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The Grand Master's Message

LET US BE SEEDS OF LIFE!

We begin this New Year strengthened by the virtue of hope that the 2025 Jubilee rekindled in our souls. In renewing our fidelity to the Successor of Peter, the unforgettable Jubilee pilgrimage we experienced in Rome is a source of spiritual energy for both the Knights and Dames who took part directly, and the others too, who share in the graces received, within the living mystery of the communion of Saints.

The hope that continues to dwell within us has nothing to do with a blissful optimism detached from reality, as Cardinal Pizzaballa explained very clearly in a recent interview granted to the Order's Communications Office. Speaking of the dramatic situation in the Holy Land, he stated: "In this context of death and destruction in which we find ourselves, we wish to continue to place our trust, to join forces with the many people here who still have the courage to desire what is good, and together with them to



The first book on the Order's spirituality has been published and translated into nearly fifteen languages. With this text, along with the Constitution, the Ritual, the Regulations and the Document on the Formation of Members, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand

Master, is helping to provide the 30,000 Knights and Dames with the tools for their sanctification. In addition, he is encouraging them to follow with humility the path of a profoundly Christian life, modelled on Saint Bartolo Longo and the Venerable Enrique Ernesto Shaw.

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create contexts of healing and of life. Evil will continue to manifest itself, but we shall be the place, the presence that evil cannot overcome: seeds of life, indeed."

I invite the Members of the Order throughout the world to choose to be seeds of life. With the founding of the "Friends of the Order" area, we are widening the circle of our missionary action, so as to bear witness to the Risen Christ amid the darkness of history. Let us draw inspiration from both the example of Saint Bartolo

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Longo, a Knight of the Order who was recently canonized, and from someone who is closer to our own time, from the radiant example of Enrique Ernesto Shaw, who was a family man and Argentine entrepreneur who belonged to the Order and whom the Church will soon beatify. We now have in our hands all the means necessary for our sanctification; therefore, without hesitation and out of love, I repeat it once more: let us be seeds of life!

Cardinal Fernando Filoni



The Order in union with the Universal Church

BETHLEHEM REDISCOVERED THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

On December 24, Bethlehem was filled with hope and new life with the solemn arrival of Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa. To welcome his arrival, in the presence of local authorities, twenty-three Scout groups from the West Bank, and thousands of faithful, there were light displays projected onto the walls of the Basilica of the Nativity, a brightly decorated Christmas tree, and a large Nativity scene in Manger Square.

Cardinal Pizzaballa recited the First Vespers at Saint Catherine's church, and offered words of hope, gratitude, and affection as he recalled his recent three-day pastoral visit to the community of Gaza and to the Parish of the Holy Family. He linked the wounds of the Holy Land to a single, universal need for peace. For the Christians of Gaza, this was a difficult Christmas, much as it was two thousand years ago when, according to tradition, Saint Joseph

Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa welcomed in Bethlehem during the Christmas celebrations.



was forced to flee with Jesus toward Egypt, passing through Gaza as they did so. In Gaza, Christmas brings people back to what is essential: the Patriarch was profoundly struck by the determination to rebuild lives that have been devastated. Christ makes every moment favorable by dwelling and transfiguring circumstances, filling them with hope and a future: "That is why the world remains blessed, even when the song of praise for its beauty turns into a cry for salvation."

To celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem meant acknowledging that God chose a real land, where the holiness of sacred places coexists with wounds that are still open. At the conclusion of the celebration, the Patriarch proceeded to the Grotto of the Nativity where he placed the statue of the Child Jesus upon the silver star and in the manger after the proclamation of the Gospel: "The Light of Bethlehem shines as it passes from heart to heart, through humble gestures, reconciled words, and daily choices for peace made by men and women who allow the Gospel to take flesh in their lives." On January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, Cardinal Pizzaballa pointed to her as the theological "place" where the spiritual "gestation" of events is

accomplished in the heart in the light of God. The title *Theotókos*, Mother of God, proclaimed by the Council of Ephesus, is a theological dogma and the revelation of a divine method.

Following Mary's example, the three words identified by Cardinal Pizzaballa as an antidote to violence and a method for building models of peace are: "*to guard*", fostering the intelligence of the heart; "*to ponder*", knowing how to interpret events in the light of the Word of God and of His Kingdom, which grows like a hidden seed; and "*to welcome*", embracing life with the trust that God dwells within it. Peace is the presence of the Face of God, which in Jesus has a human face that shines in the darkness of wounds that can become places of reconciliation. The vocation of Christians, who have been baptized in Christ, is to be "reflections" of this Face. Christians are the "guardians" and "mediators" of God's light for the world, where hope is possible. At the heart of the message is the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ in Bethlehem and, as for the shepherds on Christmas night, the angelic message calls to joy: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" (*Lk 2:14*).

Livia Passalacqua

"WE SHALL BE THE GENERATION OF THE DAWN"

Pope Leo XIV opens the way to the Jubilee of the Redemption, which is going to be celebrated in 2033.

This day and a half together will point the way for our path ahead. "We must not arrive at a text, but continue a conversation that will help me in serving the mission of the entire Church," Leo XIV said to the Cardinals who had travelled from the four corners of the world to gather around him during the Consistory,

the day after the Feast of the Epiphany. "While unity attracts, division scatters. It seems to me that physics also confirms this, both on the microscopic and macroscopic levels," he confided to them, eager to promote together "a truly missionary Church, one that is capable of witnessing to the attractive power of Christ's love." To





Pope Leo XIV brought together Cardinals from around the world. As they are his principal collaborators in the governance of the universal Church, this invitation was in a synodal spirit faithful to the Second Vatican Council, founded on the charism of the episcopal ministry and experienced in genuine collegiality.

illustrate this programme, the Pope quoted Jesus himself: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35), urging his closest collaborators to put into practice the commandment of mutual love given by Christ to his disciples after he had washed their feet.

On the Feast of the Epiphany, the Holy Father closed the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica, thus bringing the Jubilee of 2025 to a close with words that carried an invincible hope: "The faithfulness of God continues to amaze us. If we do not reduce our churches to monuments, if our communities are homes, if we stand united and resist the flattery and seduction of those in power, then we will be the generation of a new dawn. Mary, Star of the Morning, will always walk before us! In her Son we will contemplate and serve an extraordinary humanity, transformed not by the delusions of the all-powerful, but by God who became flesh out of love," he added, thus opening a path of peace towards the Jubilee of the Redemption to be celebrated in 2033.

In his message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, the feast of Mary, Mother of God, he repeated the greeting he had spoken on the evening of his election, May 8, 2025: "Peace be with you" (John 20:19-21), once again making clear that this is the peace of the Risen Christ, "a peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering," a peace that comes from God, who loves us all unconditionally.

Thus, in his homily at the Mass on the first day of the year, Pope Leo XIV urged all the faithful to approach the Nativity scene with faith, the place par excellence of unarmed and disarming peace, so as to set out anew as humble witnesses of the grotto, "glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:20). "It is beautiful" he remarked, "to view the coming year in this way: as an open journey to be discovered. Indeed, through grace, we can venture forth on this journey with confidence - free and bearers of freedom, forgiven and bringers of forgiveness, trusting in the closeness and goodness of the Lord who accompanies us always."

F.V.



“SEARCHING FOR EVEN MORE DIALOGUE”

*On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate* on non-Christian religions, last October, we interviewed Msgr Flavio Pace, Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, about the importance that this Second Vatican Council document still holds today.*

Starting from the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, how can the profession of faith — the recitation of the Creed, which implies the mission — be reconciled with dialogue with other religions, in which Catholic faithful are called to recognize what is “true and holy”?

At the outset, and following his meeting with Jules Isaac, John XXIII's project was meant to focus solely on relations between Christianity and Judaism; however, it was later extended to include other non-Christian religions. Therefore, the anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* should be celebrated first and foremost in relation to Jewish-Christian relations, which are very strained at this moment in history due to the war in the Holy Land. It is when it is difficult to understand each

other that we must seek to dialogue even more so. Furthermore, it is necessary to place *Nostra Aetate* within the context of the Second Vatican Council and recall that the declaration of October 1965 was followed, in November, by the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* on Divine Revelation, solemnly promulgated by Paul VI. This dogmatic constitution shows that the invisible God, in

His great love, turns to us human beings as friends, thus placing Revelation within a process of personal dialogue and relationship. In this sense, it is clear that because I am a friend of the God of Jesus Christ, I cannot close the door to those who think differently from me. The approach is not to assert a truth as a mere concept that I think I can “understand and possess,” but rather the Person of the Incarnate Word of God, who bears to witness to the relationship with the living God that leads me to encounter the other, every other. And first of all, those who live in the promise to Abraham and his descendants, as we sing each vesper in the *Magnificat*. The mission is experienced within the context of sharing gifts. If Christ is at the centre, then in concentric circles we can recognize around us what the Fathers of the

Church called the “seeds of the Word”, which are the seeds of truth stirred up by the Spirit of God. With regard to Judaism, we recognize our roots even more deeply, since “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable,” as Saint Paul writes in the Letter to the Romans (11:29), and as reaffirmed by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews document,



Monsignor Flavio Pace is close to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, with which he has collaborated actively during his tenure at the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches.





This fresco, which depicts the meeting of religious leaders around Peter's Successor, adorns the entrance corridor of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.

published in 2015 on the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.

With the Council and the *Nostra Aetate* declaration, the Catholic Church engaged in self-criticism regarding its difficult past relations with the Jewish people. Can we also expect a reconsideration on the part of rabbinical authorities regarding certain teachings or stances toward the Christian world?

We know that some young Jewish supremacists mistreat Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land, and their anti-Christian actions are documented, in particular, by the annual report of the Rossing Centre, an Israeli NGO that defines itself as interfaith.

The Jewish world is not organized hierarchically like the Catholic Church, and there is no single authority with whom one can engage in dialogue on these issues, which concern education in particular. Therefore, interpersonal bonds are what truly matter, and it is more urgent than ever to engage in frank dialogue with the rabbis we know, so that they feel called to

respond not only to the incidents just mentioned but also to the possible root causes at the level of formation.

Unfortunately, political and religious issues are intertwined; therefore, we have the duty to cultivate the spiritual dimension in our relations, while striving to renew the education of people, both young and old, in a dynamic of mutual respect. The Catholic Church cannot remain alone in performing her *mea culpa*; representatives of other religions, too, must assume their responsibilities before history. Above all, our gaze cannot remain fixed on the past but must be directed toward a different future, especially when history seems to be nothing more than a poisoned well.

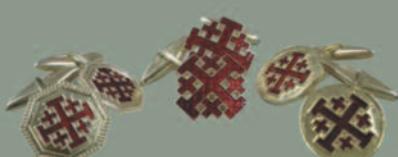
Interview by François Vayne



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

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Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

HOW CAN WE RELIEVE DESPAIR IN THE HOLY LAND?

Autumn Meeting of the Grand Magisterium (November 11, 2025)

“We decided to hold this meeting in hybrid form (partly by videoconference, partly in person) so as not to oblige Members who do not live in Italy to return to Rome so soon after the October Jubilee pilgrimage, and also in order to limit travel expenses,” explained Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, Governor General, at the start of the autumn meeting of the Grand Magisterium, held on November 11, at the Order’s temporary headquarters near Piazza Cavour in Rome.

In his opening remarks, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master, referred back to the address delivered by Pope Leo XIV to the Order’s pilgrims who had travelled 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 went on by emphasizing 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. Pilgrimages, however, have not resumed to the hoped-for extent because of persistent fears and risks, with harmful consequences for economic activities tied to religious tourism. The Cardinal Grand Master visited the Holy Land this past August, and others have followed his example, but we remain far from the numbers of pilgrims seen in the years before the war and COVID,” he noted.

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.

“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 not-for-profit entity, 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





The meeting of the Grand Magisterium of the Order is held also via videoconference for some participants, enabling in particular the Patriarch of Jerusalem to take part from the Holy Land.

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." He clarified that "the cost of this work is borne entirely by the tenant, the company Fort Partners, which has also covered the rental costs of the temporary offices and has contributed a donation of 800,000 euros to the creation of the museum, in addition to the 500,000-euro contribution offered by the Italian Government."

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 — 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*. Finally, he expressed the desire for that year's celebration of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord to be prepared with particular splendor, to offer a sign of vitality to the faithful who have been deeply wounded morally by the conflict and by the colonization of Palestinian lands.

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 have 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 are being created in the West Bank, but in Jerusalem priority is given to social assistance (food vouchers, financial aid, help paying rent, water, electricity, and overdue municipal taxes) and to job creation in the form of daily work for projects, three-to-six-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: summer camps, youth chaplaincy activities, and scout troop programs.

The President of the Holy Land Commission, Bartholomew McGettrick, recounted the Commission's visit to Jordan (see our article in *Newsletter 78*, last October,

Concerned about the transmission of faith to new generations in the Holy Land, the Patriarch of Jerusalem emphasized the importance of the Christian formation of adult believers, especially given the lack of religious vocations, particularly in Israel.



pp. 11–12), stressing the importance of physical and human reconstruction for people once hostilities end.

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.

Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli, responsible for the Nominations and Promotions Commission, noted that new admissions to the Order continue to offset losses, with 1,051 admissions recorded to date, bringing the number of Members worldwide to nearly 30,000.

In closing the meeting, the Grand Master

returned to the importance of spiritual accompaniment in the Order, to which his new book — *I miei giorni sono nelle tue mani* (*My Days Are in Your Hands*) — is dedicated. Published for now in Italian, proceeds from sales are to be donated to the Order for its works in the Holy Land. In the same vein, he announced the forthcoming publication of a book on Saint Bartolo Longo, written by Archbishop Tommaso Caputo, Prelate of Pompeii and Assessor of the Order, and confirmed the creation of an *Area of Friends* of the Order, intended for people who do not wish or are unable to become Members but who desire to support the Holy Land through free offerings, to be managed transparently in separate accounts within each Lieutenancy.

The next meeting of the Grand Magisterium is scheduled for April 21, 2026.

**Communications Office of the
Grand Magisterium**

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

“Friends of the Order”



ORDO EQUESTRIS
SANCTI SEPULCRI
HIEROSOLYMITANI



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 June 24, 2025. After taking note of the reasons presented to him, 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.

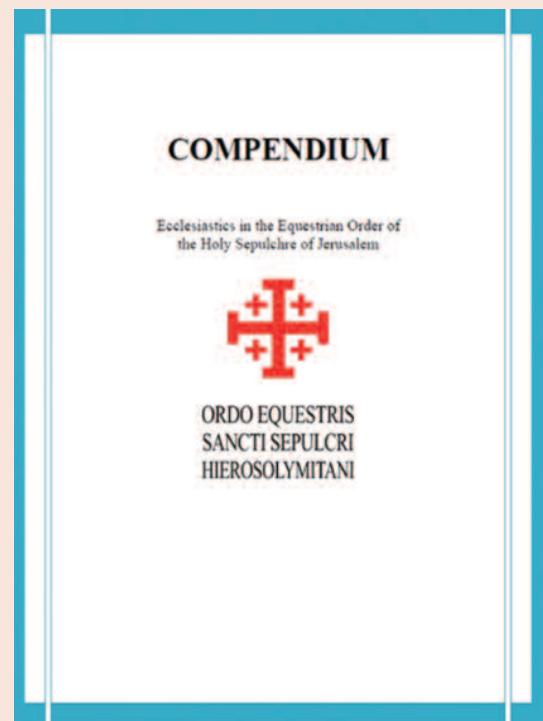
This assent was confirmed by a Letter from the Secretariat of State. The project, for which a specific document has been drawn up, falls within the framework of Article 4, no. 7 of the Constitution of the Order, which speaks of collaboration with those who share "similar goals and objectives" with regard 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.

* * *

A COMPENDIUM 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 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 IMPORTANCE OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE ORDER

Interview with the Governor General

Your Excellency, Members of the Order sometimes ask how their donations are allocated and distributed by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, particularly when it comes to bequests. Could you clarify this point?

The delicate responsibility of allocating the donations we receive is shared by the Grand Magisterium and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and is monitored by the Commission for the Holy Land: the former establishes the Order's charitable strategy, the second assesses the actual priorities of urgent needs on the ground, and the third periodically reviews the outcomes. For this reason, consultation among these three bodies is ongoing. Donations made by Members of the Order are of two types. There are statutory contributions, which are mandatory and constitute the Members' constant commitment to supporting the Holy Land; then there are additional voluntary contributions, which may be independent nature i.e. left to the discretion of the Grand Magisterium, or earmarked for one of the three main categories of expenditure of the Patriarchate (institutional expenses, humanitarian aid, or pastoral activities). Finally, there are donations or bequests with a specific designated purpose for a particular project or institution; in such cases, the donor's wishes are strictly respected. On an operational level, every Monday afternoon in Rome the administrative department of the Grand Magisterium meets with the Governor General to review the remittances received from around the world during the previous week and to forward them to Jerusalem according to the criteria described above.

Except in controversial cases requiring clarification, the transfer of donations in their entirety from Rome to the Holy Land is virtually immediate.

With regard more specifically to regular donations from Members, the latter are informed by the Lieutenants about specific projects supported in the Holy Land, but would like to know more about the monthly aid sent to the Patriarchate by the Grand Magisterium, amounting to an average of one million euros per month. What exactly does the Patriarchate do with these funds?

Shortly before the start of the year, the Grand Magisterium established a breakdown of expenses for 2025 based on estimated revenues and committed to sending the Patriarchate a monthly amount of USD 951,000, for an annual total of USD 11,412,000, distributed as follows: Patriarchate operating expenses (USD 3,852,000); Schools (USD 5,052,000); Seminary (USD 708,000); Humanitarian Aid (USD 1,000,000); and Pastoral Activities (USD 800,000).

However, the emergency caused by the war has also generated extraordinary appeals, to which the Knights and Dames of the Order responded generously, bringing the total contributions of the Order to the Holy Land to an ever-increasing level (in 2024 well over €18 million). Regarding projects, each Lieutenancy, after fulfilling the mandatory contributions of its Members, may choose from projects proposed by the Patriarchate and approved by the Grand Magisterium. These projects vary in size and



scope and have a dual objective of improving the logistical and living conditions of schools, parishes, hospitals, and similar institutions, while also creating job opportunities for those who have lost work. The Grand Magisterium assumes no obligation for projects that do not find financiers. A limited number of projects — approved in any case by the Patriarchate and the Apostolic Nuncio — are also proposed and funded within the framework of ROACO, for an amount of around half a million dollars each year. For these projects, the Grand Magisterium commits to funding them even if they are not financed by the Lieutenancies.

The Order does not advertise to solicit donations; “marketing” calculations are never in the spirit of an ecclesiastical institution that relies on God’s Providence. Donations are part of the Members’ spiritual commitment, linked to their Christian life journey, and it is not the sums that matter, but the manner in which they are offered — like the widow’s

two small coins in the Gospel. There is a noticeable tendency within the Order to be unfavorable towards the marketing practices that are popular among NGOs... What are your thoughts on this?

A person of faith joins the Order voluntarily and, through that choice, commits to making an ongoing contribution each year to his or her Lieutenancy. Continuity is one of the defining characteristics of our Order that sets it apart from other charitable institutions: it allows for the planned allocation of aid to the Holy Land and is accompanied by the constancy of our prayers and participation in pilgrimages to the Holy Sites. The Patriarch of Jerusalem has always appreciated this quiet yet steady form of support, as it provides a reliable basis for medium- and long-term planning. The Order is a Central Body of the Church and does not need to showcase its work. It should also be noted that, since the Order is composed of volunteers, its administrative expenses — unlike those of other institutions — are extremely modest.

The delivery of humanitarian aid at Christmas 2025, during Cardinal Pizzaballa’s visit to Gaza, a martyred city. Over the past two years, 71,455 people have been killed and 171,347 have been wounded.



What is the average donation of a Member of the Order, and what does this mean in relation to the Order's openness to all?

Each Lieutenancy sets the annual contribution for its Members at its own discretion, according to the economic and social conditions of its territory. It is clear that in more industrialized and wealthier countries, Lieutenants set higher contribution levels. Yet the Gospel teaches us that it is not the amount of the gift that matters, but the spirit in which the donation is made.

The Grand Master has decided to create an Association of Friends of the Order. What is its spiritual purpose, and how does it relate to future donations?

The decision to establish a category of "Friends of the Order" is intended to accommodate people who are sensitive to the Order's aims and wish to participate in its concrete initiatives and be associated in some way with its mission of caring for the Holy Land, but who for various reasons do not wish or are unable to join the Order. In

practice, this is already happening in several countries. With the consent of the Holy Father Leo XIV, after consulting the Grand Magisterium and taking into account the favorable opinion of many Lieutenancies, the Grand Master decided to give this category an organized structure and official regulations.

During the eight years of your mandate, how have you seen the donations of the Order's Members evolve, and what conclusions do you draw from this?

The amount of donations grows each year, not only due to the increasing awareness of our Members regarding the needs of the Holy Land, but also because of the Order's progressive expansion into new countries. This is a sign of the great vitality of a modern institution such as ours, which — faithful to its traditions — looks more to the future than to the past, and is aware of the important role it plays in maintaining the Christian presence in the Holy Land, especially in these dramatic times.

Communications Office of the Grand Magisterium



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THE JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE TO ROME OF YOUNG PEOPLE CLOSE TO THE ORDER

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre opens its doors to aspiring Knights and Dames starting at age 25. As a contributory Order, in which admission is based on a carefully considered personal choice, preceded by preparation and entailing a lifelong commitment, a minimum age was chosen to allow for this decision-making process and the capacity to assume the required obligations.

Nevertheless, the Order has always attracted younger individuals for family reasons (children of Knights or Dames who discover the beauty of this vocation) and out of interest (love for the Holy Land, for the spirituality connected to it, and a desire to contribute to the support of local communities).

For this reason, following the widely attended Jubilee pilgrimage of the Members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in October, the Grand Magisterium decided to organize a small pilgrimage to Rome from 27 to 30 November for young people (aged 18-24) close to the Order.

Around ten young people from Spain, France, Portugal, and Australia came together in Rome 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 took the opportunity to share their experiences as Knights and Dames with the young participants. Among them was a young aspiring Knight at the time, called Matthew Santucci, who spent much of the pilgrimage



The Grand Master and the Governor General together with the young pilgrims who had travelled to Rome in November 2025, to become more closely acquainted with the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

with the group. Matthew received his Investiture on December 13 in the Lieutenancy for Central Italy. Of the pilgrimage, he said that the experience "was a powerful testimony of faith, especially within the context of the Jubilee Year of Hope. For me personally, it strengthened the universality of the Church and the Order, as well as the importance of introducing young people to the works of the Order in the Holy Land."

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. In addition to these places central to the faith of the Universal Church, a guided visit led by the Prior of the Rome Section of the Order, Msgr Silvano Rossi, at the Basilica of The Holy Cross in Jerusalem was added. This place highlights the deep connection between the two holy cities, Jerusalem and Rome.

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. Luisa, 24, from Portugal, shared her emotion at being able to begin the Advent season in such a special place and context: "next to Peter, the rock of the Church."

There were also moments of reflection to allow the experiences of the pilgrimage to settle and bear fruit long-term. In a concluding activity, when asked what had been most important for them during these days, their responses included "time to reflect," "the Holy Doors," "the Cardinal," and "the Grand Magisterium." Patrick, the young participant who had traveled the farthest — from Australia, spending an entire day traveling each way just for this pilgrimage — shared: "The most beautiful thing was meeting new people, both other young participants and the leaders of the Grand Magisterium."

Upon departing from Rome, the young participants 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 experience they had enjoyed and hoping that this would be the first of many similar initiatives designed for young people.

Elena Dini

A FUTURE BLESSED, LAY MEMBER OF THE ORDER

Enrique Ernesto Shaw (1921–1962), a Member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and a faithful Argentine layman, will soon be beatified. The date of this beatification is not yet known, but on Thursday, December 18, during an audience with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Pope Leo XIV authorized the promulgation of decrees concerning 12 new blessed, including this family man. During his life, Enrique Ernesto Shaw showed extraordinary zeal in defending and spreading the Catholic faith; he was particularly concerned that it might guide and support the lives and

choices of believers in their family and professional environments. After Bartolo Longo, Enrique Ernesto Shaw will be the second lay Member of the Order to be raised to the honors of the altar.



The Order and the Holy Land

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARDINAL PIERBATTISTA PIZZABALLA

We publish here an excerpt from the interview granted by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Communications Office of the Grand Magisterium; the full version is available on the Order's international website, www.oessh.va

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" (Matthew 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 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 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.

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



The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, is grateful to the Knights and Dames for their regular and discreet support for the Holy Land, which is rooted in a profound ecclesial communion.



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 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.

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.

Interview by François Vayne



A TRUE PARTNERSHIP THAT ONLY GETS STRONGER DURING HOLIDAY SEASONS

This Christmas season is different in the Holy Land as it is the first time since 2022 that Christmas trees, markets, performances and celebrations are being held and staged in almost every city, town, and village, even in remote places where there is hardly much of a Christian presence. Christmas has become a national holiday not only in its visible symbols, but also through a real appreciation of the sense of giving and thinking about people with less means and who have suffered so much.

As has been the case over the past few years, as the humanitarian situation has become more challenging, we put our hands together with longtime partners and supporters and designed interventions to help people celebrate and enjoy the true meaning of the season. Our partnership with the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and the generosity of its Members has enabled us to make generous cash gifts to our faithful in Gaza to enable them to buy what they need. Today, the commercial side there after the ceasefire is returning and a variety of goods are available in the market for reasonable prices. This is certainly in addition to providing shelter, food, water, medicines, hygiene and personal items since the beginning of the war to all who took refuge in our Church. Additionally, we provided funding to enable the parish to put up Christmas decorations and be able to facilitate all kinds of functions to get people in

the Christmas spirit. The visit of His Beatitude Cardinal Pizzaballa and his various encounters with the faithful is a vivid reminder that the Church is present and cares.

On the West Bank, the generosity of the Members of the Order enabled us to provide food coupons as a special Christmas gift to thousands of families who continue to struggle amidst record unemployment rates and travel restrictions, to enable them to celebrate Christmas with family Members in dignity. This is in addition to the expansion of the various humanitarian interventions historically funded by the Order including social assistance, medicines and medical support, tuition support, rental and utilities support as well as support to training, employment, and income generation projects. The Order has been supporting humanitarian programs for decades and this Christmas season is no different.

It is also worth mentioning that over the past two years, all modes of celebration were curtailed as the war was at full force

In Gaza, the children's joy of those who came to welcome the Patriarch during his pastoral visit for the celebration of the Nativity of the Messiah, at the Parish of the Holy Family.





Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa and Monsignor William Shomali, Auxiliary Bishop and Patriarchal Vicar in Jerusalem and Palestine, with the children of the Parish of the Holy Family who enacted the Nativity scene in Gaza.

and most people were not in the mood to celebrate. This year was different as our schools were encouraged to bring the spirit of Christmas back to the youngsters as well as to our staff. Our schools, which provide quality education to 19,000 students and employ over 1,700 people were fully decorated this Christmas, with school performances and appearances of "Santa Claus" and the distribution of symbolic Christmas presents. Christmas lunches were organized for all our staff as a way to say thank you for the job well done during very challenging times. Needless to say, the funding for such event was covered by the institutional funds Members had contributed so generously to.

Our special thanks and appreciation go to every Member of the Order and to the leadership, especially His Eminence Cardinal Filoni, the Governor General, all Lieutenants, members of Caritas committees and every single Member for their care and support. You are all special, and with your support, our Christmas in the Holy Land was made special thanks to you.

Sami El-Yousef
Chief Executive Officer of the Latin
Patriarchate of Jerusalem
December 2025

THE ORDER ALONGSIDE THE DICASTERY FOR THE EASTERN CHURCHES

The agencies belonging to ROACO met in January, under the presidency of Cardinal Gugerotti, for the annual Steering Committee meeting. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was represented by the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, who announced the signing of three projects in the Holy Land. These include the renovation of a building belonging to the Community of the Beatitudes in Nicopolis, refurbishment works at the Trappist monastery of Latrun, and improvements to a nursery school of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church in Jerusalem.

During the meeting, His Beatitude Cardinal Pizzaballa, who joined the meeting remotely from Jerusalem, provided an update on the situation in the Holy Land during which he emphasized the vital role of the Church in reviving dialogue after two years of war.



The life of the Lieutenancies

RENEWAL OF THE ORDER IN THE ETERNAL CITY

The celebrations for the Investiture of the Lieutenancy for Central Italy, presided over by the Grand Master in the presence of the Governor General, the authorities of the Grand Magisterium, and numerous Lieutenants, brought together many Knights and Dames. The prayer vigil was held on Friday, December 12, at the Church of San Salvatore in Lauro, a sanctuary of Our Lady of Loreto since 1600 and of Padre Pio in Rome. The following day, Saturday, December 13, at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, the new Members, some thirty men and women who are committed to living the Gospel in the heart of society, were solemnly welcomed into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of

Jerusalem. The new Lieutenant for Central Italy, Stefano Petrillo, offered words of gratitude at the conclusion of the Mass, entrusting his service to the protection of Our Lady of Palestine and Saint Bartolo Longo, and wished the outgoing Lieutenant Emeritus, Anna Maria Munzi Iacoboni, fruitful work of universal dimension as she assumed her new role as a Member of the Grand Magisterium.



Under the presidency of the Grand Master and in the presence of the Governor General of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the Lieutenancy for Central Italy organized the Investiture of numerous young new Members in the Papal Basilica of Saint John Lateran last December.

Culture and History

THE FABRIZIO DEL DONGO SYNDROME

In his novel The Charterhouse of Parma, Stendhal gives us a vivid depiction of the Battle of Waterloo through the eyes of Fabrizio del Dongo. The young inexperienced man experiences the battle in a fragmented and confused way, judging events solely by what he sees, unable to grasp the bigger picture. His perceptions are distorted by his idealized expectations and his desire for a heroic experience. He therefore believes that the French are winning the battle, based on limited and partial moments of truth that he witnesses first-hand. This "Fabrizio del Dongo syndrome" can affect the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre too.

At times, we risk judging the reality around us through personal filters, evaluating the Order's initiatives based on our individual expectations.

For example, during a visit to the Holy Land, we might focus on the immediate needs of a single institution that we visit, without considering the Order's broader global priorities.

Or, in fundraising efforts, we might prioritize quantity over quality, and forget the ethical principles that should guide every act of charity.

Furthermore, we may exaggerate perceived personal wrongs, and lose sight of our role as servants.

Finally, we could turn charitable engagement into a competition, overlooking the Gospel's warning against ostentation.

We must avoid being guided by superficial impressions or personal expectations. We are part of a vast global family, which

encompasses diverse realities and needs. Let us entrust charitable decisions to those who have a comprehensive vision, based on complete and balanced information.

Today, the Cardinal Grand Master reminds us that we are not an NGO, whose purpose is simply to raise funds (irrespective of whatever the amount) to help a population living in a land of sorrow.

We are something more, much more: first of all, there are territories throughout the world that are equally poor, and perhaps even poorer than Palestine, yet they are not the land where our Faith was born. Our mission is directed to the land of Our Lord's preaching, death, and resurrection, because that land must be loved as the cradle of our faith, as the Mother Church of Christianity. Furthermore, in addressing the needs of the Holy Land, we must not forget our own local churches or the deepening of our spirituality through

“ Let us also remember that the true meaning of a Knight or Dame’s commitment lies in the continuity of their contribution ”





prayer and an exemplary life that leads us toward personal sanctification. While we accept donations that come to us occasionally from fundraising initiatives, promotional events, or extraordinary appeals, we avoid becoming enslaved to a cold, accountant-like logic in competing for conspicuous but episodic contributions. Let us remember that Jesus valued most the two small copper coins the poor widow placed in the Temple, because those two coins, which was everything she possessed, were a sign of great love for the House of the Lord.

Let us also remember that the true

This depiction of the Gospel episode of the widow's offering, by Gustave Doré, illustrates the importance of even the most modest of donations. In the eyes of God, the true value of a donation lies in the fundamental, enduring, and steadfast love that supports each offering.

meaning of a Knight or Dame's commitment lies in the continuity of their contribution, not its size. Just as a parent's love for their children is measured in the daily consistency of their care and attention to their needs, so too must our love for the Mother Church of Jerusalem be expressed in faithful, ongoing support.

Amb. Leonardo Visconti di Modrone
Governor General

