

The Cardinal Grand Master, in agreement with the Governor General and after consultation with the Presidency of the Grand Magisterium, in accordance with Art. 26 of the Constitution, has appointed new heads of the Lieutenancies. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is pleased to announce numerous changes decided upon in various geographical areas from 2025 into early 2026.

Helen Castro Limcaoco assumed the role of Lieutenant for the **Philippines** in February 2025, in the presence of the Grand Prior of the Order, Cardinal Jose Advincula, Archbishop of Manila.

Iztok Starc became

Lieutenant for **Slovenia** in May 2025, and Werner Johler is the new Lieutenant for **Austria** as of June 1, 2025. On June 22, during an emotional installation ceremony at

A handover between Lieutenants in Manila, Philippines.

Southwark Cathedral in London, the change of Lieutenant for **England and Wales** was formalized with John McNally succeeding Michael Byrne, who was appointed a Member of the Grand Magisterium.

From October 28, Mark





Chopko assumed the position of head of the **USA Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy**, while from November 15, Daniel Berzosa y Lopez became Lieutenant for **Western Spain**.

On November 22, Ennio Zerrillo became the new Lieutenant for **Southern Tyrrhenian Italy**, and Stefano Petrillo has held the office of Lieutenant for **Central Italy** since December 13, succeeding Anna Maria Munzi Jacoboni, who was appointed a Member of the Grand Magisterium.

The year 2026 saw several successions within the Lieutenancy for **Sardinia**, with the appointments of Luciana Dessi, and Bernardo Capozzolo for the Lieutenancy of **Southern Adriatic Italy**. Olivér Farkas has been responsible for the Lieutenancy for **Hungary** since the beginning of 2026. Marianne Rea Luthin is the new Lieutenant of **USA**

Marco Meucci becoming the youngest Lieutenant of the Order as of April 2026 (Central Apennine, Italy).

Northeastern, and Mauro de Souza Paraíso heads the Lieutenancy for **Brazil São Paulo**, while his predecessor Manuel Tavares de Almeida Filho became a Member of the Grand Magisterium. Changes also occurred in the Lieutenancy for **Ireland** with the appointment of T. Gearóid Wiliams.

On January 29, 2026, in Palermo Cathedral, the handover ceremony took place at the meeting of the Lieutenancy of **Italy Sicily**: Mons. Corrado Lorefica,

Metropolitan Archbishop of Palermo, is the new Grand Prior, and Maurizio Chiarenza is the new Lieutenant. From February 18, Alan Shearer is the new Lieutenant of **Australia NSW**.

Finally, on February 7, during the Investitures in Florence, the Governor General announced the upcoming change at the head of the Lieutenancy for **Central Apennine Italy**: Marco Meucci will become the youngest Lieutenant of the Order from April 9.

We congratulate the new Lieutenants and thank their predecessors, who are now Honorary Lieutenants.

In 2025, more than one thousand new Knights and Dames joined the Order (1,075), across about sixty Lieutenancies on five continents. This total maintains membership at around 30,000 worldwide.

From Asia to serve the Holy Land: the Order's Lieutenancy for the Philippines

Helen Castro Limcaoco has been appointed Lieutenant for the Philippines, this great Catholic Country in Asia where the Order of the Holy Sepulchre continues to develop successfully.



“I serve the Order of the Holy Sepulchre to honor the legacy of my parents. My mother, Consuelo Banzuela Castro, who joins me here today; and my father, David Malaban Castro who passed away 15 years ago. He taught me how to pray and to have deep faith. He also showed me what resilience means and what courageousness entails, while encouraging me to stand up

The Lieutenant for the Philippines, Helen Castro Limcaoco, took office in 2025.

for my beliefs. He also gave me the confidence to understand that I needed to use the talents that God had given me to care for others,” stated the new Lieutenant for the Philippines of the Order, Helen Castro Limcaoco, during her speech of assumption of office delivered

on February 22, 2025 in front of the Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy, His Eminence Cardinal Jose Advincula, archbishop of Manila, as well as her predecessors in this office: Jose L. Cuisia and Jesus P. Tambunting.

Helen Castro Limcaoco is a successful entrepreneur who has founded and cofounded two companies in the gym sector. She was invested in 2015 and very soon afterwards

she was asked to support the Lieutenancy through the Special Projects Committee whose goal was to open a Catholic Chaplaincy in Amman, Jordan. In July 2017, this goal came to fruition and the Chaplaincy was inaugurated by Cardinal Tagle to serve 22,000 Filipino migrants in and around Amman. She was then asked to join the Executive Council in 2020 and to head the Membership Committee that led the recruitment effort for new Members as well as to review the Formation Program of the Lieutenancy.

“I’m not certain why I was the person selected to be the Lieutenant,” confesses the Filipino Lieutenant, “but given that I am so today, then I am determined to carry on from where Ambassador Cuisia has left off. We are going to try to expand our membership further, continue to be more

diverse by reaching out to more dioceses, and to build strong ties among all Members so that more of them participate in our activities that aim to help their spiritual formation. We hope to transition to the practices mentioned in the General Regulations that we are still doing slightly differently, while trying to maintain our own local culture and traditions.”

The Lieutenancy in the Philippines counts more than 100 Members. The most recent five joined the family of the Order at the same Investitures during which Helen Castro Limcaoco assumed the Lieutenant’s office. Among them, there is Dame Marose Soberano who shares how it was a deep attraction and love for the Holy Land, although she is living so far away from it, that motivated her to join the Order. “In November 2019,

I was invited to join a group of ladies for a seminar organized by Opus Dei at its Saxum Conference Center in Israel. The various seminar sessions and visits to the holy places of Jesus permitted us to have a deep appreciation of the Holy Land. Thus – she continues – when I received the invitation to join the Order in November 2022, which was exactly three years after my visit, we immediately accepted it with so much excitement.” Dame Soberano concludes, “Living a meaningful and prayerful life; doing our own apostolate undertakings to share our knowledge and love for God to others; and now, this privilege to be a significant part of the activities of the Equestrian Order to help protect and support the Holy Land, this is how we want to live our lives.”

Elena Dini

South Africa: from Magistral Delegation to Lieutenancy

On July 3, 2025, in response to a request from Cardinal Stephen Brislin, Grand Prior of the Order for South Africa and Metropolitan Archbishop of Johannesburg, the Cardinal Grand Master decreed the elevation of the Magistral Delegation of South Africa to the rank of Lieutenancy.

The Magistral Delegation, which has now been elevated

to a Lieutenancy, currently comprises 60 Members. This number is expected to increase by a further 20 in the near future with the establishment of a Section in Johannesburg, in addition to the one already present in Cape Town.

Contemporaneously, the Cardinal Grand Master signed the decree by which the serving Magistral Delegate since 2019, Juan Luis Cabral,

assumed the title of Lieutenant.

This dynamic Lieutenancy held its Investiture Ceremony on May 23 and 24 in Cape Town, during which ten new Knights and Dames were welcomed into the ranks of the Order.

Among those present were Nancy Moses and Ricardo Moses.

Nancy here shares her



thoughts and feelings from the Vigil that took place at St. of St Mary of the Flight into Egypt Cathedral in Cape Town in the evening of the 23rd. “As I stood before the altar, lifting the vase of oils, a wave of emotion washed over me. I felt an immense sense of privilege to be a part of such a sacred ceremony, a prelude to the honour that awaited. It was a moment where the spiritual felt tangible, and I was acutely aware of the generations of devotion and faith that have upheld this Order. The air itself seemed to hum with grace, and I found myself overwhelmed with gratitude for the path that had led me to this very point.”

Ricardo echoes Nancy in

The Lieutenancy for South Africa was established.

recounting his experience of the Investiture Ceremony, describing it as “a moment of profound emotion that will forever be etched in my memory. Standing there, surrounded by fellow Knights and Dames, while making my solemn vows, I felt an overwhelming sense of belonging and purpose. It wasn’t merely a ceremony; it was a spiritual embrace, a tangible affirmation of a calling that has long been close to my heart.”

For all Knights and Dames it is valuable to remember how this call to join the Order came about. Penelope Irvine has no

difficulty in identifying the clear moment in her story when this vocation became apparent to her: “In 2018 I went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Father Robert Bissell, which changed my life. It was a deeply spiritual and uplifting experience, and I felt a real connection with the peoples and sacred sites. On returning I was moved to join the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre to help serve and care for the Holy land and its people.”

We extend our best wishes to the new lieutenancy, which we are sure will continue to be a sign of hope within the local Church and a symbol of closeness to the distant yet so close Holy Land.

Slovakia officially becomes a Magistral Delegation of the Order

On Friday April 4, 2025, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre – accompanied by the Vice Governor for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz, Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli, the Master of Ceremonies, Msgr. Adriano Paccanelli, and the Communications Director, François Vayne – presided over the Prayer Vigil in Trnava Cathedral, welcoming twelve Knights and Dames of the new Magistral Delegation for Slovakia, including the archbishop of this diocese,

Msgr. Ján Orosch, who officially became their Grand Prior on that evening.

“Dear friends, the risen Christ called out to Mary of Magdala who, distraught, was looking for him where his body rested, and she recognised Jesus’ living voice; today, he challenges you too and chooses you for a mission of grace, to spread the

fragrance of Christ’s charity. This is the noble task entrusted to you by the Church, which welcomes your willingness with deep gratitude,” declared the Grand Master during this intense Prayer Vigil in Trnava.

Nicknamed ‘Little Rome’ because of the large number of churches built there, the town of Trnava – located in the South-West Slovakia – has a rich history, having been for several centuries an important centre of cultural and spiritual refuge for Catholics from Hungary fleeing the Turkish invasion.

Group photo with the Grand Master in Slovakia, spring 2025. This photograph was taken at the creation of a Magistral Delegation of the Order in this Central European Catholic country.



The following day, Saturday April 5, the new Slovakian Knights and Dames, among which the Magistral Delegate Miroslav Gieci, were invested by the Grand Master of the Order, on the occasion of the foundation of the Magistral Delegation for Slovakia, which had been prepared for a long time thanks to the fraternal support of the Lieutenancy for the Czech Republic. The Investiture ceremony took place in Trnava cathedral, in the presence of the Vice-Governor for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz, Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli, the Lieutenant for the Czech Republic, Tomáš Parma, and

several European Lieutenants (Poland, Hungary, Croatia...).

During his homily, the Grand Master said: "To become a Knight or a Dame means to give your life by professing faith in Christ through witness, generosity and love of the Gospel; it means putting Christ at the centre of your existence and of every personal, family and social project. There would be no point in being a Knight or a Dame of the Holy Sepulchre if you did not place at the centre this 'Lord' for whom we have been clothed in a mantle of which the colour of the insignia is red (the colour of blood and spiritual nobility)."

The Archbishop of Prague,

Msgr. Ján Graubner, Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for the Czech Republic, concelebrated the Mass, as did the Apostolic Nuncio, Msgr. Nicola Girasoli, alongside Cardinal Filoni and the new Grand Prior for Slovakia, Msgr. Ján Orosch.

During the convivial meal that followed, the Grand Master thanked his hosts, especially the Grand Prior, whose enthusiasm in accompanying and supporting the Order in Central Europe he praised, while highlighting the courageous example set by Slovak Catholics, who have given many martyrs and confessors of the faith to the Church throughout history.

The Holy Sepulchre "a place of strength and a source of energy"

A father and son who are Members of the Order

We are often asked how, as father and son, we are able to carry out charitable and spiritual activities together within the Order. My son, whose name is Andreas, is a former Swiss Guard. He joined the Order before I did. This is rather unusual and may come as a surprise. However, we were approached and involved independently of one another and by different Members of the Order, which is something we greatly





appreciate.

The invitation to join the Order and our Investiture represent a new stage in the development and practice of our faith. My close bond with the Catholic Church also grew thanks to my wife and her family, who were originally from the now-destroyed mountain village of Blatten in the Valais. The inhabitants of the Lötschental draw great strength from their faith, and their relationship with it has left a deep impression on me over the years. My interest in the Catholic Church, particularly her history, her mission, and the role she plays

The Lieutenancy for Switzerland and Liechtenstein is very active, and its attention to different linguistic cultures is a model of openness for all the Lieutenancies of the world.

in society today, has led me to become involved and to participate actively. In recent years, the central role played by Jesus and the Holy Sepulchre has become increasingly clear to me, and it gives me strength.

Our children were raised in the Catholic Church, and from an early age, Andreas wished to contribute and to serve the Holy Father as a Swiss Guard. We want to help Christians in

the Holy Land directly, for whom the Holy Sepulchre is a place of strength and a source of energy for all believers, especially for those in need. My son and I are deeply grateful to the Order for giving us this opportunity and for allowing us to offer our financial support.

As a family, and as people of the Holy Land, we know all too well what solidarity means and what it can achieve. Solidarity among volunteers is invaluable and essential.

Peter Burkhard
Commandery of St Gallen,
Switzerland



Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem
Cardinal Fernando Filoni

Governor General of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem
Leonardo Visconti di Modrone

Director
Alfredo Bastianelli

Co-Director and Editor-in-chief
François Vayne

Redactors
Elena Dini, Livia Passalacqua

Coordinator
Andreina Merheb

With the collaboration of the authors cited in each article; the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; the Lieutenants, or their delegates, of the corresponding Lieutenancies

Translators
**Beatrice Frabollini Aliberti, Christine Keinath, Muriel Lanchard,
María Palomares Zafra, Andrew Rutt**

Layout
Fortunato Romani

Photographic documentation
**Photographic archive of the Dicastery for Communication – Vatican Media;
Grand Magisterium archives; the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; EOHSJ
Lieutenancies; and other sources indicated in the captions**

On the cover
Pope Leo XIV greeting the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in the Paul VI Hall during the audience granted to them on the occasion of the Jubilee pilgrimage (inset: the Grand Master presenting an icon of Our Lady of Palestine, patroness of the Order, to the Holy Father).

Published by
Grand Magisterium of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem
00120 Vatican City
E-mail: comunicazione@oessh.va
Copyright © OESSH



 [@grandmagisterium.eohsj.eng](https://www.facebook.com/grandmagisterium.eohsj.eng)

www.oessh.va

 [@GM_oessh](https://twitter.com/GM_oessh)

Daily Prayer for Knights and Dames

I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having become, through your grace and benevolence, a Member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, which within the Church keeps alive the memory of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, your Son.

Thank you for granting me to be united in this way to his redemptive mystery and to take part in the life of the Church of the Holy Land.

Thank you for the knowledge of you that we have through Jesus, Creator and above all merciful Father.

Thank you for allowing Jesus the Redeemer to take upon himself also my yoke, my weariness, my fears, my cross, and my sins.

Thank you for the consolation of the Holy Spirit and for the opportunity to contribute to the service of Charity in the Holy Land, together with all those brothers and sisters with whom I am spiritually and associatively united in the same ideal.

Thank you for Mary, given to me as a loving Mother under the title of Queen of Palestine; through her intercession grant peace and reconciliation to the land of Jesus.

Through Christ our Lord.

AMEN

Fernando Cardinal Filoni
Grand Master

This prayer, recited by the Grand Master at the beginning of each meeting of the Grand Magisterium, twice a year, is so beautiful that we wished to publish it in the Jerusalem Cross in order to make it known to all the Members of the Order, as a complement to the Knight and the Dame's official prayer, which has already been widely circulated.