

2018-2019

JERUSALEM CROSS

ANNALES ORDINIS EQUESTRIIS SANCTI SEPULCHRI HIEROSOLYMITANI



**With the Christians
of the Holy Land
for encounter
and peace**

*Grand Master of the Equestrian Order
of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem*
Cardinal Edwin O'Brien

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



ANNALES ORDINIS EQUESTRIS SANCTI SEPULCHRI HIEROSOLYMITANI

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On the cover
An Australian Knight on the day of his Investiture: the Order of the Holy Sepulchre
attracts numerous young Christians who find a spiritual family with whom to walk
towards holiness (photo Giovanni Portelli)

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A concrete support to the Church in the Holy Land

In recent years our Grand Magisterium has made great strides in the effort to inform Catholics and others of the efforts of so many members of our Order to support the Church in the Holy Land in its spiritual, material and humanitarian assistance to a population – Christian and non-Christian – most in need.

Here are some summary facts:

- the Order supports a network of forty schools in the Holy Land where Christians and Muslims study and learn to live together;
- the Order comes to the aid of needy families, above all in Palestine, alongside Caritas;
- the Order is committed to helping migrants and foreign workers in Israel and Jordan;
- the Order contributes to the pastoral and catechetical activities of the Diocese of Jerusalem.

This annual 2018-2019 edition of the *Jerusalem Cross* gives ample evidence of our Communications Office's efforts to enable our ever-expanding and diverse Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations to grow in their interaction and to tell their story on behalf of a biblical land too often ignored or misrepresented by the world's media.

The reason for this letter? To encourage you, reading these words, to make every effort to share the *Jerusalem Cross* with countless of faithful Catholics and others of good will who are totally ignorant of our Order, or have a mistaken impression of us, usually through no fault of their own but sometimes through our own fault in failing to spread the word.

It is sad to say, as well, that even active members of our Order will have no opportunity to read these pages. Hopefully, the communication efforts, painstakingly pursued by our editors, will be reflected in each of your lieutenancies and subsidiary sections.

This is not an exercise in self-congratulations, but of true evangelization – to spread the Good News of the far-reaching results of God's grace in the Church.



The Grand Master of the Order visiting at the Hogar Niño Dios in Bethlehem February 2019. This is one of the realities that the Knights and Dames accompany with their material and fraternal support and that welcomes disabled and abandoned children.

Edwin Cardinal O'Brien

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Encourage communion among all those who love the Holy Land

We had informed readers about a change to the Order's annual magazine: our pages are no longer simply dedicated to what we have experienced; now they open a path to the future. Thus, this issue of the *Jerusalem Cross* helps us to discover the beauty of the journey of holiness undertaken by the members of the Order, and at the same time prepare us for pilgrimage to the Holy Land, through encounters with the different human realities that exist there.



I hope that this edition – dense and richly illustrated – will be widely circulated, as the Grand Master has requested. I encourage Knights and Dames to use this magazine to promote awareness of their vocation in all environments and areas, so that our spiritual family may continue to grow.

The Grand Magisterium's Communications team also produces a quarterly publication in five languages that recounts the life of the Order at a seasonal pace, everyone is invited to subscribe via the website www.oessh.va. The annual magazine is a compliment to the aforementioned publication.

The main objective of our Communications Office is to foster communion between us – members of the Order – and all those who love the Holy Land.

Alfredo Bastianelli
Chancellor of the Order

“Flow of Christian pilgrims to Holy Land increasing”



Interview with Msgr. Leopoldo Girelli, Apostolic Nuncio to Israel and Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem and Palestine

Monsignor Leopoldo Girelli, one year since the beginning of your term of office in the Holy Land, where the problems are unfortunately numerous, do you have objective reasons for hope and what is the good news you wish to share?

In the year since my arrival in the Holy Land, on November 27, 2017, the situation in the Middle East region has developed in different ways, presenting a certain stability in Iraq, but a persistent conflict in Syria and the growing tension between Israel and Iran. Furthermore, the transfer of the US Embassy to Jerusalem constituted a further obstacle to the peace process in the region and in particular in relations between Palestine and the United States. The clashes on the border between Gaza and Israel have resumed, with numerous

victims, followed by periods of precarious truce. The US administration of President Donald Trump is considerably reducing aid to the Palestinians, while Palestine appears increasingly isolated even from the Arab Gulf countries.

In this context, I would say that the objective reasons for hope on a political level are very few and weak. At the same time, this situation of great uncertainty could give rise to new developments, hopefully towards a more stable and peaceful structure for the Holy Land and for the entire region. The Holy See continues to support the need for dialogue and therefore the resumption of negotiations between Israel and Palestine. The Holy Father Francis reiterated that “Only a solution negotiated between Israelis and Palestinians, firmly desired and promoted by the International Community,

Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, Apostolic Nuncio in Israel and Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem and Palestine, in prayer in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.

will lead to a stable and lasting peace and guarantee the coexistence of two States for two Peoples”.

I believe that the leaders of the two countries should adopt a more pragmatic approach to achieving the desired result. Hope remains strong, However, personally, I have reason to rejoice at how I was welcomed by the Church in the Holy Land and by the Israeli and Palestinian governments as a Pontifical Representative. I noted respect and appreciation for the positions of the Holy See regarding the question of Jerusalem and the Palestine, as well as esteem and consideration for the dedication of the Holy Father to the cause of peace in the region and in the world. Another positive aspect is the flow of Christian pilgrims which, in spite of everything, has not decreased during this year, rather it has increased, especially from Asia, proving that the holy places are a desired destination and a profound pilgrimage experience of faith both for ecclesial communities and for individual believers.



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Can you outline the important issues facing the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, the progress of the negotiations, in particular regarding the agreement between Israel and the Holy See?

Christianity is persevering in the ongoing effort to preserve its presence in the Holy Land, threatened by a decline caused by many factors: political, economic and even religious. In this context, the Catholic Church has implemented various initiatives in favor of Christians. The Holy See, in particular, has negotiated agreements with the State of Israel and the State of Palestine that contribute to ensuring conditions of stability for ecclesial and religious institutions in the changes that have occurred in the Holy Land in the last 70 years. The known episode of the closing of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre last February was a further sign of the opportunity for the Catholic Church to reach agreement on economic and fiscal matters between the Holy See and Israel. In November 2016, these bilateral negotiations were resumed.

A recently passed law in Israel, on the Nation-State of the Jewish People, has provoked heated reactions, in particular from the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. What is your opinion on this subject as the representative of the Holy See to this country?

Indeed, the new Law on the Nation-State has aroused and is still provoking considerable reactions. As a Pontifical Representative, I do not intend to enter into the merits of it, as it is a law passed by the Knesset, which is the organ of the democratically elected State, representative of the people and called to legislate. Rather, it is the voice of the local Church that has the right and the duty to pronounce itself, as indeed it did in the statement issued by the Latin Patriarchate.

In it, the new Law is described as “exclusive

rather than inclusive, disputed rather than consensual, politicized rather than being rooted in the basic norms that are common and acceptable to all factions of the population”. Furthermore, it is stated that “the Christian citizens of Israel have the same concerns as any other non-Jewish citizens with respect to this Law. They call upon all citizens of the State of Israel who still believe in the basic concept of equality among citizens of the same nation, to voice their objection to this law”.

You meet Catholics in the Holy Land regularly, in Palestine and in Israel. What are the characteristics of these different communities and what do you consider the priorities to be taken into account in supporting them?

Catholics of the Latin rite in Israel and Palestine are two distinct communities for their different languages, Hebrew and Arabic, and for their ethnic composition, but part of the same ecclesial reality that is the Latin Patriarchate.

In Palestine, the parishes are still numerous. For decades, there has been a decrease in the number of faithful, especially young people, who migrate in search of better

living conditions, because of the insecurity that reigns in this region. By visiting the parishes, to bring them the support and blessing of the Holy Father, I have been struck by the sense of belonging and desire to affirm the Christian identity. There are established charitable and social institutions, such as the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul and the Scouts, and religious institutions, and the long-standing Legion of Mary. There are parish schools that play an important educational role and are a source of dialogue and peace in society. However, they find themselves in economic difficulty and they experience the challenge of maintaining their Catholic identity, welcoming Muslim students, because of the



decrease of Catholic ones. The clergy is dedicated at a pastoral level, respected by the faithful and shares the destiny of the Palestinian people.

The Catholic Church in Palestine receives economic support from the universal Church, without which it would be difficult to continue and carry out the religious, educational and social activities which are essential to ecclesial life. At the same time, it is necessary to promote in the faithful the sense of responsibility and participation for a better awareness and a greater commitment to contribute to the life of the ecclesial community.

In Israel, the Catholic Church of the Latin rite, as well as various parishes celebrating in Arabic, is present with a community in Hebrew that is rather composite and even variable, since many migrants of different origins are part of it. Pastorally and socially it appears lively as well as growing. It can be said that it is a highly symbolic reality, representing the Church of Christ within His people.

The Catholic communities of the Melkite, Maronite, Greek-Catholic, Syrian-Catholic and Armenian rites that exist in Israel and Palestine also face the challenge of the dwindling number of the faithful and clergy as well as the scarcity of resources. They express the richness of faith, of liturgy, of the identity of the Christian East that must be protected. Moreover, being part of the Catholic Church as such, they are faithful to the Holy Father and attest to the universality of the Church of Christ, not only geographically but also in temporal terms, referring to the origins of the



Abp. Girelli welcoming Cardinal O'Brien, Grand Master, Governor General Visconti di Modrone, Chancellor Bastianelli and Msgr. Frezza, Master of Ceremonies of the Order, in Jerusalem in February 2019.

Church that is present in the Holy Land in a peculiar way with various rites of equal dignity.

Can you share your reflections on the Order of the Holy Sepulchre with us, the relevance of its mission and its role in helping the inhabitants of the Holy Land face these challenges?

I have long known the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and now in my mission in the Holy Land I am a direct witness of its admirable work in sustaining the Christian presence in the territories where the Son of God, made man, lived and died and rose again.

During the past year, I met the Governor General of the Order, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, on two occasions, to whom I wished to express my heartfelt gratitude for the generous help and fervent testimony of Christian solidarity of the Knights and Dames towards the Church that is in the Holy Land.

The safeguarding of the Christian presence, as the mission of the Order, is carried out by promoting the coexistence of peoples, cultures and faiths, which has in its education its vital fulcrum. Support for Catholic schools and educational activities is a priority for those who seek to support the Christians of the Holy Land who face the challenges of building peace and of witnessing to the Christian faith every day.

Interview by François Vayne

“May we all be one”

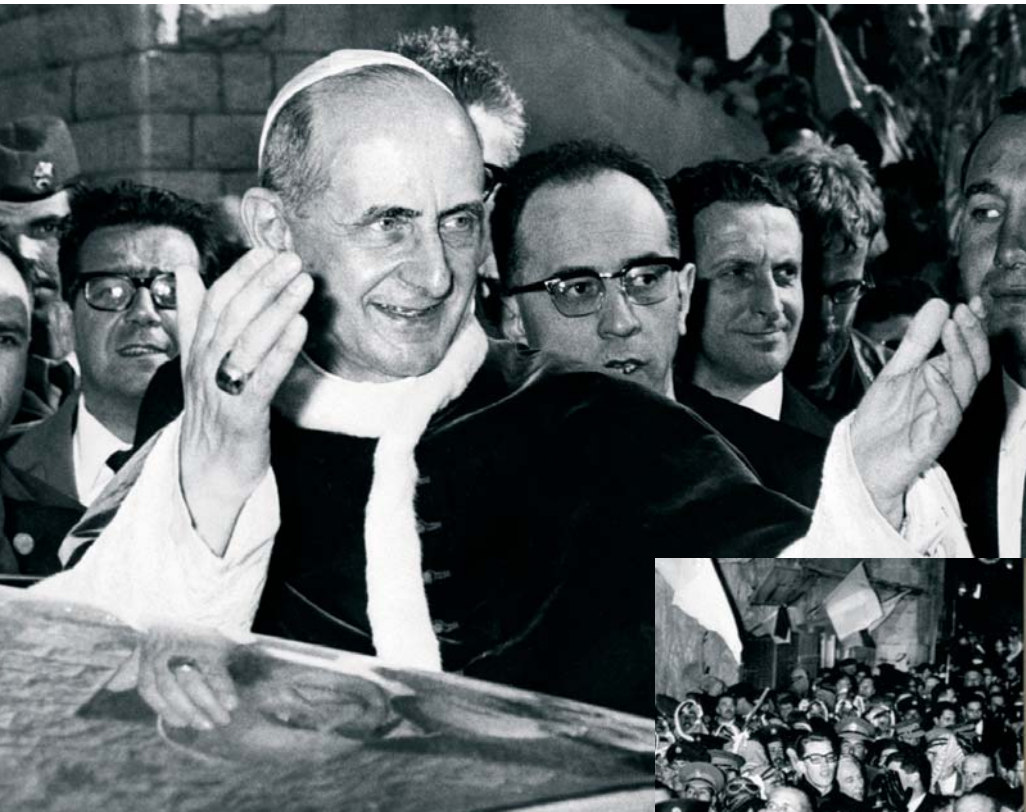
St. Paul VI's Prayer at the Holy Sepulchre

Paul VI – canonized October 14, 2018 – was the first Pope, after St. Peter, to go to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 55 years ago. In communion with the new saint, we unite in prayer using the words he recited before the Holy Sepulchre, January 4, 1964, contained in the following extracts of great depth, upon which we are asked to reflect:

“**B**rothers and Sons, may our minds be enlivened, our consciences be lightened and all the forces of our spirit spread beneath the luminous gaze of Christ. We are sincerely sorrowful for all of our sins, the sins of our fathers, those of past history, we are conscience of those of our own time, of the world in which we live. And so that our pain is neither vile nor reckless, but humble; so that it may not be desperate, but confident; so that it may not be inert, but prayerful; united to that of Jesus Christ

our Lord, patient up to death, and obedient up to the Cross, and re-evoking His moving memory, implore His saving mercy.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because with Your Cross you have redeemed the world. Here, where You, O Lord Jesus, the innocent, have been accused; the just, you have been judged; the saint, you have been condemned; You, Son of man, have been



St. Paul VI during his historic pilgrimage to the Holy Land in January 1964.

On the next page: portrait of Paul VI canonized by Pope Francis on October 14, 2018.



**Accueil délirant
et désordonné à
Jérusalem, enthousiaste
mais plus sage à Nazareth**

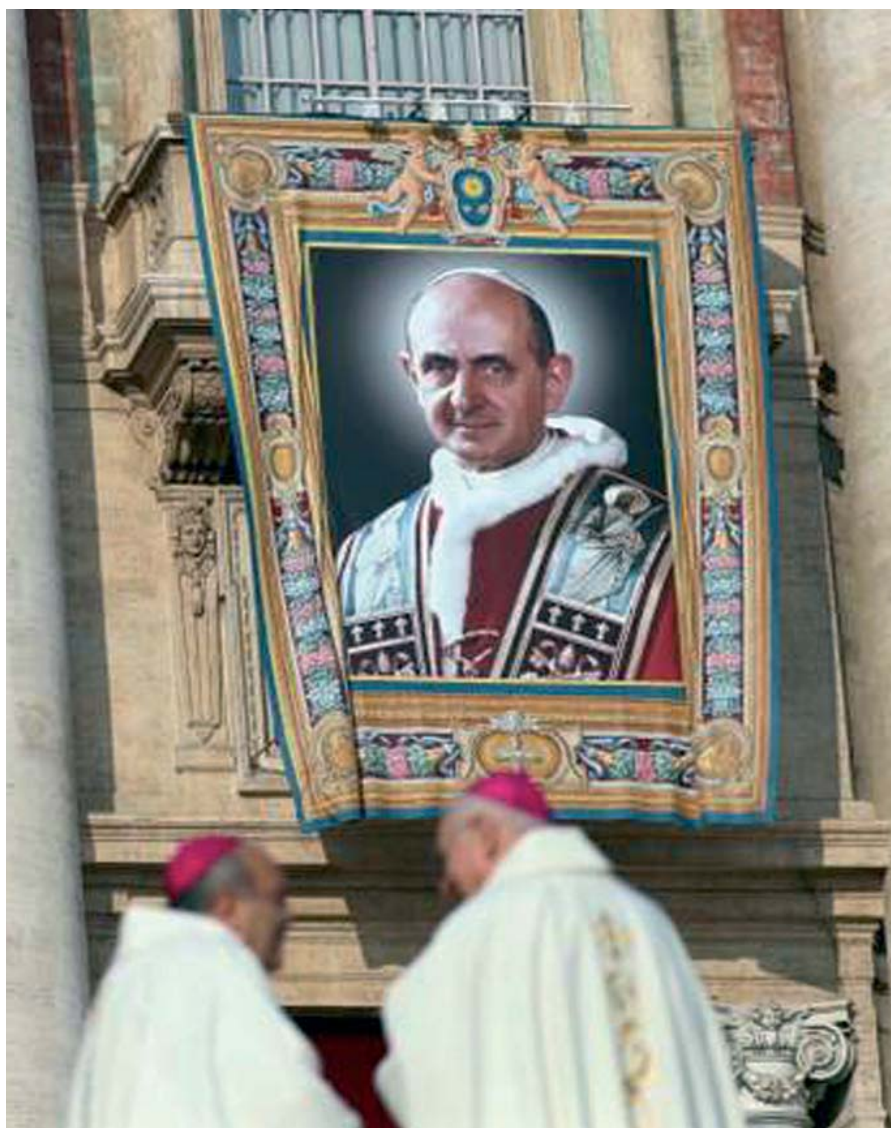
**DES CENTAINES DE MILLIONS DE CHRÉTIENS
ET D'HOMMES DE BONNE VOLONTÉ SE
SONT ASSOCIÉS AU PÈLERINAGE PAPAL**

tormented, crucified and put to death; You, Son of God, have been blasphemed, mocked and denied; You, the light, have experienced the darkness; You, the King, have been raised on a Cross; You, the Life, suffered death and You died, and rose to life. We remember You, O Lord Jesus. We adore You, O Lord Jesus. We invoke you, O Lord Jesus.

Here, O Lord Jesus, Your Passion was oblation (*Is. 53, 7*) planned, accepted, desired, it was a sacrifice: You were the Victim, You, the Priest. Here Your death was the expression, the measure of human sin, it was the holocaust of supreme heroism, it was the price offered to divine justice, it was the proof of supreme love. Here was the duel between life and death. Here You were the victor, O Christ, You died for us and then rose again.

Lord, all powerful God, holy and immortal God, have mercy on us!

We are here, O Lord Jesus, we have come like the guilty who return to the place of their crime, we come as the ones who followed You, but who also betrayed You; so often faithful and so often unfaithful; we have come to recognize the mysterious relationship between our sins and Your passion, our work and Your work; we have come to beat our breasts, to ask You for forgiveness, to implore Your mercy, we have come because we know that You can, that You want to forgive us; because You have expiated for us, You are our redemption and our hope. Lamb of God, You who take away the sins of the world, forgive us, O Lord; Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, hears our voice, O Lord; Lamb of God, who



take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, O Lord.

Lord Jesus, our Redeemer, revive in us the desire for and confidence in Your forgiveness, rekindle our will to conversion and fidelity, let us taste the certainty and also the sweetness of Your mercy. Lord Jesus, Redeemer and our Master, give us the strength to forgive others, so that we too may be truly forgiven by You. Lord Jesus, Redeemer and Shepherd, put in us the capacity to love as You want, by Your example and with Your grace, You and all those who are brothers in You.

Lord Jesus, our Redeemer and our Peace, who have made us know Your last wish: “that all may be one”, fulfill this desire that we make ours and that becomes our prayer here: **“May we all be one”**.

“My own journey into the Order”

*Testimony of Father John Bateman,
secretary of Cardinal Edwin O’Brien
for the Jerusalem Cross*

Prior to my own Investiture in 2017, I always thought that the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre merely was an honor you received because you did something really good for the bishop or diocese. Well, in my 2 years as a member of the Order, and in my capacity as the Grand Master’s priest-secretary, I’ve learned that I was REALLY wrong! Being a priest-member of the Order is not merely an honorary title but it requires of me an active role and full commitment.

My own journey into the Order pre-dates my appointment to Rome. While a pastor back in the USA, I established a group in the parish for young men (age 13-18) to encourage them to be strong, faithful Catholic gentlemen. The program was rooted in the Chivalric Orders and was called “Knights of the Holy Temple.” Many of the aspects of knighthood of old

Father John Bateman (left) with the members of the Order concretely and spiritually supporting the Christians of the Holy Land, sorely tested by their living conditions.



were the backbone of the program: strength of character, faithfulness to God and Church, ready defense of the Faith, and standing up for those who are oppressed. Then in 2015 we were all horrified at the reports that ISIS

(DAESH) had beheaded about 30 Coptic Christians on a beach in Lybia. Very soon after, following the lead of a priest friend, I initiated an “Orange Ribbon Campaign” in my parish which encouraged people to wear an orange ribbon to call attention to the plight of persecuted Christians throughout the world. Certainly, we had known of previous persecutions of Christians, but this event was a watershed moment for me that led me into a more active and more focused prayer support for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

Coming to Rome and beginning my work for the Order I quickly learned that the Christians of the Holy Land also are suffering greatly as a result of various types of persecutions and hardships. This is the work of our Order: to support and encourage them by our prayers and our financial sacrifices.

Just as my own journey began with a spiritual awakening, so, too, does our membership in the Order. Our first task is our own sanctification and spiritual lives—the Universal Call to Holiness. Membership in the Order requires of each of us a diligence in our own lives of Faith: the celebration of the Sacraments, personal prayer, participation in the life of our parish and diocese, and spiritual reading in order to grow in our knowledge and understanding of the riches and beauty of our Catholic Faith. This is what should motivate and encourage all our



activities and our greater participation in the important work of our Order.

As a priest member of the Order, my consecration to service in the Church has an important relevance for my life as a Knight. In addition to, as St. Paul said, working out my own salvation “in fear and trembling,” I am also called to assist my brothers and sisters in their spiritual lives. In the Order, this means that I willingly and readily place my priestly ministry at the service of my fellow Dames and Knights: offering them opportunities to celebrate the Sacraments (most especially the Eucharist and Confession), offering spiritual retreats or presentations on spiritual topics of particular interest to us in the Order, inviting and providing opportunities for Dames and Knights to take active roles in the parish and diocese, inviting others to learn more about the Order and to consider becoming members.

As so often happens in the life of a priest, I discover that through my ministry to members of the Order I myself and enriched and strengthened

in my own Faith and commitment to the Church and to our Order. Working with so many Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates, Grand Priors and clergy, Dames and Knights, I have discovered so many opportunities to strengthen my brothers and sisters in their own commitment to the Faith and to the Order. In the process, it strengthens my own commitment to teaching and proclaiming our beautiful Catholic Faith and working diligently (in my own spiritual life and personal and financial sacrifices) on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.

I’ve learned that, no matter the persecution, no matter the hardship, no matter the obstacle, no matter the scandal or controversy, Our Faith and our Order stand on solid ground—for we are rooted in Christ, rooted in His Holy Land. My connection to my brothers and sisters in the Order – and my brothers and sisters in the Holy Land and other persecuted Christians throughout the world – has been a source of encouragement and growth in my own life as a Christian.

A community in which one experiences fraternity

Although only invested in 2015, Fr. Tom Enneking, osc, the conventual prior of the Crosier Fathers and Brothers in the United States, has already made a substantial contribution to the USA Western Lieutenancy. He has served as Retreat Master at the Annual Meeting of the Western Lieutenancy for the past three years, and he attends most First Monday Rosaries in the Phoenix area as well as the many Phoenix area functions of the Order. Fr. Tom contributes reflections to the Lieutenancy website, and makes himself available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the Annual Meetings. Let’s hear more about his experience as a Knight Chaplain in the Order.

I have attended the Annual Meeting each year since becoming a member of the Order in 2015. Those gatherings include the wonderful liturgical celebrations for the Promotions and Investiture of New Members. I am inspired by the dedication of time and resources to preparing these celebrations so well and in the spirit of the liturgical renewal of Vatican II. I have regularly attended the First Monday Rosary in the Phoenix area along with Days of Renewal around the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and Lent and Mid-Year Meetings. I have participated in joint gatherings of the members of the Order from Tucson and Phoenix.

I support the Lieutenancy spiritually by my presence and sharing the spirituality of the Holy Cross of my religious order. I also am attentive to building community among the members of the Order as part of our shared identity. The Crosiers host a couple of the First Monday Rosaries during the year.



I look forward to gathering with members on the first Monday of every month (when my schedule allows) as there is the joy in seeing each other again, warmly greeting one another, and sharing time in prayer as we pray the rosary for the needs and concerns of our Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. It is the custom of the group to go out for dinner together after the rosary, giving time to socialize and foster the communal bonds among us. These gatherings are marked by a spirit of warmth and genuine appreciation for one another, not to mention joy and hope rooted in our Christian faith.

The pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a central moment in the life of the members of the Order because it expresses the solidarity of the universal Church towards the Mother Church that is in Jerusalem.

I support and encourage the mission of the Order in supporting Christians in the Holy Land by offering the Prayer of the Order on a regular basis and have served as spiritual director for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land sponsored by the Order in June of 2018. These pilgrimages provide an opportunity for members to experience first hand the realities of the Holy Land and its peoples; they foster a sense of solidarity with the challenges faced by our Christian brothers and sisters who live there.

The relationship with members of the Order has expanded my awareness and concern for the Christians in the Holy Land. The spirituality of the Empty Tomb enriches the Crosier spirituality of the Cross as it symbolizes the love of God in Jesus giving his life for us and the new life that God can bring out of suffering, pain and death.

PETER ALLMAIER

parish priest of the cathedral of Klagenfurt, Austria

The Order is of great importance to me because it is a community where I feel at home, a community of people that I can accompany in faith and, even more so, that accompany me in my faith.



CLEMENS ABRAHAMOWICZ

parish priest in Baden-Wr. Neustadt, archdiocese of Vienna

I was in contact with some friends of the parish who were Knights or Dames of the Order and who sometimes needed something. One day they came up to ask me if I wanted to become a Knight of the Order myself. I took some time to reflect on this proposal: why not live with this community rather than just in front of it? I questioned myself profoundly and, with great satisfaction, I discovered how this community was centered in Christ, the point to which the event of the Passion of Jesus – the Paschal Triduum – is the object of their contemplation and is at the center of their every action.



130 years of Dames in the Order

In 2018, we celebrated 130 years since the entry of Dames into the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. In fact, on August 3, 1888, the Order received the good news of the Papal Bull “Venerabilis Frater” of Pope Leo XIII in which the Holy Father authorized the Patriarch of Jerusalem to grant the Cross of the Order to Dames in all three ranks.

For 130 years, Dames have been an extremely active part of the life of our Pontifical Institution, which is mainly composed of lay people, and today they represent one third of the members of the Order. The presence of women, as well as the experience of married couples within the Order, has helped to offer a wider and more complete image of the people of God willing to serve, in particular, the Church that is in the Holy Land.

On the side-lines of the Consulta, Lieutenant for Switzerland, Donata Maria Kretlow-Benziger, underlined that Dames have the same rights and duties as the Knights.

Reflecting on the aspect of spirituality, she commented: “let us continue to bear witness to our faith and our love, as well as our fidelity to our Church. And we should do it with great joy. Our faith requires us to become a living symbol of the presence of the Risen Christ in the world “. The words of Saint Paul in his Letter to the Galatians

are echoed in the importance of the mission and common call: “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither man nor woman, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (*Gal 3:28*).

In 2016, Eva Maria Leiner of the Lieutenancy for Austria wrote: “Is being a woman within the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem different than being a man? From my personal experience, a passage from the book of Genesis (*Gen 1:27*) is tangible in our Order: ‘God created man in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them’.

In the Order of the Holy Sepulchre women have long had access to the same responsibilities as men, in particular to the leadership of the Lieutenancies (the picture is the Investiture in the Philippines presided over by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for the Philippines, February 2019).

It is the fact of being fully accepted that distinguishes our community, thus creating a family atmosphere and a ‘religious homeland’, in which we contribute to the development of the charismas of each one. Dames and Knights, lay members and clergy: we have all the same rights as witnesses of the Resurrection”.

Yvonne Camp,





The women who hold positions of responsibility at the helm of the Order's Lieutenancies have enriched the Consulta with their wisdom, helping to foster the family atmosphere that all the participants joyfully noted and wish to continue cultivating.

Lieutenant for USA Middle Atlantic, shared her experience as a Dame in a position of responsibility within the Order. “I received an invitation to join the Order from the then Lieutenant. I was Secretary, then Chancellor and now Lieutenant: for me this is an opportunity to be of service, to support the Knights and Dames in their spiritual life and to inform them about the Holy Land. Being a Lady Lieutenant is something special. My predecessors were all men.”

Currently there are 11 Lady Lieutenants and the five-year assembly of the Order, the Consulta,

which saw all the Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates gathered in Rome from all over the world, gave them occasion to get to know each other better. “Spending time with women of faith who have gone through the same challenges that I have experienced in life and sometimes even in the Lieutenancy – she commented – was nice”. As the Lieutenant for USA Middle Atlantic recalled, “we are Lieutenants not because we are women but because we are the people who have been deemed most qualified for this position”.

Reflections on Western replicas of the Holy Sepulchre Aedicule

Replicas of the Holy Sepulchre Aedicule differ greatly according to their geographical location, the places and the inspiration of the pilgrims. These devotional monuments – often intended for liturgical prayer – have played an important role in strengthening the faith, allowing pilgrim believers to turn their inner gaze to Jerusalem.

“Copying the Aedicule of the Holy Sepulchre: when religious practices and architecture intertwine”: this was the subject of a conference held a few months ago at the École biblique et archéologique française in Jerusalem by Charles-Édouard Guilbert-Roed. The PhD student in architectural history has researched and cataloged replicas of the aedicule, the term that designates the structure built by the Greek-Orthodox in the early 1800s over Christ’s tomb, within the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre itself built on the orders of St. Helena, after the edict of Milan that liberalized Christian worship throughout the Roman Empire.

“As a child I discovered a copy of the Aedicule



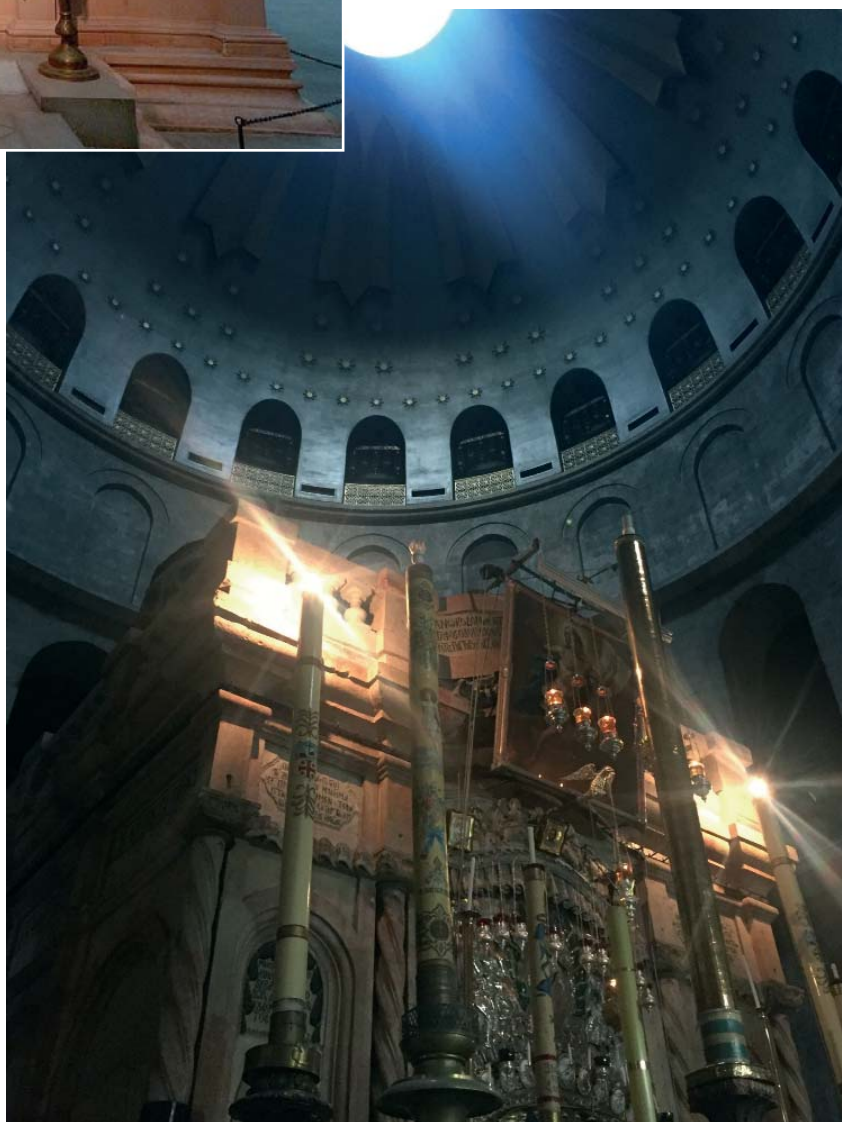
The Aedicule that protects the empty tomb of Christ, built in the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (right) has been reproduced in various places across the world. Above we see the Monastery of the Servants of the Poor in Angers, France (1932). This reproduction is the work of Bishop Potard, a tireless priest of Angers who led 72 pilgrimages to the Holy Land ...

of the Holy Sepulchre in the Shrine of Notre-Dame du Chêne (Our Lady of the Oak) in Vion, in the Sarthe region, where I spent part of my childhood. But it was only several years later that I understood the wealth of this place,” says the lecturer during an interview given to the Communication Service of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Notre-Dame du Chêne – which left an indelible mark on the young researcher – is a Marian shrine that became

known after Virgin Mary appeared there in the 15th century. In 1896, the bishop of Le Mans decided to build a faithful reproduction of the Aedicule of the Holy Sepulchre, thanks to the offerings of the faithful.

Charles-Edouard Guilbert-Roed went on to study the history of art and architecture at the Sorbonne University in Paris. He has always been sensitive to artistic heritage, especially in its religious aspects. “I was entrusted with the organization of spiritual retreats with the young people of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. It seemed natural to me to





hold these events at the tomb of Notre-Dame du Chêne, which I knew well. Then, after three months of work at the École biblique et archéologique française in Jerusalem in 2014 and after better understanding the reality of the Jerusalem tomb, I decided to research the replicas,” he explains.

Currently a doctoral student in architectural history, he has chosen to carry out a cross examination of other replicas across the world, identifying more than a hundred: these structures are often frequented for Holy Week, from Friday to Easter Sunday, reviving in the hearts of pilgrims the exclamation “Domine ivimus”, “Lord we will come!”, characteristic of the fervor of the Christians of every age, eager to go to Jerusalem.

There have been four versions of the Aedicule across 1700 years: Firstly, a Byzantine edition dating

The Aedicule reproduced in Florence, Italy (16th century).



In Görlitz, Germany, on the border with Poland, it is possible to see a copy (1504) of what the Aedicule was like in Roman times.



to 324, a second Romanesque edition dating to 1012, a third version dating to 1555 and finally the Aedicule in Ottoman baroque style that we know today, dating to 1810.

The first three forms have physically disappeared, but thanks to their copies, it is possible to find them replicated in full. For example, the Byzantine version can be viewed in Italy, in the autonomous region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, in Aquileia, while the Romanesque form can be seen today in Görlitz, Germany.

“The replicas represent a real treasure to see the extent of devotion to the tomb of Christ, but also to understand it better”, observes Charles-

Reproduction of the Aedicule in the Basilica of Santo Stefano in Bologna (5th century).

construction of a replica.

“One of my main discoveries during the compilation of this corpus is that most of the copies of the Aedicule were built during the Counter-Reformation in the ancient kingdoms of Bohemia, Austria and those in the possession of the Habsburg family. Today, these copies are found in the current Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Other copies have been located in France, Belgium, Italy, Russia, Ukraine, Canada, the United States of America, Georgia and in Jerusalem itself!” states the PhD student, who also notes the building of new replicas, for example at the Notre-Dame sanctuary Dame du Cap, in Trois-Rivières, Canada.

F. V.

We appeal to our readers: send us photos – accompanied by a caption – of any replicas of the Holy Sepulchre Aedicule you know, anywhere in the world, for a future article on the subject.

From enemy to brother: celebrating 800 years since encounter between Saint Francis and the Sultan

The poor man of Assisi is known in the Catholic world for many reasons and is probably one of the most cherished saints for many faithful. However, perhaps few know the event that marks its 800th anniversary this year: his meeting with the Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil.

In 1219, Francis decided to embark for Egypt where at that time the Fifth Crusade was being fought pitting Christian troops – accompanied by the papal delegate, Cardinal Pelagio – against the Sultan’s army in Damietta. Francis obtained permission together with Fra’ Illuminato to enter the Muslim camp and to speak with the Sultan al-Kamil. The available sources are hagiographic and we do not know exactly what these two important figures said on that occasion. One thing is certain: in a context of war, Francis and Fra’ Illuminato emerged alive from an “enemy” camp.

Although we know many details of the life of St. Francis, we do not know much about the life of this Muslim ruler who on more than one occasion proffered peace agreements to the Crusader forces. He was even willing to grant Jerusalem and other holy places to them to avoid an armed confrontation that would surely have caused so many victims on both sides, as indeed was the case. During a recent conference at Rome’s Centro Pro Unione, Islamic scholar Brother Michael Calabria, member of the Special Commission for Dialogue with Islam of the Franciscan Curia, said Sultan al-Kamil was likely close to the spiritual environments of Sufism, that is the mystical trend that insists particularly on the

uniqueness of existence, the imminence of God, his mercy and contemplation, as well as on fraternity and spiritual poverty. Considering his religious background, one can perhaps better understand the openness he had towards Francis, who probably did not seem too distant from Muslim mystics with whom he was accustomed.

“Certainly Francis’ purpose in life was evangelization: the whole life of St. Francis is centered on this. He was a traveling preacher, would announce the Gospel everywhere, and to everyone,” commented Brother Michael.

Before leaving, he expected that he would probably be killed for this attempt. But this did not happen and this helps us understand that Francis’s sharing and proclamation have been imbued with respect and nothing that he said was considered an insult to the faith of those he had before him. “What Francis discovers is different from what he had expected. The meeting with a man of faith, who surely shared

his spirituality with him, probably led to a certain brotherhood between the two “, underlined Brother Michael.

On his return from Egypt we find some indirect evidence of the experience lived there, of the importance of a proper discernment of his own testimony and of not upsetting peace in chapter XVI of the Earlier Rule written in 1221 where we read: “The friars who go among the infidels, they can behave spiritually among them in two ways. One way is to avoid quarrels or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God’s sake and



1219 T 2019



Icon that evokes the fraternal encounter between St. Francis and the Sultan in 1219 in Damietta, Egypt.

confess that they are Christians. The other way is that when they see that it pleases the Lord, they announce the word of God that they believe in God Almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of all things, and in the Son Redeemer and Savior, and be baptized, and they will be Christians, for if one is not reborn through water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Brother Michael Calabria also invites us to recognize a trace of the encounter between Francis and the Sultan in a well-known text: at La Verna, towards the end of his life, Francis wrote the

Praises of God Most High where he refers to God by various names and attributes. This is a rather unusual prayer and some Franciscan scholars put forward that the text is an echo of the Islamic prayer of the 99 beautiful names of Allah (*al-asma’ al-husna*), the divine attributes that Muslims find in the Qur’an and they repeat with devotion: many of the attributes quoted in Saint Francis’ prayer are the same ones that belong to the Islamic tradition: whether it is a “case”, that shows the intrinsic closeness between Islamic and Christian spirituality, or that it can be hypothesized that Francis was inspired by the prayer he heard during his time in Egypt, today we have a text of praise that brings the Christian and Muslim communities closer in a special way together.

“The meeting was successful because the two people involved both experienced God not only in the formalities of their respective religions but in the depths of their hearts and this led them to see in the other not an enemy but a believer and a brother. We need good theologians to explain and justify our commitment to

interreligious dialogue based on doctrine. However, without spirituality, dialogue remains an intellectual exercise. Spirituality allows us to see each other as a brother or a sister,” concluded Brother Michael.

In 1229 al-Malik al-Kamil was the protagonist of the negotiations that led to the agreement without bloodshed with Frederick II. In exchange for a ten-year truce, al-Kamil ceded Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and other villages on the way to Jerusalem to Frederick while Muslims would retain control over their holy places on the Haram al-Sharif and enjoy some autonomy.

Sometimes the events of the past remain closed in history books. Yet this encounter still



resonates with us today. During his recent visit to the United Arab Emirates in February (February 3-5, 2019), Pope Francis together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyeb signed the “document on human fraternity for world peace and shared coexistence”. Already from the title of this text, we hear our inheritance from the vision of St. Francis.

On his return from this journey, Pope Francis wanted to underline how the

During his recent visit to the United Arab Emirates (February 3 to 5, 2019), Pope Francis signed the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” along with Al-Azhar Grand Imam Ahmad Tayyeb. Right from its title, this document is permeated by the legacy of St. Francis’ vision.

example of that meeting that took place 800 years ago guided his steps: “For the first time a Pope has traveled to the Arabian peninsula. Moreover, Providence wanted it to be a Pope by the name of Francis, 800 years after the visit of St. Francis of Assisi to the Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil. I often thought of Saint Francis during this journey: he helped me to keep the Gospel, the love of Jesus Christ in my heart, while I was living the various moments of the visit; in my heart there was the Gospel of Christ, prayer to the Father for all his children, especially for the poorest, for the victims of injustices, wars, misery ...; prayer for dialogue between Christianity and Islam to be a decisive factor for peace in today’s world” (General Audience, February 6, 2019).

Elena Dini

“ *The meeting was successful because the two people involved both experienced God [...] in the depths of their hearts and this led them to see in the other not an enemy but a believer and a brother. [...] Without spirituality, dialogue remains an intellectual exercise. Spirituality allows us to see each other as a brother or a sister* **”**

The mission of the Order's Lieutenants at the heart of the 2018 Consulta

In November, about sixty Lieutenants from around 40 countries attended the five-year assembly of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Rome, gathered around the Grand Master, Cardinal O'Brien.

The Lieutenants of the Order who arrived from six continents participated in the Consulta once every five-year assembly (November 13-16, 2018), seeking together to better define their role and exchanging their respective experiences, in the presence of the Grand Master and the leaders of the Grand Magisterium.

Received by Pope Francis at the end of the gathering, they had the joy of hearing him pronounce important words, reflecting the exceptional bond that unites the Order to the Successor of Peter: "Here in the Vatican, you are, in a certain way, at home, as you constitute an ancient pontifical institution under the protection of the Holy See." The Holy Father encouraged members of the Consulta to promote interreligious dialogue, as well as mutual understanding and respect in the Holy Land, asking them to set an

example for the Knights and Dames of which they are responsible. "It is a task above all of you as leaders to offer the example of intense spiritual life and true following of the Lord: in this way you can render a valid service of authority to those who depend upon you", he stressed, urging them to constantly invoke Our Lady, venerated with the title of Our Lady of Palestine (see the complete text of the Papal address in the following pages).

After the welcome address of Cardinal O'Brien and the clarifications on the program provided by the Lieutenant General Borromeo and the Governor General Visconti di Modrone, the Consulta – held in the Crowne Plaza hotel, on the Via Aurelia Antica – began with the intervention of Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and the representatives of the Holy See,



Msgr. Paolo Borgia, Assessor of the Secretariat of State and Father Oscar Marzo, Franciscan, of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

Archbishop Pizzaballa recalled with strong words that without the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the Mother Church of Jerusalem could no longer exist. He insisted on the need to continue to support, especially, Christian families in the Holy Land, despite the incessant political crisis, noting that the closeness of Knights and Dames to local communities allows an opening to the world that reignites the hope of a very tested population.

In the same vein, Msgr. Borgia stressed the importance of contact between the 30,000 members of the Order and the inhabitants of the Holy Land, which contribute to fostering peaceful relations, especially through pilgrimages. Fr. Marzo – speaking in the name of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches – stressed the crucial role of Knights and Dames for the Church in the biblical territories, insisting that the Order is “the only secular institution of the Holy See to care for the Christian presence in the Holy Land,” working for a future of respect and collaboration among inhabitants of different religions, through educational and training initiatives.

Subsequently, the Lieutenant General Agostino Borromeo presented the working sessions based on the Instrumentum Laboris, which centred on the mission of the Lieutenant, the principal theme of the Consulta, specifying the two aims of the Order: the sanctity of members and concrete solidarity with the Church of the Holy Land.

Regarding this solidarity, a much appreciated video – produced by the Order’s Communications Office in partnership with the Communication Office of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem – has allowed Church officials to thank the Lieutenants directly for their constant help offered in the educational and pastoral sectors, showing the joy of children and young people expressed with



The Lieutenant General, Agostino Borromeo, the coordinator of Consulta 2018, one of the positions of trust that the Grand Master has given to him.

unforgettable smiles that have impressed the members of the Consulta. “We are a Church that changes because of the complex context in the Middle East, but not a dying Church,” commented Abp. Pizzaballa, mentioning

a “new way of being in the future ...”, which will not mean the disappearance, but a ecclesial transformation that has become necessary in the aftermath of the politicalstrategic “earthquake” that is shaking the whole region.

In the course of the following two days, the Lieutenants met in three linguistic discussion groups, to reflect upon the documentation made available to them. The Instrumentum Laboris has been carefully analyzed, especially with regards the themes of the figure of the Lieutenant, their appointment and the transmission of directives from their predecessor, the collaboration with the Prior of the Lieutenancy, relations with the Grand Magisterium, with the Sections / Delegations and with members, the recruitment of Knights and Dames, as well as the organization of activities and their eventual succession.

Every morning, the celebration of Mass experienced in community gave a spiritual dimension to the event of the Consulta. A

meditative oratory – exclusively staged on the evening of November 13 in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (built to keep the relics of the Cross of Christ brought by Saint Helen from the Holy Land) – helped the Lieutenants to deepen the Christian meaning of their mission, in light of the journey of conversion of Bartolo Longo, the only lay person of the Order to have been beatified and a model for all the members. The Grand Master of the Order of Malta fraternally took part in the evening, alongside the Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and other ecclesiastical personalities, including the Archbishop of Pompeii.



On the eve of the concluding audience with the Pope, the Lieutenants shared their reflections during a general assembly, following the speakers of the three working groups: Enric Mas of Europe, Agnes Sheehan of Australia and Vicky Downey of America. Essentially, it emerged that the Consulta favored the exchange of experiences between Lieutenants, contributing to strengthening the family spirit in the Order and the vitality of this pontifical institution. The ecclesial rootedness of the Order in the diocesan Churches was strongly emphasized, beyond the questions of

technical organization, by presenting the Lieutenant as a man or a woman of the Church called to collaborate with the bishops and the clergy, as a “local ambassador” of the Church in the Holy Land. The summary offered by the

The new Vice Governor General for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz (left) and the new Vice Governor General for America, Thomas Pogge, took office in January 2019.



During the week of the Consulta, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, honoured the Order with his presence at the reception organized in honour of Our Lady of Palestine at the Palazzo della Rovere.

Lieutenant General Borromeo based on the work of the Consulta, emphasized the need for an improved definition of the role and responsibilities of the Lieutenant and more attention to their formation and training to offer Lieutenants the means to provide a free voluntary

service with humility and efficacy.

Before the conclusion, the assembly welcomed some new leaders (who then took office in January 2019): the Vice Governor for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz, and for North America, Thomas Pogge; their two predecessors – Giorgio Moroni Stampa and Patrick Powers – were greeted with a standing ovation.

During the papal audience, Pope Francis summarized in few but precise words the mission of the Lieutenants of the Order, declaring, “Do not forget that you are not a philanthropic entity committed to promoting the material and social improvement of recipients. You are called to place the evangelical love of your neighbour as the final aim of your works, to witness everywhere the goodness and care with which God loves everyone.”

François Vayne

The Pope to the members of the Consulta: “You are at home in the Vatican”

Address of the Holy Father pronounced on November 16 in the Sala Clementina of the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican.

Dear brothers and sisters!

I welcome you at the conclusion of the Consulta of Members of the Grand Magisterium and of the Lieutenants of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. I greet and thank Cardinal Edwin O’Brien, Grand Master, and the Pro-Grand Prior, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa; I greet the members of the Grand Magisterium, together with the Lieutenants of the nations and of the places where the Order is present. And with you I greet the whole family of Knights and Dames from all over the world. My gratitude goes to all of you for the many spiritual and charitable activities you carry out for the benefit of the peoples of the Holy Land.

You have gathered for the Consulta, the general assembly that is celebrated every five years at the See of Peter. Here in the Vatican, you are, in a certain way, at home, as you constitute an ancient pontifical institution placed under the protection of the Holy See. Since the last Consulta of 2013 the Order has grown in the number of its members, in the geographical expansion with the creation of new peripheral articulations, in the material assistance that it has offered the Church in the Holy Land and in the number of pilgrimages made by your members. I thank you for supporting programs that are pastorally and culturally beneficial and I encourage you to continue your commitment, alongside the Latin Patriarchate, in facing the refugee crisis which has led the Church to provide a significant humanitarian response throughout the region in the last five years.



Participants in the Consulta carefully listened to the Pope's message that they have the mandate to transmit to the Knights and Dames of all the continents.

It is a good sign that your initiatives in the field of training and health care are open to all, regardless of the communities they belong to or the religion professed. In this way you help to pave the way to the knowledge of Christian values, to the promotion of interreligious dialogue, mutual respect and mutual understanding. In other words, through your commendable commitment, you too contribute to the construction of the path that will lead, we all hope, to the achievement of peace throughout the region.

I know that this week you have focused on the role of local leaders, or Lieutenants, present in over thirty nations and areas of the world where your Order is active. Certainly the continuous growth of the Order depends on your incessant and ever renewed commitment. In this regard, it is important not to forget that the main purpose of your Order lies in the spiritual growth of its members. Therefore, any success of your initiatives

can not be separated from appropriate religious formation programs aimed at each Knight and each Dame, so that they consolidate their indispensable relationship with the Lord Jesus, especially in prayer, in the meditation of the Holy Scriptures and in the deepening of Church doctrine. It is above all the task of you leaders to offer an example of intense spiritual life and concrete adherence to the Lord: you will thus be able to render a valid service of authority to those who are subject to you.

As for your mission in the world, do not forget that you are not a philanthropic agency committed to promoting the material and social progress of your beneficiaries. You are called to place the evangelical love of neighbor as the purpose of your work, to witness everywhere the goodness and care with which God loves everyone. The admission into your Order of Bishops, Priests and Deacons is not an honor. It is part of those duties of their pastoral service to assist those among you who have a responsibility role by providing opportunities for community and liturgical prayer at every level, continuous spiritual opportunities and catechesis for ongoing formation and for the growth of all the members of

the Order.

It is in front of the whole world – which too often turns its gaze to the other side – the dramatic situation of Christians who are persecuted and killed in ever-increasing numbers. In addition to their martyrdom in their blood there is also their ‘white martyrdom,’ such as that which occurs in democratic countries when freedom of religion is restricted. Alongside your work in favor of people so harshly tried, I urge you to always associate the prayer, to constantly invoke Our Lady, whom you venerate with the title of “Our Lady of Palestine”. She is the caring Mother and the Help of Christians, for whom she obtains strength and comfort from the Lord in sorrow.

May the icon of Our Lady of Persecuted Christians, which I will soon bless and you will all receive to carry her to each of your Lieutenancies, accompany your journey. Let us together invoke Mary’s concern for the Church in the Holy Land and, more generally, in the Middle East, together with her special intercession and for those whose life and freedom are in danger. I accompany your precious and indefatigable work with my Blessing, and I ask you to please pray for me. Thank you.

Complete coverage of the event:

On our website www.oessh.va, you will find a special page dedicated to the 2018 Consulta. In addition to the various articles on the assembly, you will find some videos with the thanks received from the institutions of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem addressed to the members of the Order.



Grand Master's Greeting of the Holy Father on the occasion of the Consulta 2018

Your Holiness:

We are honored by your invitation to this Audience and grateful for this opportunity to hear your words and receive your blessing.

Present here are the leadership of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem representing 64 Lieutenancies from 40 countries and territories. Ours is an ancient Pontifical institution presently enjoying a time of strong development in terms of increased members, geographical expansion and financial support. Especially in these days, for everyone it is a great joy to observe the ongoing growth of a Catholic association.

Every 5 years according to our Statutes we gather as a Consulta to discuss matters of importance to the Order in developing the growth of personal holiness of our more than 30,000 members. We also seek ways of how we can more effectively serve and support the needs of the Church in the Holy Land in serving the pastoral, spiritual and humanitarian needs of our fellow Christians there.

Our support goes especially to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, but also to independent Catholic institutions and to the other sui iuris Churches. Let me underline that all the schools, universities and health-care centers that we support are open to everyone regardless of their



religion or the community to which they belong. In addition to prayerful and material support our members are pledged to regular pilgrimages to the Holy Land to show our solidarity with the faithful in their daily trials and challenges.

This week we have profitably considered the pivotal role of our lieutenants in fostering the goals of our Order. We have also taken note of the growing persecution of Christians in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East. We know how often you have spoken of this continuing tragedy. We humbly ask you to bless the icon of Our Lady of Persecuted Christians copies of which our members will take to their lieutenancies for prayerful intercession.

We repeat our thanks, Holy Father, and we assure you of our prayers in your ministry and our unflinching loyalty to the Successor of St. Peter.

The Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre: a fruitful collaboration

*Discourse by Cardinal Leonardo Sandri
at the press conference to present the Consulta*

On 7 November 2018, a few days before the beginning of the Consulta, the Grand Master Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, was joined by Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches – with whom the Order of the Holy Sepulchre cooperates mainly through the offices of ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for Oriental Churches) – and the Governor General of the Order, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, to present the program of the 2018 Consultato the journalists at the Holy See Press Office. Lieutenant General, Professor Agostino Borromeo, and the Lieutenant for Switzerland, Professor Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger were also present. During his speech, widely reported by the press, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, said that, in respect of the different competences, the communion of objectives between the Congregation presided over by him and the Order was manifest at various levels, from the most institutional to the most operational. “I am thinking above all of the presence of Cardinal O'Brien among the Members of the Dicastery, as well as the fact that the Order is a member of ROACO, with a presence at the plenary table in June of the Governor General Ambassador Visconti di Modrone as well as his predecessor Prof. Agostino Borromeo, and annually the Order guarantees the financing of various development projects, assistance to the pastoral reality and more generally to the life of the Eastern Churches.” We have chosen to publish excerpts from the speech by Cardinal Sandri in this edition of the *Jerusalem Cross*, to have a written memory.

Many of you who regularly walk along the Via della Conciliazione to come here to the Press Office, may have had occasion to stop to look at two buildings, one almost in front of the other: The Palazzo della Rovere, with the windows dotted with the motto “Soli Deo Gloria”, and at the top the flag of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre flying, and Palazzo Bramante, its façade recently restored thanks to APSA (Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See), seat of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. [...]

The Congregation for the Oriental Churches on the one side, and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre on the other, have not been created throughout history to preserve something archaeological or ancient, but the concrete life of our Christian brothers and sisters in the lands visited by the presence of the Savior, from whom the precious treasure of the Gospel and the sparks of Pentecostal fire have come to us. The sad events of recent years, especially in Syria and in Iraq, not forgetting Egypt, a place of recent martyrdom, and the continuing tension on the future between Israel and Palestine, have garnered the awareness throughout the world that the land there is still home to someone who has always lived there by belonging to Christ, and various efforts have been made so that they can continue to live in peace and finally with the fullness of the status of citizens and not only of *dhimmi* or “minority”. [...]

There is concrete life of Christian people like us: we in the wellbeing of the West are asked to live the faith in fullness, with that awakening of the joy of the Gospel that the Pope continues to call us to. For them there is a need for faith to be internalized and not just a matter of family tradition or of the clan or village. The Glory of God is the living man, the



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maintains to support the life of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, especially since its reconstitution in 1847 with the Bull *Nulla celebrior* of the Blessed Pope Pius IX, could appear: most of the competences previously reserved for the Custody of the Holy Land with regard to the Order passed to the new ecclesiastical circumscription. Without forgetting what the Patriarch Barlassina did (1920-1947), to whose merits the revitalization of the activities of the Knights should be ascribed so that their way of supporting the life of the Church in the Holy Land would be more organic and updated, as documented in some articles and publications by Prof. Paolo Pieraccini.

(authentic) life of man is precisely God's vision.

This is to make you realize – as we often suggest in pilgrimages or writing the Letter for Good Friday Collection – to go to the Holy Land not only to see the stones of the shrines and the remains of the biblical testimonies, but to meet the Christian communities, with their life, their challenges and sufferings, their daily charity. I can say with great joy that the union of intentions – in respect of the different competences – between the Congregation that I preside and the Order manifests itself on several levels, from the more institutional to the more operative ones. I am thinking above all of the presence of Cardinal O'Brien among the Members of the Dicastery, as well as the fact that Order is a member of ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for Oriental Churches), with a presence at the plenary table in June of the Governor General Ambassador Visconti di Modrone as well as his predecessor Prof. Agostino Borremeo, and annually the Order guarantees the financing of various development projects, assistance to the pastoral reality and more generally to the life of the Oriental Churches. This should not be overlooked, because at first glance only the stable link that the Order

Cardinal Sandri (right) next to Cardinal O'Brien and Governor General Visconti di Modrone, at the Holy See Press Office on November 7, 2018.

A particular and due recognition should be expressed to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for the extraordinary effort expressed – in collaboration with other organisms of the Holy See, starting from the Secretariat of State with the establishment of the Vatican Foundation St. John the Baptist – to contribute to the work of reorganization not only of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, bringing some offices to the level of international standards through the work of some specialized professionals, in addition to the decisive contribution that we hope will continue to reach the full sustainability of the University of Madaba, in Jordan. [...]

One last thank you, I say it in reference to a living reality of the Holy Land, the Effatà center for hearing impaired children remembering the one who tenaciously wanted it from his trip to the Holy Land in 1964: St. Paul VI. I conclude with the words that the Holy Pontiff addressed on May 30 of the same year to the members of the Order who came to visit the Successor of Peter “And with the wish, the prayer, which responds no less to your Statutes, than to Our solitudes for that blessed Land, where the Holy Sepulchre has its seat, and where We ourselves have had the great fortune of accomplishing, as you know, a humble, but moving and celebrated pilgrimage: continue to love those Holy Places, of an increasingly intense and pious

“ Keep honoring the land sanctified by the steps of the Son of God made Son of man ”
Saint Paul VI, in 1964

predilection; keep looking for and honoring the land sanctified by the steps of the Son of God made Son of man; continue to promote the works of religion, education, and charity there which attest to the tenacious and loving presence of the Catholic Church; increase, as your spiritual and corporal charity efforts for those peoples may be,

that the meeting with them, so lively and cordial on their part, has made us even more dear; and let them see that your Crusade wants to be that of charity, of harmony, of peace; that of the Gospel of Christ, which in the service of the Catholic Church and its most faithful and industrious children, does not want anything but the true salvation of all.”

The *ExsulteT* oratory inspired by the Holy Sepulchre

An opera that invites wonder, reflection and conversion of those who wish to allow the light of Christ to transfigure their lives.

In the context of the Consulta, Cardinal Edwin O’Brien – Grand Master – commissioned a cultural work to remember the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Therefore, Marcello Bronzetti “ilFedeleamato” (Faithful Beloved) was asked to compose a sacred oratory, as he had done on several occasions, for example with the *Mother* oratory for the official celebrations of the canonization of Mother Teresa of Calcutta or with the *Aquerò* oratory, for the 160th anniversary of the apparitions of Lourdes. This is how *ExsulteT* was born, an oratory inspired by the Holy Sepulchre, put into music and words by narrator, soloists, chorus and orchestra.

It was presented for the first time on the evening of November 13, 2018 in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome, where the relics of the cross of Jesus are venerated, brought from the Holy Land by Saint Helen – patroness of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre – and kept in this same place of worship, with one of the nails of the crucifixion.

The date of November 13 marks the recurrence of

the arrival of the image of the Virgin of the Rosary to the Marian city of Pompeii, founded by Bartolo Longo, the only lay member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre to have been beatified.

In the presence of the Lieutenants of the Order, from six continents, and of numerous personalities, including the Grand Master of the Order of Malta and the Archbishop of Pompeii, the fifty volunteer members of the choir “Fideles et Amati” – directed by Tina Vasaturo – gave voice to the interior pilgrimage of Blessed Bartolo Longo, led by Saint Helen, mother of the Emperor Constantine, through the Gospel story of the Resurrection. During the evening, the *ExsulteT* oratory allowed the members of the Order and friends – united in prayer – to ask the Lord for the grace to make their life a Holy Land, following the example of Bartolo Longo.

On request, this work can be represented in other places, thus continuing to spread the spiritual message of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and to make better known the vocation of the members themselves to daily sanctity.

Applauded for its artistic quality and spiritual depth, the ExsulteT Oratory, which united Saint Helen and Bartolo Longo on stage, brought together the Grand Masters of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and the Order of Malta in the same fraternal fervour.

For more information, contact Marcello Bronzetti: marcello.bronzetti@icloud.com



Praying with the Grand Master

Among the material prepared for the Consulta, each Lieutenant and Magistral Delegate received the new spiritual booklet produced by the Grand Magisterium: this year it is a guide to prayer with the Grand Master, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien.

Each month we offer an introductory text on the theme chosen for reflection, a comment by the Grand Master, a text from the Scriptures or important authors for further study and a proposal for a commitment to be made for the current month.

Here, for example, is what the booklet proposes for the month of November: an invitation to deepen our understanding of our symbols:

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre has its roots in the past and, through the living bond with its history, each day the Knights and Dames experience the beauty of the continuity and fidelity of a calling that continues to be transmitted generation after generation. Together with a mission we also receive symbols, decorations, cloaks that evoke, first of all to ourselves, our calling. These outward signs also allow us to be a visible witness on some occasions but our testimony is empty if it is not supported by something far more profound: our spiritual life nourished by the awareness of God's love, our commitment and our fidelity to the Church.

THE GRAND MASTER SAYS:

In his appointment by Pope Pius XII as first Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Cardinal Nicola Canali reminds us of the role which our Order should play in each of our lives as members:

"No vanity and pride of decoration and uniform, no matter how honorable and deserving they may be, should enchant those whom the Supreme Pontiff has honored. The only gesture of boasting that we may manifest is under the banner of the Risen Christ...before the empty Sepulchre."

We should take pride in the symbols of our Order – Capes with crosses, sword and spurs banners with the cross of victory – these are rich in historical memory and content. But they lose their



meaning and value if our enchantment ends there: until and unless they remind us and commit us to the awesome spiritual roots that deepen our love and devotion to the Risen Christ and his Holy Land.

Edwin Cardinal O'Brien

TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

The garments which we wear – with the Jerusalem Cross symbolizing the five wounds of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – are designed not to set us apart as special people, which we are not, but to remind ourselves and others of our special obligation to be identified with the Passion of Christ and to assist the Christians who live in the land made holy by Him.

Cardinal John Foley
*then Grand Master of the Order,
Opening Mass of Consulta 2008*

A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH

Let us take the time to recall the words we heard from the Celebrant who presided over the Ceremony of Investiture the day we entered into the Order.

The booklet can be downloaded on the Grand Magisterium website (www.oessh.va) in the MEDIA section.

How do young people live in the Holy Land?

*Interview with Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa,
Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem*

In this issue of the *Jerusalem Cross*, we asked Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, to tell us something more about the life of the young people of the Holy Land, also in light of the Synod on Youth that took place last October.

Archbishop Pizzaballa, you took part in an important moment in the life of the Church in 2018: the Synod on young people, their faith and vocational discernment. What emerged from the Synod that is of particular relevance to young people in the Holy Land?

Nothing addressed directly the young people of the Holy Land. The Synod must produce documents of a general nature and the young people of the Holy Land are no different from the young people of the rest of the world. What has been interesting for me is that I have had the opportunity to listen to the experience of the bishops of

Youth of the Holy Land at the World Youth Day in Panama.

other parts of the world because this helps us to view our problems in proportion to others. In fact, when we compare ourselves with others, we notice that the dynamics are quite similar.

However, the Holy Land has something special to offer to young people around the world...

During the Synod, there was talk of discernment, evangelization and transmission of the faith. In this context, the Holy Land is a particular place, unique I dare to say, because our faith as an incarnated and historical faith has its roots there. It is therefore a formidable instrument of evangelization and re-evangelization. In this sense, organized pilgrimages to the Holy Land for young people, which are increasingly frequent initiatives, are an extraordinary occasion and usually constitute a point of no return.

In recent years, the Latin Patriarchate has invested particular energy in the activities of the catechetical office. Can you tell us something about this?



All our catechetical manuals were a little dated and it was necessary to rethink them keeping in mind the generational changes that have taken place. For this reason, an effort was made to create a new edition that is not only more attractive in format but rewritten with awareness of the mind-set of our young people. These manuals were not written by nuns and priests but by involving the young people themselves with their sensitivity. It was and still is a wonderful experience: the joyful participation of the young people who felt involved was thrilling. If we had done this with the usual priests, it would have been an extra mandate perhaps accomplished with difficulty, but instead this has set in motion positive dynamics and it is a methodology that needs to be extended also in other sectors.

The schools are an important institution of the Latin Patriarchate and the members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre support them with conviction. What determines their centrality at the heart of the diocese you are called to administer?

The Christian faith of young people is the engine of hope and commitment to a future that is often difficult to perceive in the Holy Land.

Without schools, there is no church. More than the parish and other activities, the school is the reference point around which the Christian community revolves. The hearts of families are children and the first concern of parents is their formation. Therefore, we reach families through the schools.

The question of Christian identity and community, also pass through the school. The school creates communities starting with children. Often if you invite families to a formation course, they do not come, but if you contact them to talk about school matters or the young people, they come immediately because it is something they care about deeply.

Another important aspect is that through the school we come into contact with the territory. In our schools, the majority of students are often Muslim. It is in our vocation to be in dialogue with everyone, not only in an abstract or theological way but also by experimenting the dialogue of life, and school in this sense is fundamental.

How do young people experience the complex political situation in the lands they inhabit?

It is difficult to find one word that would encompass all the young people in this field. The young, because of their age, are more passionate and expresses their passion in different ways: there are those who fight their way through life and this happens more with young Muslims than Christians; those for whom passion becomes frustration in the face of yet another spiral of violence and future perspectives that close more than open up; or there are those who roll up their sleeves to get back into the game. We need to invest in this last group that certainly does not make news like the others but that exists.

Interview by Elena Dini





The projects supported by the Order give priority to people. They are the real wealth of local communities in the Holy Land.

Some projects carried out in the Holy Land

Many small initiatives in contact with people

Over the past two years, the Grand Magisterium, in agreement with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, has decided to invest more on some small projects in the Holy Land compared to large construction projects. In 2018 the Grand Magisterium of the Order continued its support of those major projects already underway, such as the completion of the work in the new church in Jubeiha and the restructuring of a kindergarten in Hashimi (both in Jordan), but above all the important project that provides for the increase in salaries for teachers of the schools of the Patriarchate.

This initiative allows students to continue to have a high-level education while respecting the skills of their teachers whose pay must reflect their abilities.

In addition to these projects and the important monthly aid sent to support the institutional expenses of the Patriarchate – for example, the seminary or school fee subsidies for students who have difficulty paying – other smaller projects are outlined in the following pages.

Various projects involve minor renovations. Unless we understand the daily life of the structures that require them, these projects may seem far from urgent. Yet, we can all imagine how much more complicated normal activities become in a dilapidated environment.

The Beit Afram elderly home in Taybeh in Palestine is home to 28 elders from various Palestinian cities and Jerusalem. The mission of this centre is to offer a healthy place permeated by a family spirit that provides a better quality of life and medical care to the people who need it. In the summer months the hospice kitchen can reach 50° C, meaning it is impossible for the staff to prepare lunch. One of the small projects implemented in 2018 donated an **air conditioning system** to this structure.

Through another project that required help for an **air conditioning system**, we came to discover the story of a small Christian village in Jordan in a semi-desert area: **Smakieh**. The land on which the village stands was donated to the Christian community by the progenitor of the Majali Muslim family in the name of good relations between this family and the Christian community. Today it is home to 300 Bedouin families belonging to two historical Catholic tribes, one from the Latin rite and the other from the Greek rite. Because of the location, summers are extremely hot and winters can be very cold. The air conditioning system of the Latin church of Saint Michael had to be repaired to allow the elderly and young children to participate in church functions.

To help cover electricity costs, **Ein Arik** (next to Ramallah, in Palestine) decided to **build a solar panel system for the church and the Catholic school in the city**. This system has already been tested in the

Various projects are at the service of education: in this photo the new IT equipment in a school in Palestine.



schools of the Patriarchate in five other cities, with good results. Over time, what is saved on electricity will be reinvested in projects to the benefit of students and the population.

Additionally, **the school in Kerak** needed a **video surveillance system**. Unfortunately, in December 2016, the city was the target of a terrorist attack and the police requested the Latin Patriarchate provide security cameras for this school that welcomes a thousand students, some of whom live even 40 km away. These children face this journey every day to receive their education here.

The Latin school of **Beit Jala** with more than 700 students sought funding for **new equipment for their computer lab**, thus allowing the school to offer more computer stations for students. In today's world, the importance of being able to keep up with the technology to face the world of work is clear.

Students in the **school in About in Palestine** have had to move to other villages to complete their education since the structure until now housed only up to year nine of compulsory education. The structure requires one more classroom to allow students to also attend the tenth year by taking advantage of the premises dedicated to the Christian educational centre. This is why the project would like to be able to build a **new room for pastoral activities**.

Some small projects have **renovated the houses where the Rosary Sisters live in Rameh** (in Israel), **Hashimi and Amman** (in Jordan). The Sisters of the Holy Rosary of Jerusalem are the only religious female congregation of Latin rite of Arab origin in the Holy Land and are at the service of the diocese in many ways and in various structures, especially in schools and parishes. Pope Francis proclaimed the foundress, Mother Marie Alphonsine, a saint on May 17, 2015.

Another small structural project concerns **the headquarters of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem**. With the restoration of the Patriarchate in the 19th century, a building was built to house its headquarters and this occurred above **six water tanks** that have since been used as a precious source of water for priests living in the convent and employees, as

well as for irrigation. Recent studies have shown that water quality is no longer good and poses a risk to health, thus requiring **restructuring and cleaning** work.

Staying on the subject of water, another project involves the disabled guests of the **Our Lady of Peace Centre next to Amman**. Opened in 2004, this centre offers day care for disabled people and their families. Every year, 2000 people are welcomed here and it is the largest, free of cost rehabilitation centre in Jordan. In the physiotherapy department, among the various equipment available, there is also a hydrotherapy pool. The ability to float and the warm waters reduce pain and muscle spasms. The pool has been unusable for several months because of the need to restore its filters before it is fit to welcome its guests again.

In 2011, **Our Lady of Peace Centre** opened a second facility in Jordan, in **Aqaba**. One of the small projects carried out in 2018 has supported an initiative aimed at creating jobs for disabled young people and



Various activities proposed at the Our Lady of Peace Centre in Jordan are carried out with the help of the Order.

The pastoral care of migrants is an important reality for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which benefits in this area from the support of the Order.

for some unemployed Syrian refugee women living in the area. Some large hotels, like the Hilton, have agreed to donate to the project used **soap bars** that are left in hotel rooms. In the Aqaba Centre, they are reworked to be **recycled by disabled children**, and women are involved in marketing these products. The loan requested was used to cover the purchase of machinery and costs for licenses.

Another project benefits the **Palestine Scouts**. To date 1500 young people are part of the Catholic scouts

and they live their ecclesial membership with joy and dynamism. Among the many activities, the children go on excursions, camping, volunteering and contribute to the well-being of the society in which they live. To continue all this, adequate facilities are needed and, in some cases, the right equipment. This project, in fact, has allowed the purchase of **10 tents** to allow young people to experience summer camps and **2000 badges** not only for Palestinian children but also for

international scout groups when they are on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Another project focuses on the young people of **Gaza**. The parish priest of the only Catholic church in Gaza, the Church of the Holy Family, together with the other members of the church and the Patriarchate, wants to open a **Christian cultural centre** for young people in which young people can access a more specific formation that prepares them for the jobs market, given the very high percentage of unemployment in Gaza. The goal is to provide courses, for example, in English, IT,



leadership and management.

The **employees of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem** were also asked to participate in **training courses** to increase their skills and knowledge. Another project that closely touches the headquarters of the Patriarchate concerns the work necessary to **preserve, catalog and enhance its cultural heritage**. Since 1847, in fact, various objects have become part of its heritage: liturgical objects, sacred vestments, religious works of art, books and gifts received, as well as a collection of 3000 photos that need to be digitized and made available for exhibitions. The main goal is to boost awareness of the history of the diocese and the mission of the Patriarchate.

In **Jordan**, a request was received to support pastoral work with migrants. Unfortunately, foreign workers from Sri Lanka (20,000 of whom 8,000 are Christians) and the Philippines (45,000 of whom 85% are Catholics) remain a category vulnerable to abuses and exploitation. In 2016, the Lieutenancy for the Philippines of the Order committed to sending a Filipino chaplain to this community for

their spiritual needs and this commitment continues through economic support **in favour of pastoral activities** that allow these migrant communities to organize initiatives, have spaces to meet and share their experiences and produce books and liturgical aids in their languages.

The last project supported in 2018 concerns **assistance to prisoners in Jordan**. Since 2008, the Patriarchate with a group of volunteers has started to go to visit the detention centres regularly, together with the Caritas staff. There are about 200 Christians in the 13 Jordanian jails. A Sri Lankan sister says: "Very often, Sinhalese women are not guilty of important crimes, their crime is to have left their employer before the end of the contract, sometimes they were victims of abuse, and some have stolen but rarely is it about major crimes. Caritas helps them return home; without this help, these women would likely remain in prison for the rest of their lives because the embassies do not help them". Therefore, sometimes, this project covers the cost of airfare home, but also medicines, clothes, religious items and even food.

Projects carried out in collaboration with the Congregation for the Oriental Churches

During 2018, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre financed nine projects in the context of the Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches. In the first half of the year, these included a new generator (required by law) for the St. Vincent de Paul Hospice in Jerusalem. "Now thanks to you, the new generator can supply the whole building," writes Sister Simone Abi Dib. In addition, the home of the Community of the Beatitudes Emmaus-Nicopolis next to Latrun in Israel has managed to carry out work to improve the supply of electricity and gas in the spaces for the reception of pilgrims. Brother Anton Magrachov, from the Community of the Beatitudes, said: "We thank the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for the generous gift that has helped us to carry out this project through which we will offer better accommodation to the pilgrims".

Thanks to the funding of the Order, the "Peter Nettekoven" school of the Greek Catholic Patriarchate in Beit Sahour was able to purchase computers and equipment for classes while the community of the Greek-Melchite church Maghar was able to open its renovated parish hall in 2018.

In the second half of the year, three projects benefited the Bethlehem area: fire safety works at the Holy Family Hospital and the restructuring of the Maronite house of Saint Charbel and the kitchen of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters in a refugee camp. The Order also supported the renovation of an atrium in the school of the Sisters of the Apparition in Ramallah, as well as the ventilation of the classrooms in the Saint Mary kindergarten, in Bethany (Jerusalem).



The Hospice of Saint Vincent de Paul in Jerusalem.

The Hebrew speaking Catholics and migrants: the Patriarchate's pastoral outreach

The Saint James Vicariate and the Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers are placed under the responsibility of Patriarchal Vicar Father Rafic Nahra. He outlines the history and the mission of these two Vicariates for the *Jerusalem Cross*.



Sixty-four years have passed since the foundation of the Association of Saint James, which later became the Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel. The first step towards the establishment of the Vicariate was the appointment of Msgr. Jean-Baptiste Gourion, in 1990, Patriarchal Vicar in charge of Hebrew-speaking Catholics (he was ordained bishop in 2003).

After the death of Bishop Gourion in 2005, the post of Vicar passed to Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa (then Custos of the Holy Land) from 2005 to 2009, followed by Father David Neuhaus from 2009 to 2017. It was in 2013, at the time of Father David, when the Saint James Vicariate received its official status from the Holy See, as proof of its particular identity and mission. From 2017, I personally hold the position of Vicar.

Members of the Holy Land Commission of the Grand Magisterium in 2018 with the Governor General (centre) and Father Rafic Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar (right).

The Vicariate – which includes Hebrew-speaking and Russian-speaking Catholics – is an integral part of the Latin Patriarchate and is essentially active in large urban areas. Hebrew-speaking parish

communities exist in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Beersheva, Haifa and Tiberias, considering that the faithful of surrounding towns and villages move to reach these communities.

With regards the Russian-speaking communities, the two leaders meet to pray regularly on a weekly basis in Latrun and Haifa; added to these are other small communities that meet sporadically. Eleven priests – two of whom



“We believe in Jesus and we speak Hebrew”

Interview with Deacon Benedetto Di Bitonto of the St. James Vicariate led by Father Rafic Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar of Hebrew speaking Catholics

How is the Vicariate of St. James organized for Hebrew-speaking Catholics, how many faithful do you count and in which cities mainly?

Our Vicariate is made up of small communities, of which only two are parishes, where everything takes place in the Hebrew language, from the liturgical celebration to pastoral action. Our great handicap is the scarcity of adequate structures and funds to carry forward the numerous initiatives that grow from year to year. Thank goodness, there are Christian organizations that support and fund us with their contributions; otherwise, we would be unable to accomplish anything. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre has a fundamental role in this support, and we are deeply grateful to you all. I do not know the exact numbers of our faithful, but I know for sure that in the last ten years we have grown in participation. Since 2010, we have also discovered the great world of migrants and foreign workers, who number in the tens of thousands here in Israel. Since then we have been caring for their children with targeted initiatives: kindergartens, catechesis, school camps 4 times a year, formation



... Since I have been here, I find myself among children of all origins, and we all have two things in common: we believe in Jesus and we speak Hebrew. A decidedly unique experience for which I thank God sincerely.

A deacon since June 2018, soon you will be a priest, a member of the St. James Vicariate of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: can you tell us what your mission consists of, how your days unfold and what is the fulcrum of your pastoral action?

In 2011, returning from the WYD in Madrid with our youth group “Perah ha-midbar” (Desert Flower) I spoke with the then Patriarchal Vicar, Father David

Deacon Benedetto Di Bitonto lives his service with the Hebrew-speaking Catholics in Israel who are often foreign workers who speak the language of the host country.

are currently retired – care for our communities.

The families of the Vicariate are predominantly middle class. One of their main challenges is the transmission of faith: children mostly attend the Israeli public school system (since there are no Hebrew-speaking Christian institutions) and – as a minority in a secularized world – risk losing their Christian identity. For this reason, the Vicariate invests heavily in the pastoral care of young people.

Neuhaus, with whom I lived in community for 7 years, and I expressed my desire to become a priest for the Vicariate. As soon as I finished my PhD, I was admitted to philosophical studies, and then to theological studies. My path was not entirely easy because for all the six years of study I was the only seminarian for our Vicariate. This has a little influence on my perception of formation, but in the end it is more for the better than for the worse, because it opened me up to form fraternal relationships with more young people who are also in religious formation: Franciscans, Salesians and Arab seminarians of the patriarchal seminary of Bet Jala. In the end, I am a son and brother to everyone.

During these years Father Rafic Nahra, today our Vicar, accompanied me and followed me. I live in community with him and with the priest in charge of the community of Jerusalem and others who come to stay with us for periods of varying duration. Together we pray the Morning Prayers (in Hebrew). During the day, everyone is

A moment of prayer during an interreligious meeting in Jerusalem, with the participation of those responsible for the Saint James Vicariate.



The Saint James Vicariate – given the context of life – is particularly sensitive to relations with the Jewish world, which are primarily neighbourhood relations. Some of our priests and faithful also engage in interreligious dialogue, which includes Jews and Muslims on various occasions.

The pastoral work of the Vicariate with migrants began in 2010 when Father David Neuhaus and his collaborators began teaching catechism in Hebrew to the Filipino children in southern Tel Aviv who attended the Israeli school and whose first language was Hebrew.

Later, in 2014, we opened nursery schools for migrants and asylum seekers (from 3 months to 3

busy with his commitments. If our lunchtimes coincide we take advantage of the time to update each other, but our days are rather hectic and each of us is engaged in a particular area, so that we do not always meet “in the field”, but in the evening we always come together for Mass and dinner.

The task of the St. James Vicariate is to ensure pastoral assistance to the Catholic faithful who live in the Israeli society, who speak the Hebrew language, and constitute a unique event in history, from the times of the early Church: to be a Christian

years old), knowing that their parents were forced to work all day long to earn a living.

We have also progressively developed our pastoral care of young people, to accompany them, instruct them and allow them to integrate into the local Church as well as into Israeli society. The development of activities for the benefit of migrants and their children led to the creation – within the Latin Patriarchate – of the Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers, during Pentecost 2018.

Allow me to express my heartfelt thanks to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, which has helped the Saint James Vicariate down through the years, offering moral and material support for our

mission. I thank the Knights and Dames for their constant attention and zeal in helping us in our the pastoral action of the Patriarchate in favour of migrants and their children, permitting them to lead a dignified existence, despite the precarious living conditions and the various risks that are posed.

Father Rafic Nahra
Patriarchal Vicar

You can find all of the latest news on the Saint James Vicariate and its activities on our website: www.catholic.co.il

minority within of a strong Jewish majority. This essentially means ordinary (parishes, catechesis, sacraments, service to the poor and the sick ...) and extraordinary (school camps for children, special activities for families, care and accompaniment for young people, pilgrimages ...) pastoral care.

Catholics are often unaware of their Jewish roots: how does the St. James Vicariate help the Church return to its spiritual origin, especially in liturgical formation? Do you organize meetings between Catholics and Jews, as well as days for exchanges and sharing? Does your experience have an echo on a universal scale?

There is no doubt that our faith was born in the bosom of the Jewish people and that as Christians we owe much to the People of the Covenant. What is important for us is the expression of our Christian faith and our Catholic identity in a language and in a form that is related to the culture of the society in which we live. We do not want our faith to be perceived as something exotic and foreign to the world in which it was born and formed. This means, for example, that our places of worship are very simple, there are not many images (we have no statues, for example) nor are there practices that belong to more Western European Catholicism. Although profoundly Catholic, in our communities, for example, one would not easily find a relic to venerate or a novena dedicated to one Saint rather than another. The emphasis is more on the Word of God, on the biblical experience understood in the light of the tradition of the Church, on an essential

but dignified Eucharistic celebration, on the conviviality of a community on a human scale, in which we all know each other and we all can support one another. All of this undoubtedly prepares the ground for a serene and convivial encounter with our Jewish friends, who find in us a reality that does not frighten them but involves them in a bond of sincere friendship, in which differences are valued and never overlooked.

The Eucharistic celebration is deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition, and it is good to deepen one's knowledge of this reality, being, however, careful not to fall into the sentimental and somewhat simplistic attitudes of those who want to imitate certain Hebrew customs at all costs, affixing them to the Christian liturgy, especially those rites that developed later in Christianity. This is not what I am talking about, I am speaking rather of deepening biblical Judaism, and the one that Jesus, His mother Mary and all the Apostles certainly knew and practiced. Above all to accept the fact that the event Jesus Christ is a watershed in the history of humanity that cannot be ignored or neutralized. The separation of the Church from the Synagogue is something that is hidden in the mystery of God and will only be revealed to us at the end of time. Until then, however, we can still learn to really know each other, to respect each other, to have mutual esteem and work together for a world more similar to the vision of God. We also view Muslim believers in this light, rightfully members of the family of the children of Abraham, who like us have a responsibility to spread the light and love of God, Who loves us all, in the world.

Teaching and transmitting love of the Bible

*A conversation with Father Jean-Jacques Pérennès,
director of the Ecole Biblique of Jerusalem*

Father Pérennès, could you summarize in few words the great history of the Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française (French Bible and Archaeological School) of Jerusalem (EBAF), beginning with its foundation by Father Lagrange in 1890?

The Ecole Biblique was founded by Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange at a time when the progress of modern sciences (history, archaeology, linguistics) seemed to threaten the credibility of the Bible. Eminent scholars such as Ernest Renan and Alfred Loisy left the Catholic Church in a brutal manner, suggesting that it was not able to accept the challenge of a critical reading of the Bible. At the end of a rigorous Thomist formation in Salamanca and of Oriental studies in Vienna, Father Lagrange arrived in Jerusalem, convinced that the Christian faith had nothing to fear from

this comparison with reason. He established a passionate group of young religious, specialized in the various disciplines that help to understand the sacred texts: ancient languages, history of the Near East, geography of the Holy Land, archaeology, epigraphy, etc. He elaborated a method of reading, the *historical method*, for which he was suspected of modernism, an accusation he particularly suffered. However, he always remained obedient to the Church, even to the point of agreeing not to publish his own Commentary on Genesis (ready in 1905) and to focus on the less problematic New Testament. Nowadays, the elements of the *historical method* (presence of literary genres, editorial layers, etc.) are applied by all researchers and by the Catholic Church at the highest levels (see the encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu* of Pius XII, 1943). Intellectual rigor, love for the Holy

Land and fidelity to the Church characterize the founding work of Father Lagrange, who one day should be beatified.

The director of the Ecole biblique of Jerusalem while showing the institute's impressive collection of books and precious archaeological finds.

What concrete service does the EBAF guarantee in the context of universal studies of the Bible?

Since its foundation, the Ecole Biblique has applied a precise method: the study of the Bible in the lands of the Bible, according to Lagrange, brings “the document closer to the monument.” Its professors have travelled far and wide throughout the biblical regions, from Syria to

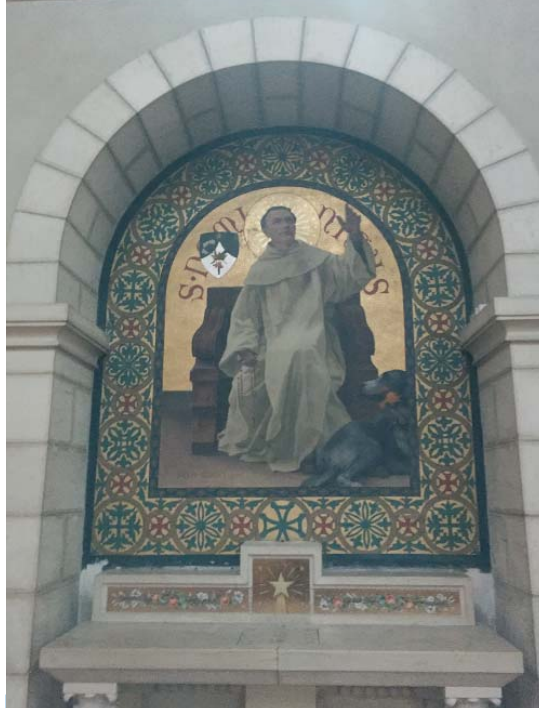


northern Arabia, from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean. They have led their students on rigorous field studies, regularly described in the *Revue Biblique*, which has been published four times a year since 1892. The seriousness of the research carried out meant that in 1920 the Ecole was recognized by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres as a French archaeological school. The Ecole Biblique has also trained generations of specialists in Biblical science. On the other hand, it is one of the rare Catholic institutes authorized to issue the PhD title in this area.

Finally, it makes available to the faithful the fruit of its research, thanks above all to the Jerusalem Bible, which the Dominicans of Jerusalem have been publishing for the past half century. Currently, an innovative project is bringing this to the Internet: “the Bible in its Traditions”.

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre collaborates with the EBAF, in particular through the library which has 160,000 works. Could you describe the function and wide-ranging influence of this world renowned library?

This library is one of a kind, as it is the result of



Saint Dominic watches over the Ecole Biblique brought forward by his spiritual children.

130 years of acquiring books and magazines, selected by experts in exegesis, history and archaeology. The collection is therefore exceptional. The catalogue is computerized and allows access through ‘biblical pericope’, which is very rare. In addition, the library includes numerous works concerning Qumran and the Dead Sea manuscripts, given the role played by

Father Roland de Vaux, director of the EBAF from 1945 to 1965, who was in charge of those excavations and prestigious archaeological finds. Finally, it is open 24 hours a day for the students and researchers who stay and work at the Ecole Biblique ... An extraordinary facility!

The EBAF is located on the premises of the monastery of Saint Stephen where the community of Dominican friars, to which you belong, lives and works. Can it be said that this community represents the soul of the Ecole Biblique? What roles do the Dominicans play in the many activities that are offered?

It is an essential dimension of the Ecole Biblique: the research is carried out by religious who lead a community life and whose main apostolate consists in studying, teaching and transmitting passion for the Bible. The friars are

Studying the Bible in the land of the Bible

“**S**tudying the Bible in the land of the Bible”: this is how we summarize the activity of researchers and students of the Ecole biblique in Jerusalem. With this beautiful goal, the *Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française* (EBAF) carries on the project of its founder, Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange, in short “scientifically comparing the document and the monument”. The Order of the

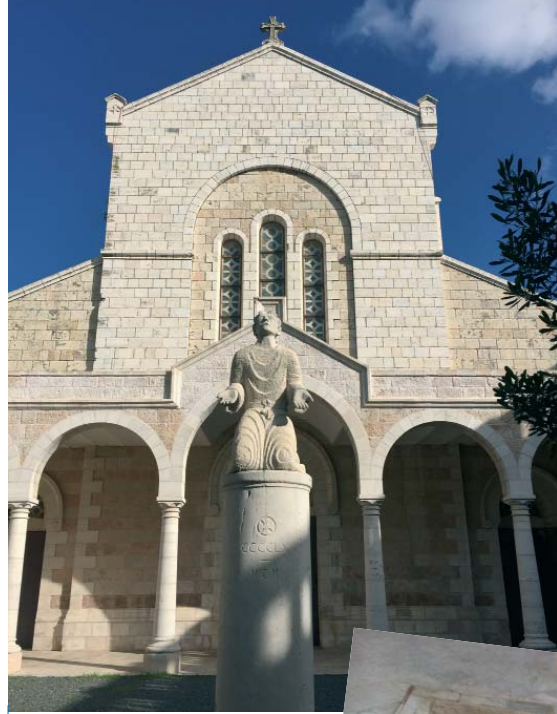
Holy Sepulchre regularly supports this unique and precious enterprise.

Founded in 1890 in the Holy Land, the *Ecole* proposes various university study programs, from a three-year diploma to a doctorate in Sacred Scriptures, as well as conferences, seminars and on-site visits. The Saint Stephen Convent – home to Dominican friars – houses the school premises and

essentially professors and magazine editors. Students are welcomed by this community, with whom they can pray, live and visit the country. The affection of our former students show that such a dimension has given them a great deal.

How is the EBAF funded and do you feel threatened by a proposal Israeli authorities are considering to tax religious communities? If so, who will come to your defence?

We live with precarious resources, consisting of modest contributions from the Dominican Order and from the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as from Catholic aid organizations to the Holy Land, such as the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and the Oeuvre d'Orient. We survive by the fact that our professors are religious who do not receive a real salary. Obviously a tax would threaten our existence, like that of many educational and charitable works of the Holy Land that are non-profits, but must rely on Providence. The Consulate General of France has come to our defence, but it is a battle with unequal arms.



The tomb of Father Lagrange, founder of the Ecole biblique, is located in St. Stephen's Basilica, next to the convent of St. Stephen which houses the Ecole.



More generally, how do you see the future of the Catholic Church in the Holy City? Based on your experience, what are the reasons to hope for an eventual resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict around Jerusalem?

Christians now represent a small minority in Palestine, less than 1% of the population according to the last census. Our mission naturally consists in making the Holy Places accessible, helping the faithful to come and pray. But "the little remnant" that we are currently also has another mission: to

encourage the inhabitants of the country not to despair, to believe that only nonviolence and dialogue will contribute to building a lasting peace.

How does the field of biblical studies favour exchange with the Jewish-Israeli world?

The Bible is greatly studied by Jewish intellectuals, religious and secular. We have much to gain by collaborating with them, although our reading must remain Catholic, since, for us, the Bible is first and foremost an inspired text.

Interview by François Vayne

above all a large, world-renowned library, which has over 160,000 works. The fraternal spirit that reigns in the monastery envelops the entire academic body, creating a climate of community life and prayer that fosters in everyone an insatiable desire to understand, search and probe the foundations of the Christian faith.

In an environment such as this, so conducive to intellectual and spiritual elevation, translations and archaeological analysis unfold, bound by an intimate union between theology and history. "Receive and

transmit", this is the lesson that is experienced at the *Ecole biblique*, in the words of the director, Friar Jean-Jacques Pérennès. This is how everyone intimately draws closer to the mystery of the faith of the Resurrected Christ that truly becomes concrete in Jerusalem.

Pauline Bourgoigne

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Support for the schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: a priority for the Order

Part of the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre's regular financial aid sent to the Holy Land is funding for the diocesan schools of the Latin Patriarchate. This is very important when taking into consideration the salaries of teachers and professors, as well as the related pension funds. These schools allow young Christians to acquire essential skills to find work in their own country and become active participants; moreover, these institutes serve as laboratories for a lived interreligious dialogue, since they welcome a certain number of Muslim students, fostering fraternal bonds, and nurturing bearers of peace in society. With the collaboration of the Communication Service of the Latin Patriarchate, the *Jerusalem Cross* presents the following article on the history and the relevance of this Catholic education network, which is both a manifestation of solidarity and efficiency.

The schools of the Patriarchate were born during the phase of restoration of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem by Pope Pius IX, in 1847. The first Patriarch of the re-established diocese – Monsignor Joseph Valerga – saw these Catholic

institutes, linked to the re-born parishes, as an excellent means to reach the Christians scattered in various villages and cities across the entire territory of the Holy Land. Still today, by participating in the education and teaching of children, the Latin Church accompanies families in their daily lives. These families which represent the true wealth of local Christian communities are oftentimes tried by a difficult reality.

About forty schools of the Latin Patriarchate are active in Jordan, Palestine and Israel. In these institutions, maximum effort is guaranteed to ensure that students are nurtured in a healthy environment and receive quality education, from kindergarten to high school. Good formation is a diocesan priority. This formation brings hope to the young generations and their families.

These schools want to be accessible to anyone, regardless of their income. This is why the poorest are exempted from paying fees. All this is possible thanks to the financial support of Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre: from across the globe they send donations through the Grand Magisterium, which coordinates the aid sent

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre and education

By Professor Bartholomew McGettrick – President of the Holy Land Commission

“What we need is a new spirituality. One that integrates the Hope of the Gospel with the pain of daily living.”



Over many years the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre has been a significant source of funding for the work of the Catholic Church in The Holy Land. Within this the Order has always seen

education as a necessary part of its work. Currently it spends over 44% of its annual budget on schools.

It has done so because it has a concern for the common good of all people, and particularly the Christian communities. A primary role of education is to improve the life chances of all people. In the “Western world” this

is often seen as ensuring young people are literate and numerate; are developing skills and understanding to make them employable; and serving others by their gifts and talents; and so on.

The Governor General visits a kindergarten of the Latin Patriarchate: the Patriarchate's School Management office has inaugurated structures aimed at children, convinced that the environment in which children live between the ages of three and five is decisive for the development of their learning skills and their character.



monthly to Jerusalem from Rome.

The Patriarchate schools employ about 1,600 teachers, administrators and educators, providing an education to almost 20,000 children and adolescents.

In Jordan and Palestine, schools are not funded by the state. However, the authorities in these countries provide textbooks and grants for some specific programs. In order to preserve these subsidies and obtain new ones, the diocese must comply with the requirements of the ministries: propose and maintain a high educational level of teachers as well as infrastructures. Father Iyad Twal, director of the schools of the Patriarchate in Palestine and Israel tells us that “important work has been undertaken to improve working conditions in our schools, both for pupils and for employees to create a more favourable context for learning”. In fact, various small projects financed by the Order (see pages 33-36) follow this direction through reconstruction or the purchase of

computer equipment in some school facilities.

The maintenance of schools in some Palestinian cities remains problematic, given the low incomes of families, strongly affected by unemployment.

In Israel, the role of the schools of the Latin Patriarchate has been recognized since 1989. Despite their significant decline in 2017, the subsidized grants partly cover teachers' salaries and allow them to overcome numerous financial problems. That said, the support offered by the Order remains vital, and has grown in recent years.

Convinced that the environment experienced by children from three to five years is decisive in their developmental abilities, the general direction of the schools of the Latin Patriarchate has opened institutions for preschoolers: Kindergartens. Following this, both primary and secondary level schools follow the students up to the equivalent of a high school diploma, the *Tawjihi*. Therefore,

This is equally true in the Holy Land; and yet the context is so different. There it would be possible to see education also as a means of protecting young people... the vulnerable and those at risk in a world of conflict, indifference... abuse... etc. In the Christian culture of education this is not protection that arises from building external shields, but rather it comes from forming a kind of “inner strength and light” within the person that protects each of us. The Christian school provides the foundation for a caring, compassionate world through the sacred hospitality that comes from the relationships it creates and sustains.

The Order would wish to see high quality education for all people, and so it funds the Patriarchate schools (the “parish schools”). This high

quality which it seeks is not simply implying academic performance alone – important though that might be. It is seeking education that is based on hope, love and justice. These are the qualities that are incarnated in the person and which will form a basis for peace and mutual understanding.

In many countries public education is driven by the measured outcomes of key performance indicators. In considering Christian schools the preoccupation with numbers needs to give way to a legacy of humanity in which the human values deriving from justice, hope and love are paramount. Those are the values that will be transformative – forming people of hope. This is what is needed in The Holy Land.

The question is often posed about the Order

students are accompanied from their infancy to the beginning of adulthood.

A teaching in faith and in favor of peace

To satisfy the current criteria for students and ministries, the Patriarchate has launched a large program of reforms aimed at placing the students at the center of the system, improving teacher training and increasing school autonomy. Nowadays, each institute has the mission of proposing a policy to support teachers' careers, boost motivation and in doing so, provide a high quality education for young people.

Compared to other public or private schools, the infrastructure of the Patriarchate schools can appear outdated. Nevertheless, our schools are committed to applying modern educational methods in line with the needs of the various countries in which they operate, whether in relation to educational, sporting or cultural activities. Every year, new projects are launched to optimize teaching and education, such as the renovation of the spaces and the modernization of didactic materials. These programs are financed partially or in full by some benefactors, primarily from the Knights and Dames of the Order.

The schools also offer complementary, educational, recreational and social programs: for example "Global Generation", which promotes the exchange with other students via Skype; welcoming friends who visit Palestine and Jordan on

pilgrimage; the setting up of workshops focused on peaceful cohabitation and interreligious dialogue; finally, partnership with the 'Barnabé Network', an organization that offers help to teach French.

Parish schools offer a better environment to encourage vocations and represent places of ecumenism par excellence. Since their creation, they have welcomed students from all communities and confessions, imparting a solid religious, moral and intellectual formation. In this regard, Father Iyad Twal states: "Our schools constitute the majority of the Christian schools of Palestine and have the purpose of living the values of the Catholic Church, of ensuring cooperation between Christians from different parishes and finally of promoting coexistence among Christians and Muslims. Our actions are not characterized solely by this religious dimension but by the integral growth of the student, regardless of his or her religion. We stand out for our openness of mind and our will to insist on the personality of each student and their development within society".

The Latin schools promote the human and social development of the neediest populations in the Holy Land. In supporting these institutions which are fundamentally linked to diocesan pastoral care, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre helps stem the Christian emigration from villages to cities, sometimes even international emigration, facilitating the life of local Catholics in the land of their ancestors, which would not be the same without a Christian presence.

funding the education of Muslim children. There are many Muslim children in the Patriarchate schools (59% of students in the Latin Patriarchate schools are Christian; and 41% are Muslim). Inter-religious dialogue is a real missionary challenge, and there may be greater threats to Christian values from secularisation than other religious interests (except extremism). Yet we need to hear the voices of Christians in The Holy Land. They are the voices of reason and of peace.

The quote introducing this set of comments, *"What we need is a new spirituality: One that integrates the hope of the Gospel with the pain of daily living,"* comes from conversations with the Principals of the Patriarchate Schools who

expressed the frustration of leading communities in an environment of constant challenge and feelings of isolation.

So the Order sees itself supporting the Christian communities through teaching as the ministry of hope in the service of the young. It is passionate about finding every way to support the striving for peace in the Middle East. The globalisation of indifference is a severe impediment to this, and yet there is widespread recognition that an educated populace is an essential requirement for peace.

Education inspired by a vision that it is the lifeblood of humanity remains a priority for the Order, It is through the generosity of so many that the Church can make a difference in this way.



PILGRIMAGE, AN ECCLESIAL JOURNEY



The Land that gives Life to life: an interview with a guide of pilgrimages to the Holy Land

Father Sergio Rotasperti is a Biblical scholar and has been accompanying groups of pilgrims to the Holy Land for years. Over the years he has experimented with some ad hoc proposals, from pilgrimages with the Bible in his hands in which he dedicates more time to the meditation of the Word of God to biblical trekking, walking in the Holy Land on foot.

Father Sergio, for many years you have been guiding pilgrimages to the Holy Land “with the Bible in hand.” Can you share some of your experiences with us?

There are so many ways to go to the Holy Land; one of the more profound methods is to go with the aim of deepening our understanding of the Scriptures, starting with Jerusalem. You fully enter

into the Scriptures the moment they take life before your very eyes. Many pilgrims share this experience. Many people say to me: “now going home I understand the Scriptures” perhaps because they can locate the event. Reading the Scriptures on the spot means giving body, eyes, smell, feelings ... everything that a mental reading alone, far from the land, does not give you.

I have studied the Bible for many years, but only when I went to the Holy Land were my eyes opened: the Holy Land is not enough to read Scripture but if you do not read it in the Holy Land your way of reading the Bible remains limited and limiting. In fact, we call it the Fifth Gospel.

Clearly, the relationship between the Bible and the Holy Land does not end once you go to the



Father Sergio Rotasperti, biblical scholar, concelebrates Mass with Archbishop Giovanni Tonucci, Prelate Emeritus of Loreto and member of the Order, during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Holy Land. The Holy Land boosts biblical archaeological knowledge and if one knows how to present the Bible well, it manages to arouse the love for Scripture in the pilgrim that must continue even when we return home. To give dignity to this land we must start from the biblical language.

Listening to you, one can tell that the Holy Land is not just a place of work for you, but it plays a much more complete and deeper part in your life experience...

For me the Holy Land symbolically contains all my being. I believe that the biblical world and its geography recall the entire inner landscape of a person and, therefore, mine too. When I go to the

Holy Land I read and reread the Scriptures with people, but I also read and reread myself. Deepening my experience of this world, I rediscover myself better and it is an ever-new exercise. The texts that are read are always the same but are maieutic and have the power to arouse a response in me by always teasing out new things.

You also lead various Bible treks. How does this journey differ in the vision it allows of places and of the Scripture?

The experience of walking is unique and cannot be compared to any other itinerary. When you travel by bus, you normally experience the territory in a hurry. Trekking across land on foot allows you to recover the dimension of time. From Nazareth to Capernaum by bus, it is twenty minutes, half an hour. Walking this distance on foot may take between three and five hours but the time that you consecrate to this path, taking in every detail, is incomparable.

A couple of years ago I made the journey from Jenin to Jericho. This is not a purely biblical trek but there the experience with the Palestinian people, in walking the land of the patriarchs, was marvellous. We felt welcomed by a people and at

Living as pilgrims to the Holy Land at home

Along the west coast of Ireland is Máméan, a pass in the Maamturk Mountains. It is said that this place was already a religious sanctuary at the time of the Celts and that Christians transformed it into a Christian sanctuary. Closer to our days, in the 18th and 19th centuries, during the time of the Penal Laws,¹ given the not easy accessibility of the place, it became an ideal location to celebrate Mass secretly. Father Francis Mitchell, Ecclesiastical Master of Ceremonies of the

Lieutenancy for Ireland of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and diocesan secretary of the Archbishop of Tuam, tells the moving experience of walking the Via Dolorosa meditating the passion of Christ together with 150 young people in this special place on Good Friday last year, reminding us how much the experience of pilgrimage to the Holy Land that every Dame and Knight of the Order is called to undertake, can often be replicated even a few steps from our home.



the same time, entirely dependent on them and it is something that cannot be described.

Those who choose to go trekking normally feel the desire for something deeper and often experience something similar to that of the disciples of Emmaus. You travel along the way with a stranger and questions about the meaning of life emerge. In this land, people immediately open their hearts, they enter a climate in which they delve within themselves in a way that allows them to share their reflections with others, they

Pilgrimages allow us to draw closer to the Gospel; in the places that Christ and his apostles lived. In this perspective Lake Tiberias is one of the most moving sites.

read the Scriptures, which are the key to the reading of the day and lower all barriers. The walls that can exist between people who do not know each other magically disappear and they are not afraid to bare themselves. I think this is one of the gifts of walking in this land because when you



In his Apostolic Letter *Sanctuarium in Ecclesia*, Pope Francis says: “The Shrine has ‘enormous symbolic value’ in the Church, and becoming a pilgrim is a genuine profession of faith”. Of course, going on pilgrimage to the top of a mountain is nothing new. Scripture scholars tell us that the mountains are mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible and, since the summits of mountains are closer to God who “sits above the vault of the world” (*Is 40,22*), these were places of prayer (*Mt 14,23*) and often locations for divine revelations

decide to go to the Holy Land and to travel on foot it starts already with a desire, a question that seeks an answer, whether human or spiritual, a pain, or it is someone who is in some conflictual situation or has to make a difficult choice.

In these years of pilgrimages, can you tell us about a particular situation or person that remains in your heart?

The story I am about to tell has evangelized my life and my way of thinking about death. A couple had long sought to go to the Holy Land but, for one reason or another, they had never been able to. His wife was diagnosed with bone cancer near their thirtieth wedding anniversary. Before dying, she told her husband that she wanted to make this pilgrimage to the Holy Land and they decided to travel with their son. Obviously, no agency wanted to take them ... The agency I work with contacted me to tell me that it did not feel like refusing their request and they asked me if I could accompany this group.

During the pilgrimage, we happened to go to the Gethsemane hermitage and that afternoon I gave them time for personal prayer. The lady asked me if she could receive the Anointing of the Sick and we prepared everything in the chapel. Before the celebration, another person in the group got up and asked to receive the sacrament because – she told to the group at that moment – she was also suffering from cancer. Then another person ... I was so touched by what people carry in their

hearts.

A few months later, the first lady died and after a while, the couple's son contacted me. The months after the pilgrimage – he told me – were full of suffering, but his mother kept repeating that thinking back to the Holy Land she had the strength to continue and was not afraid.

I think the Holy Spirit is acting in ways we do not understand. This experience has evangelized me and taught me the courage to sow and give strength. The Holy Land gives life where apparently there is none. The biblical and spiritual reading give Life to life.

The pilgrimage is not just visiting places. The Holy Land evangelizes people, just as it evangelized this woman. The memory of the places of the Lord made her go toward death with serenity despite great suffering. I can testify that for many people, even if differently, the experience is profoundly similar.

And a place?

The most beautiful place for me is the desert. I think Negev is the place that fascinates me the most and speaks to me with its silence. It allows you to enter into yourself, into God, into nature and into history. It seems to echo Hosea “Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.” (*Hos* 2:16) and the many biblical pages, which speak of the journey of this people.

Interview by Elena Dini

(Mt 17,1-13).

Having been first invited by Divine Grace to climb the mountain and then in allowing himself the opportunity to encounter God there, who is love, the pilgrim cannot but change as Moses did, as the disciples on the Mount of the Transfiguration did and as Jesus himself did. When the pilgrim does all that he can to accompany Jesus on his Good Friday pilgrimage, he will experience a change like that of Simon of Cyrene at the Fifth Station and will be blessed in some special and personal way like Veronica for her act of tenderness at the Sixth Station.

Máméan is very far from Golgotha and is little known even in western Ireland, let alone in the Holy Land. However, every year, on Good Friday, its Way of the Cross is sanctified by the feet of the pilgrim people of God who come and join the universal chorus: “We adore you O Christ and we praise you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”

¹ The Penal Laws were a set of laws imposed by the British government in Ireland that took all power away from the Catholic majority in the country.

Towards new destinations in the lands of the Bible

An ecumenical pilgrimage to Egypt

By Father Gianni Toni
Prior of the Delegation of Latina
Unitalsi regional assistant for Lazio

The following is an account of the revival of an ancient yet new pilgrimage, brought to life for each Dame and Knight of the Holy Sepulchre. In our time, with so many stories of immigrants and people fleeing their own land, I wish to speak of a family dear to all of us who fled from the wickedness of the powerful in search of a safe place: the Holy Family and the flight into the land of Egypt.

The pilgrimage I will tell you about took place from June 15 to 21 with almost fifty participants, Catholics and Orthodox Copts. The group was led by the Catholic bishop of Viterbo and Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Monsignor

Fumagalli, by the Coptic Orthodox bishop for Italy Barnaba El Soryany and by myself, Prior of the Delegation of Latina, with the president Unitalsi for Lazio Mrs. Preziosa Terrinoni.

We share this experience in the hope that other pilgrims, drawn from across the world, would choose to repeat this journey, with a certain goal: to return to the roots of our faith, in that Land of God to rediscover the great sense of being children

of the same Father and thus of being brothers and sisters. Moreover, this was the concept underlined by Bp. Giacinto Marcuzzo of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: "This is an initiative that needs to be experienced by many

Fr Gianni Toni, Prior of the Order next to Rome, met Theodore II, the Coptic Orthodox Pope, during a pilgrimage to Egypt in the footsteps of the Holy Family.





because only in this way can we reach the unity desired by every human heart attentive to others!”

The area of Maadi is home to a sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin Mary. According to local tradition, this is the place from where the Holy Family embarked for Egypt. It was moving to see more than 500 people, Muslim and Christian, give witness together and welcome those who came to relive a story that is today more relevant than ever before!

One of the Masses of our pilgrimage was celebrated at the Italian Hospital: there we prayed for those who shed blood for the faith or because of violence. Here one lives a very particular kind of ecumenism: that of martyrdom because Christian blood has no theological distinctions.

A pilgrimage to the land of the Holy Family would not be complete without a visit to the Coptic Orthodox Pope, Tawadros II, who showed his joy in meeting us with a fraternal welcome and

Pilgrimages to Egypt are also a form of moral support for local Christian minorities.



full of consideration towards Pope Francis, ending with the invitation not to forget to pray for one another!

Yet this experience in Egyptian lands led us above all to confront ourselves with a reality present in many parts of the world: asceticism, monasticism and the life of hermits. It is in Egypt that, at the beginning of the first centuries of Christianity, monasticism was born, taking root in the desert thanks to Anthony the hermit and St. Pachomius.

Thanks to the Coptic Orthodox Bishop Barnaba, we had the opportunity to learn about the experience in the Egyptian desert of the Coptic monastery of Wadi Al Natrun (about seventy kilometers south of Cairo) with a monastic presence of up to 150 monks.

We had the opportunity to experience the fraternal welcome and to celebrate Holy Mass, which was attended by about fifteen monks with the bishop of the monastery and which was presided by our bishop, Msgr. Fumagalli. When asked how we had arrived at this exceptional gesture, the response of Bishop Barnabas was very elementary but very effective: “We are all Christians”!

In our own small way, we are convinced, because we have experienced it, that talking about unity and ecumenism means first “meetings that go towards the other” and the other is always our brother and sister ... in image of God the creator!



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Order of the Holy Sepulchre
Papal Equestrian Orders
Order of Malta

Italian Dynastic Orders and Orders of the Italian Republic

Echoes of the Order's great events in the Americas and Australia

*First continental meetings of Governor General Visconti di Modrone
with the Lieutenants of the Order in Spring 2018.*

The meeting of Latin American Lieutenants took place in Argentina, in Buenos Aires, following the Investiture presided over by Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, Grand Master. The Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone believes that this continental meeting was decisively important to help raise awareness among the inhabitants of the area about the cause of the Holy Land. "Latin America is very far from the Middle East and the Order favors a mutual rapprochement, thanks to solidarity for our Christian brothers and sisters in the biblical territories", the Governor emphasized, adding that the South American Lieutenants appreciated being informed as directly as possible about the recent decisions taken by the Grand Magisterium.

"We communicated to the Lieutenants the new direction of our aid, especially with regards training and teaching, since education is the safest means of preparing the ground for a better future. What is really close to our hearts is the 'human building'," reported the Governor General after this trip, alongside the Grand Master.

In Argentina, the visit of the leaders of the Order rekindled interest in the Holy Land,

helping local Lieutenancies to emerge from the daily life and projecting them towards the new challenges facing the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The Lieutenants of the nations that brought the Catholic faith to the South American continent – Spain and Portugal – enriched the meeting with their presence, in a dynamic dialogue between Lusophone and Spanish-speaking countries.

"We are considering the appointment of a Vice Governor General for Latin America, to better coordinate the action of the Lieutenancies, namely Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil," stated the Governor General, announcing that the

The Grand Master and the Governor General of the Order celebrated the 130th anniversary of the Lieutenancy for Argentina during a historic meeting in Buenos Aires where the Investiture ceremony for new members was also held.

Order plans to officially settle also in Chile, where many descendants of Christian Palestinian immigrants live. Mexico – which is part of North America – would be placed under the responsibility of the new Vice Governor for Ibero-America, especially for a



reason of linguistic consistency.

All the initiatives of the Order and this project were presented in prayer, especially in front of the statue of Christ the Redeemer, in Rio de Janeiro, where the leaders of the Order later went. The Governor General also met the Archbishop of Rio – Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy – and the clergy committed to spiritually accompanying the members of the two current Lieutenancies of the Order in Brazil.

A few weeks later, alongside the Grand Master, the Governor General was in Toronto for the meeting of the Lieutenants of North America, in which he took part for the first time. “I found time to listen to each one personally and I wanted to thank them for the considerable effort offered to our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land,” he noted, paying special tribute to the action of the then Vice Governor Patrick Powers.

Interest in the Holy Land is very strong in the United States and Canada, manifested by immense generosity. Many people who have succeeded overseas from an economic point of view donate to the populations in difficulty, supported in this action by a favorable legislative framework.

The third major and important meeting last spring was the meeting with the European Lieutenants whom the Governor General already knew in some ways, having attended various Investitures since his entry into office in 2017.

“Contrary to what is experienced in North or South America, where there is a certain cultural homogeneity, the question of the diversity of languages and cultures remains a problem in Europe, although the historical link with the Holy Land is very ancient and aggregating,” he observed.

“I try to promote unity within the Order and at



Cardinal O'Brien, Governor General Visconti di Modrone and Chancellor Bastianelli in front of the statue of Christ the Redeemer, in Rio de Janeiro, together with the local leaders of the Order.

the same time freedom of initiative on a local level; these intercontinental meetings have also had the purpose of preparing the Consulta – which took place in November in Rome – on the theme of the Lieutenant’s mission,” concluded the Governor

General Visconti di Modrone, who has already suggested some appointments decided by the Grand Master, trying to call forth competent personalities, rooted in their dioceses, endowed with a spirit of service and capable of fostering unity at all levels.

“The Order will never be an NGO, we are an institution of the Church in which the values of humility, charity, and obedience are to be cultivated”, he affirmed firmly. The action of the Order in this sense is increasingly oriented towards service to the human person, essentially through works of education in dialogue and coexistence, which constitute a great guarantee for long-term peace in the Holy Land and in the Middle East.

F.V.



The Grand Master visits members of the Order in Oceania

On August 30, 2018 the Grand Master, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, along with his secretary Father John Bateman departed Rome for the great Southland and New Zealand. They arrived in Perth Western Australia to be guests of the Lieutenancy for West Australia as their initial point of contact. The tour would subsequently go through the Lieutenancy for South Australia in Adelaide, Lieutenancy for Australia-Victoria in Melbourne, Lieutenancy for Australia-New South Wales in Sydney then the Magistral Delegation of New Zealand in Auckland and finally the Lieutenancy for Australia-Queensland in Brisbane. The tour was busy and demanding and they left Australia on September 20 for Philadelphia and New York and returned to Rome on October 2. I joined them in Perth, West Australia, on the first of September.

This was the second time the Grand Master has made an exhaustive tour of Australia and in fact the third time he had been to Adelaide and Melbourne. The members of the Order throughout Australia greeted his visit with quite significant enthusiasm and their preparations for their vigils and Investitures were quite diligent thanks to the efforts of Father John Bateman who provided advice several months ahead of the visit. 25 Knights and Dames were invested by Cardinal O'Brien during these days. A new Prior for the Lieutenancy for Australia-Victoria, Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli was installed in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. Also Bishop Tim Harris of

Townsville in north Queensland, where there is a section of the Queensland Lieutenancy, was invested as a Knight of the Order in the Cathedral of St. Stephen in Brisbane. He will of course act as coadjutor Prior to the section in North Queensland.

The effort made by the various councils to organize various social functions produced some very memorable and informal gatherings across the continent. Most of the Lieutenants (and Magistral Delegate) and members of their councils came to the Cardinal's Mass each morning in the various cities. While in Australia the Grand Master circulated to all members worldwide his letter about the child abuse scandal in the Church and he spoke very strongly on this issue at the formal dinner for each Lieutenancy and Magistral Delegation. It is fair to say that the Knights and Dames found this enlightening and were very pleased to hear his strong words in such a public forum. Clearly this was a superb stamp of approval on his leadership. His Eminence throughout the tour repeatedly talked about the plight of the Palestinian Christians and the need for increased donations given the withdrawal of the United States aid. This of course will only increase the demands placed on the Order for support.

I can certainly attest to the intensity and demands of the tour of Australia and New Zealand which His Eminence undertook joyfully.

Paul C. Bartley

Vice Governor General for Australia and the Pacific

The Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* inspires the life of Knights and Dames

“Nor need we think only of those already beatified and canonized. The Holy Spirit bestows holiness in abundance among God’s holy and faithful people, [...] I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God’s people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile.”
(Gaudete et Exsultate 6-7)

Perhaps we have always known on a conceptual level that we are all called to holiness and that it is not a destiny reserved for ecclesiastics and religious who have chosen to consecrate their lives especially to God. Perhaps we knew we too were called by virtue of our baptism to be holy. Nevertheless, perhaps we have not always believed in this possibility.

In 2018, Pope Francis wanted to recall with simplicity this common vocation, in an Apostolic Exhortation that he wanted to be, not a treatise on holiness or the means of sanctification, but a way to “repropose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time, with all its risks, challenges and opportunities. For the Lord has chosen each one of us ‘to be holy and blameless before him

in love’ (Eph 1:4)” (GE 2).

Thus we have asked our members to tell us in a few words how this text by the Holy Father encouraged them to reflect on their own journey of faith within the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. How does our call as Knights and Dames help us find our way to God and to others in our daily life? Returning to the intuition of the Second Vatican Council, “Each in his or her own way,” Pope Francis immediately wanted to dispel all temptations to standardization: “The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor 12:7), rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness” (GE 11).



“We are called to be saints in what we are. For me it means that I must strive to be, first of all, as a husband and father, but also a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre,” shares Petar-Krešimir. “Reading the Exhortation, I felt encouraged to accept the Beatitudes as a sure guide on the path towards holiness. I realized that they should be my identity card that I received on the day of my baptism and that does not expire because I was created for eternity.”

Within the Order, many couples live their call to holiness, starting from the dimension of their conjugal life. Maria and Adolfo recount: “This extreme love of Christ assumed in conjugal love is what must shape our existence. But this love would not be fruitful if we mean this word only in relation to the children who are born from our union, without enlarging our heart to serve others.” This dimension of extended love is what the Order proposes to live by opening itself ever more to the needs of our brothers and sisters of the Holy Land.

“The lay faithful need more than ever to feel part of the Catholic Church and to know that holiness is accessible to all,” comments Claude Grbesa, Magistral

Many married couples are engaged in the Order. Inside, they journey together with other members towards holiness, trying to put the Gospel into practice every day in their daily lives.



Delegate for Croatia who announced that the reading of *Gaudete et Exsultate* will, from now onwards, be part of the formation of future members. “The specific dual mission of the Knight or Dame of the Holy Sepulchre who is constantly called to deepen and strengthen their faith and support the Christian presence in the Holy Land – he continues – creates a favourable situation for walking on the road to holiness.” This path is lived in community and for this reason the life of the Lieutenancy and Magistral Delegation lends itself to offering each member an appropriate context of accompaniment and sharing.

In this regard, Roberto shares his experience from a complicated moment of his life in which “the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre gave me a Section President who was a true spiritual father for me, a knowledgeable adviser as well as being a shining example. As was the case later with another confrere. The Lord never leaves us alone; He always sends us people to keep watch with us, to keep us from becoming discouraged by the trials we encounter and to always look towards the horizon. I can honestly say that I have found these sentinels thanks to being a member of the Order, rediscovering with greater vigour and enthusiasm the meaning of the promise I made at the altar.”

In August 2018, the Lieutenancy for Australia New South Wales decided to dedicate its annual retreat to reflection on the Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, of particular relevance for a secular order such as ours. Sister Isabell Naumann, an ordinary professor at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, preached the retreat. Sister Naumann invited the participants to reflect in particular on paragraph 14 of the Exhortation, trying to complete the text with their own answer to the question: Are you a Knight or a Lady of the Order? Be holy...

To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be



holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your

Pilgrimages to Marian shrines strengthen the faith of the members of the Order who visit them regularly, in addition to their commitment to go to the Holy Land.

husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain. (GE 14)

Perhaps each one of us today can place his or her own story before the Lord in prayer and ponder how, in practice; one's life is called to bear fruits of holiness.

During 2019, we will share some of the testimonies received in recent months in full in our publications to continue to support our reflection on the theme of holiness.

Elena Dini

A path to holiness within the Order

I walk through the streets of my adopted city, Padua, the city of the “Saint without a name”, loved even beyond our nation and our continent. I have a black veil on my head and a cloak of the same color surrounds me, embraces me, as I like to think, to guard a “Yes” pronounced nine years ago at the altar according to the Statute of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

I am in procession, like every year on June 13, and my thoughts turn to the Exhortation of our Holy Father Pope Francis. The whole document is an invitation to break with our comforting habits to listen to the voice of the Lord who calls us to be saints in the simplicity of everyday life, in the dense web of human relations. The invitation is strong and destabilizing at the same time, because it is not enough to have pronounced that “Yes” finally, rather it needs to be renewed every day in the places and events of our personal history.

My story of love for the holy places, for the

living stones of Jerusalem, begins with the books of theology that I devoured as a young and enthusiastic student. Almost at the end of my studies that lasted so many years (Licence in Theology with specialization in Catechetics), I took part in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land: I desired a special encounter in the place where the Gospel is read, heard, breathed. This experience transformed me and, even if after a week I had to return to my usual life, I was now aware that Jerusalem had become part of me, had taken root in my heart.

Years pass, I meet the reality of the Order in my Parish and I begin to ask myself questions. In the meantime, my life's journey is marked by a fundamental “Yes” to my existence: marriage, the transfer from a southern city to a northern one, acceptance of the mysterious will of the Lord not to send me children to make my love for my husband Luca full and perfect. I still have a full



life within in my small family unit, in my encounters with the Lord in church, in work.

However, I feel it is not enough, I need something else, there is still a sense of the unfinished and I want to leave the door open to welcome the voice of the Father.

One day I take courage and send an e-mail to the Lieutenancy for Northern Italy: I wish to speak with one of the people in charge. It's December 31: I want to close the year by opening the door to the new, to what the Lord still reserves for me. The answer is not long in coming and within a few days I was in contact with the then Delegate for the city of Padua. I well remember that winter afternoon: I was in the Cloister of the Saint and I was very

Gabriella Vecchio (left in the photo), Dame of the Order, is a member of the Lieutenancy for Northern Italy.

excited. I expressed my desire to become part of the Great Family of the Order but also the perplexities that stirred within me.

The answer is simple: "Come and see, then you will decide if this is really your path". Over the months I touched the reality with my hands and I became aware that yes, it is really what God wants for me. My concerns were not dispelled rather I acquired a new awareness: the Order is made up of people who, as such, are an expression of love, but also of so many weaknesses and annoying limits. To me the task of imitating the models of Holiness

leaving aside the rest.

I can remember so many particularly happy moments that bind me to the Order: the moment when I was wrapped for the first time in the cloak and perceived His blessing embrace, when I knelt before the Holy Sepulchre as a member of this great family, when I received the pilgrim shell... But there are also times when the heart becomes small in front of the diatribes for or against our Jewish or Palestinian brothers and sisters, the small arguments over placings in processions, the way the title of Dame or Knight sometimes seems to overcome the privilege of charity in favor of worldly feelings. The temptation is strong, the weakness is infinite, and the only hope is the merciful Father.

Certainly, membership of the Order does not end in the strong moments of encounter in which we all breathe together and take on renewed strength and hope. There is in fact another type of belonging that takes shape in the reality of everyday life: in the family, with friends, in associations, in work. Then, testimony is not so much carried out in words but in many small gestures that express the choice made, the response to the call that is renewed every day.

Mine comes about in my little family formed by my husband and I, where, even in moments of fatigue, we must try to smile, understand each other and help each other to walk in the same direction. The strength of our love always wins. My

holiness is also put to the test within the class groups because I am a primary school teacher and I am at the service of so many children, many more than I could generate in the flesh. Children who have everything from the material point of view but who sometimes have difficulties in relationships but are so thirsty for love. After all, my students are not very different from their peers who attend schools supported by the Order and who are so thirsty in their eyes and hearts not only for the water denied them because of the closure of wells but for peace and freedom.

We Dames and Knights are here for this; this is our mission, our path to holiness. My call to holiness is still realized in the encounter with the many people who pass through the ‘Scoletta del Santo’ to receive the bread of St. Anthony, to feed on the beauty of the artistic treasures or in search of a word of comfort, of sympathy, of closeness. I confess that my journey is made more by stumbling than by worthy works, but every time I am about to fall someone helps me up and I start again.

This is who I am. A few simple words to give an account of my life. I thank the Lord for what He has given me and for what He still reserves for me, I ask Him for the strength to raise me up again and my brethren their support in prayer to always see His gaze of love on the face of those I meet, regularly or by chance, on my path.

Gabriella Vecchio

Veneto Section of the Lieutenancy for Northern Italy

Hoping to go back to the Holy Land as a Knight

Igor Peter Pletikosa is a young Knight who joined the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. He was knighted by Cardinal Edwin O’Brien, Grand Master of the Order, during the Investiture he presided over in Sydney in September 2018. A 25-year old school teacher, Igor migrated from Yugoslavia to the Holy Land when he was 9. Today he lives in Australia and is one of the world’s youngest Knights of the Order. Here you find his testimony for the *Jerusalem Cross*:

I first traveled to the Holy Land as a child and a refugee. I was born and spent my early childhood in Yugoslavia and was baptized “underground” as a result of being in part of the then-Eastern-Block. When I was 9 my family “escaped” from the Communist Block and we migrated to the Holy Land where we found refuge.

Being in the Holy Land brings one a



The young Knight Igor, on the day of his Investiture in Sydney, in the company of the Grand Master.

profound moment in which you are able to really practice your faith. For me, this was especially true. Since I was baptized in secret I had had very little opportunity to practice the faith into which my parents brought me through Baptism. So being in the Holy Land was really my first opportunity to experience my faith. At that point, both because of my age and my situation, I didn't know where I was in my faith – but being in the Holy Land brought it to life for the very first time. In particular, I recall visiting the Holy Sepulchre – it was the most amazing place.

Now, having migrated to Sydney, Australia, I

“ I have vowed never to water-down or misrepresent or, even worse, distort the Church's teachings. Our young people need and deserve to know the Truth! ”

teach religion in a Catholic High School. I recognize the great importance of this task of helping parents to form their children in the Faith. It is sad that I sometimes find teachers in our Catholic schools who do not authentically share and teach our Catholic Faith. I have vowed never to water-down or misrepresent or, even worse, distort the Church's teachings. Our young people need and deserve to know the Truth! There is so much confusion out there; I want to bring the Light of Truth into their lives so that my students can discover the joy and freedom that the Church's teachings bring into our lives.

It is my desire, through my past experience of the Holy Land as a child and on a future pilgrimage to the Holy Land – now as a Knight of the Order – to use that opportunity to bring to my students a visual of what I teach them in religion class by walking the paths that Jesus walked and sharing my own personal experiences with them – to make the Faith come alive for them – just as it has and does and will for me when I am able to make my pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It will be for me a remarkable opportunity to connect me once more to the roots of my faith, and a reminder of my escape from Communism to enter into the Freedom that the Church brings.

In today's world is not easy to find a group of people with whom you do not have to be apologetic about who and what I am – a Catholic who strives to faithfully live a Catholic life. I have found that the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is just such a group – we cherish and rejoice in our Catholic Faith – and no one need apologize for who we are and what we believe and represent.

Spirituality as the fulcrum of life of the Lieutenancies: the example of France

The religious and spiritual formation of the members of the Order is the basis of their mission. In this context, the French experience is of great interest. We asked the person who animates this aspect for the Lieutenancy for France – Pierre de Lauzun – to tell us about it. Born in 1949, a former student of the Ecole Polytechnique of Paris, Knight Commander of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, a member of the Catholic Academy of France, he offers a personal reflection, focused in particular on philosophical and religious topics tackled during the meetings of members of the Order.

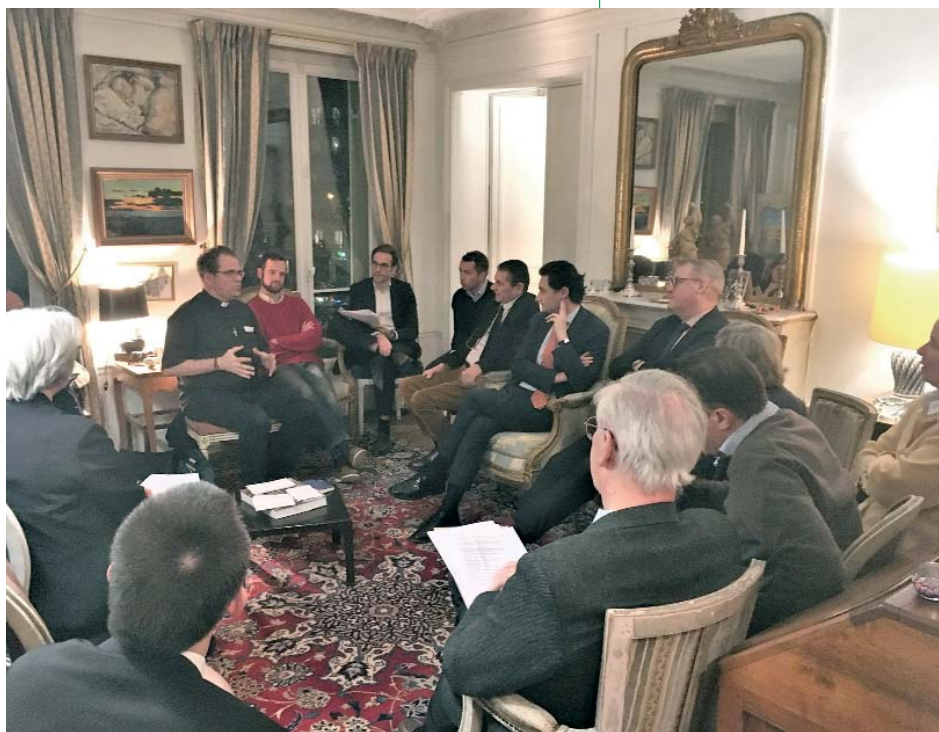
The Lieutenancy of France boasts a rich and long experience of spiritual formation, understood as a basic activity. In this article, I will elaborate on the subject of meetings held by the spiritual and local groups (from 10 to 15 people), which gather approximately nine or ten times a year. These meetings focus primarily on elaborating the annual theme chosen for study and greater reflection by the Lieutenancy (from September to June). The theme to be discussed is selected by the Grand Prior, after consulting the Lieutenant and the person in charge of spiritual formation; nine booklets from four to six pages are drafted, consisting of excerpts from texts, and of commentaries that facilitate their comprehension during

the meetings. The texts in question can be extracted from a chosen document that perhaps has been chosen as the theme of the year, or texts from the Scriptures, the Fathers or the Magisterium, in relation to the selected topic. If the subject lends itself, each booklet attempts to approach the theme through the specific lens of the vocation and spirituality proper to the Order.

The national head of spiritual formation collates the booklets under the authority of the Grand Prior, possibly in collaboration with the latter. The topic is chosen in March and the booklets are made available before the summer holidays, so that they can be read by everyone during the summer, shared between the members in September and used by the group from October to June.

One of the spiritual formation meetings of the members of the Order (in the photo in Paris, around Father Hervé Soubias).

This leads to the organization of nine working sessions in which a member of the group prepares the discussion, introducing it with a



background presentation. The booklets are designed to serve as a basis for this presentation and the discussion that follows; however, often the people in charge undertake individual research, adding other data and perspectives to those contained in the booklets.

Sometimes these sessions are folded together, especially when the distance between the members prohibits nine different meetings during the year.

Finally, in some cases, it is the chaplain who presents each booklet, although undoubtedly this does not follow the logic of the proposed method. On the other hand, the chaplain's role in the discussion that follows the presentation proves essential, as it is aimed at clarifying certain points, as well as ensuring the quality of the discussion and its spiritual fruitfulness.

Let's analyze some recent examples of focus topics,¹ which I hope will inspire other Lieutenancies thanks to the sharing of experiences in the *Jerusalem Cross*, our international magazine.

Biblical anthropology (2013-2014)

The idea was to "start from a reflection on what man is – as presented to us by the Bible – and on what this could concretely mean for us in our commitment as Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre in today's society."

The Encyclical Lumen Fidei (2014-2015)

"Pope Francis' first encyclical was *Lumen fidei*, issued at the end of the Year of Faith. Such 'encyclical of four hands' ... will give us a clearer understanding of the Christian faith ... Faith is provoked by the recognition of an event that changes the course of life: The incarnation, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ ... The reading of this encyclical will help us to redirect our position regarding the faith we have received and we are called to transmit."

The Fathers of the Church and the economy of salvation (2015-2016)

"It could only be a matter of contact, with two objectives: to become familiar with who the Fathers are and their role in the development of early Christianity; deepening the theme of the economy of salvation in a particular perspective ... The Fathers had the fundamental task of thinking about

nascent Christianity and its spread in the Roman Empire: in theological terms, this presupposes a reflection on God's design that is at work, as well as on the ways in which it is transmitted, therefore on the economy of salvation ... Moreover, this allows to direct the Fathers' lessons towards a topic that is current for us: the place of Christianity and the offer of salvation it brings in a society characterized – then as now – by a considerable cultural, philosophical and religious diversity ... In this respect, the Fathers' reflection becomes irreplaceable."

The Eastern Catholic Churches (2016-2017)

Evangelization (2017-2018)

The theme is dealt with on the basis of two apostolic exhortations: Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, and Francis' *Evangelii gaudium* in 2013. "These texts differ quite a bit from each other in tone and period, but they are closely linked by the object ... Pope Francis explicitly collocates his exhortation in a continuity with that of his predecessor, which he considers the most important pastoral text of the period following the Second Vatican Council."

The Social Doctrine of the Church (2018-2019)

"Given the richness of the subject, it can only be an initiation ... These texts are mainly taken from the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2005) ... Since then, two important encyclicals have been published and used": *Laudato Si* (Pope Francis, 2015) and *Caritas in veritate* (Benedict XVI, 2009).

As you can see, the themes are very varied and sometimes quite demanding; at the same time, they are not aimed at being purely intellectual research, but topics that foster conversion in a precise spiritual perspective that must belong to the members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

The resonance of this vocation – which is ours – is immense; the possibilities of shared study and reflection, but also of interior conversion, are extremely fruitful.

Pierre de Lauzun

¹ Citations in quotation marks are taken from the presentations made at the time of the topics in question.



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