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# JERUSALEM CROSS

ANNALES ORDINIS EQUSTRIS SANCTI SEPULCHRI HIEROSOLYMITANI



**“It is important to go forth  
and carry the Holy Land in  
our hearts, always, always”**

**(Pope Francis, 6 February 2021)**

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of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem*  
**Cardinal Fernando Filoni**

*Governor General of the Equestrian Order  
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Children of the Holy Land, during a summer parish camp, showing their gratitude, with a gesture and a smile, to the members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre (Photo LPJ)

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# Participating in the life of the Church is spreading good in today's world

**T**he *Jerusalem Cross*, our Annual Magazine is one year older; that is, it is enriched with a new edition on some of the most significant moments in the life of our Order.

The purpose of an Annual Magazine is not to forget!

One year ago I began my service among you, dear friends of the Order, thinking of it as a large 'parish' scattered almost everywhere. This prompted in me the desire to know and meet you. The pandemic, which has reached everywhere, has also imposed severe limits on travel and meetings. Yet this has not impeded the life of the Order. Just as a river is incapable of stopping before an obstacle, rather flowing around it, so it has also been for many of you and for me.

In order to avoid pessimism and instead think biblically, that is, according to God, I borrow from the prophet Isaiah the passage where it is said that, despite the "plague" that sometimes afflicts us, the "light" of the Eternal will be like a fire consuming "brambles and thorns", while "trust" will generate a "new shoot" (cf. *Is* 10:16 et seq.; 11:1 et seq.).

2020 was also a year full of graces: many brothers and sisters have become new Members of the Order, we have concerned ourselves with the Land of Jesus, you have contributed to the life of your communities, civil and religious in which you live, given time and affection to your families, our faith has experienced periods of growth and perhaps even moments of crisis.

I would now like to pause briefly on one aspect that I consider important to us: Devoid of an ecclesiological vision (in short. working in union with the Church and in the Church) our being and our action – be it of the Grand Magisterium, of the Lieutenancies, or of the local Sections and Delegations – would spoil and waste a golden opportunity; our action and being are part of the life of the Church; It is not indifferent to her. Therefore, participating in the life of the Church (be it the Holy Land or our local communities) means sharing in the life of the Mystical Body of Christ, it is prolonging His salvific presence, it is extending the good in today's world. Every Dame and Knight are called to be part of it.

This awareness has its roots in the great and arcane mystery of the Holy Sepulchre; the place where the Body of the Lord was laid, like a grain in the earth, but also the place where the 'other' life of Jesus began. There is no higher and more significant motivation to call oneself and be a Dame or a Knight today.

We consequently think of the Church as a 'gift' of the Risen One for the world; as the "sacrament" of our union with God, as the "instrument" or "sign" of unity of the whole human race (cf. LG 1). All this means, dear friends, we should think positively of the Church, beyond the deficiencies that are attributed to Her, which in truth are ours; it means to think of her as "Mother", that is, as the dearest person in the world, "Teacher", unique in charisma and grace, and "Holy", because sanctified by Jesus; it is thinking, finally, of the Church as a 'mission', now and forever.



**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

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## A word from the Chancellor

In this edition of our annual review, published in five languages and distributed on all continents, we wanted to return to the events experienced during the terrible Coronavirus pandemic, seeking to bear witness to the Christian hope that has remained throughout this global tragedy. The following pages aim to encourage the mission of every baptised person – and members of the Order in particular – called to shine with the light of the Risen One at the heart of this painful period in human history. The spirituality of the Order, highlighted in an important book by the Grand Master, is a lively source of inspiration for the Knights and Dames in this respect, likely to intensify our concrete support for the Holy Land without forgetting the local Churches. in which we are rooted.

Alfredo Bastianelli, *Chancellor*

## A time of crisis: a time of the Spirit

*“The experience of a grace hidden in the darkness”*



**We thank Pope Francis for his spiritual accompaniment during the heart of the health crisis, rereading the fundamental points of his pastoral teaching during this dramatic period.**

On April 19, 2020, Divine Mercy Sunday, the Holy Father celebrated mass in the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, close to Palazzo della Rovere, where members of the Grand Magisterium of the Order regularly pray and the new Grand Master presided at his first public liturgy on taking office.

In this Roman sanctuary of Mercy, Pope Francis evoked a danger related to the end of the pandemic. “The risk is that we will be struck by an even worse virus, that of indifferent selfishness,” he

*The cooperation fostered by the health crisis has made us feel even more part of a single international family.*

warned, calling for a momentum of solidarity. “The present pandemic, however, reminds us that there are no differences or borders between those who suffer. We are all frail, all equal, all precious. May we be profoundly shaken by what is happening all around us: the time has come to eliminate inequalities, to heal the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family!”

In those dramatic weeks, Francis has ceaselessly supported our faith and our hope. We will never forget those heart-breaking moments of Friday, March 27, 2020, in the early evening, when he raised the Blessed Sacrament with his arms to bless us, in front of an empty and rain drenched St.

Peter's square, in the twilight, while the sound of the bells of the basilica overlapped the sound of ambulance sirens ... In front of the television screens, the holy and faithful people of God – “confined” because of the pandemic – gathered in communion with him, in a profound silence, to implore courage and inner strength. The miracle of this extraordinary prayer was revealed in understanding that on the way we were not

alone. Instead of looking at the Vicar of Christ on the balcony of St Peter's, as in the usual Urbi et Orbi blessings, we all had our eyes nailed to the Eucharist, carried by the Pope in a large monstrance to the threshold of the basilica.

He had arrived alone, in pouring rain, climbing limping towards steps of the basilica. The surreal blue of the sky was reflected on the square, evoking the abysses into which we seemed to sink for a few weeks. The miraculous crucifix that saved Rome from the plague in the 16th century was positioned in front of the basilica, precisely on the occasion of the solemn prayer. The water that fell from the sky dripped onto the statue of Christ, giving a vivid reverberation to the wooden painting; the blood really gave the impression of dripping from the pierced side, symbol of the Spirit offered for the renewal of our lives. The discreet icon of the Virgin *Salus Populi Romani* – also linked to the protection of the Eternal City during various epidemics – watched over us at the foot of the cross.

We held our breath, with the awareness that we were participating in a historical event. Not that it was the end of the world, but certainly the end of a world, that of globalization based on selfish and excessive consumption. Economic policies contrary to people's interest have led society to find itself disoriented in the face of a health catastrophe that has shaken all humanity. “Greedy for profit, we let ourselves be absorbed by things and confused by haste,” the Pope analysed during the homily, denouncing “our thirst for power and possession.” “We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were



*The prayer vigil on March 27, 2020, presided over by the Pope, and broadcast across the world live from St. Peter's Square, will go down in history as one of the great moments of universal communion with Christ, our hope.*

not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick.”

Francis commented on the passage from the Gospel of Saint Mark which recounts the episode of the appeased storm, noting that – like the disciples in the boat, frightened and lost while Jesus seems to be sleeping on board – “we were taken aback.” “The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities,” observed the Pope, explaining that this trial time is a time of choice: “the time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not.” He urged us to “reset the course of life” towards God and others, following the example of numerous current witnesses: doctors, nurses and nurses, volunteers, priests, religious “who understood that no one is saved alone.” “Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons,” continued the Holy Father, before giving us an exceptional blessing for the period of the epidemic.

The Pope's teaching intensified during Holy Week. With 20,000 deaths in Italy until Easter

2020, Covid-19 continued its devastating advance, causing suffering and dismay throughout the world, where over 100,000 deaths were already recorded. On all continents, we were millions of “prisoners” of the virus who listened to the Holy Father thanks to television, live streaming, experiencing the first virtual Easter in history. During the vigil, Francis mentioned this “all to be rebuilt” experienced by the women who went to visit the tomb “after the Sabbath” (*Matthew 28:1*), that is, after Holy Saturday, the day of great silence. “For them it was the darkest hour, as for us,” commented Peter’s successor. He pointed out that in such a situation the women did not allow themselves to be paralyzed by fear, but in their homes, they prepared perfumes for Christ’s body, without renouncing love... Jesus, like a seed buried in the ground, was about to make new life blossom in the world; and these women, by prayer and love, were helping to make that hope flower. How many people, in these sad days, have done and are still doing what those women did, sowing seeds of hope! With small gestures of care, affection and prayer,” he added, eager to encourage any act of love in the darkness of the present historical moment. “Let us silence the cries of death, no more wars! May we stop the production and trade of weapons, since we need bread, not guns. Let the abortion and killing of innocent lives end. May the hearts of those who have enough be open to filling the empty hands of those who do not have the bare necessities,” he said.

During the *Urbis et Orbi* blessing on Easter Sunday, held in St. Peter’s Basilica, in the physical absence of the faithful, he appealed for a “contagion of hope,” observing that this advent of the coronavirus “is not the time of indifference,” neither “the time of selfishness,” nor “the time of divisions” ... but of a new solidarity and innovative solutions for the good of the one human family.

Since the beginning of Holy Week, on the occasion of the celebration of Palm Sunday, he had shown us a path of trust to arise and “rediscover that life is of no use if it is not served.” “Before

“ ***Fixing our gaze on the Crucified One – let us ask for the grace to live in order to serve. May we reach out to those who are suffering and those most in need*** ”

God before the God who serves us to the point of giving his life, and, – fixing our gaze on the Crucified One – let us ask for the grace to live in order to serve. May we reach out to those who are suffering and those most in need. May we not be concerned about what we lack, but what good we can do for others,” he added, addressing in particular to the young people to show them “the real heroes” in these days: they are not those who have fame, money and success, but “those who give themselves to serve others.”

During Holy Thursday mass, commenting on the gesture of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, the Pope reiterated the important dimension of serving, “a condition for entering the Kingdom of Heaven.” The Holy Father paid a heartfelt tribute to the priests who sacrifice their lives for the Lord, to the servant priests, of whom a hundred have recently died in Italy, in attention to

the sick in hospitals, with doctors, nurses... “They are ‘everyday saints’, priests who gave their lives by serving,” he observed, bringing with him to the altar all the brother priests, especially” the slandered priests.”

These slandered priests were also remembered on prayer on Good Friday, following the *Via Crucis* broadcast worldwide from St Peter’s Square, in the area of the ancient circus of

Nero, where the crucifixion of Christians once took place ... The meditations were written by prison inmates and in turn the “Simon of Cyrene of today” took turns to carry the cross, including doctors and nurses who daily help the sick of Covid-19.

On Easter Monday, after the *Regina Cœli* prayer – which replaces the *Angelus* from the Easter Eve to Pentecost – Francis praised the role of women, the first witnesses of the Resurrection, thanking all those who help today’s society to put the person at the centre of our worries instead of the god of money. Having finally regained the rhythm of the morning masses aired from his residence in Santa Marta, he continued to invite us to pray together “so that the Lord, in the difficulties of this time,

**Pope Francis**

will help us discover the communion between us, the unity that it is superior to any division.”

During these passing months, which have been difficult for all, Pope Francis has sought to offer not only words of consolation to the Church and the world, but also inspiring alternatives to previous ways of life, in particular through his catechesis during public audiences, at the end of August and September 2020.

At the beginning of winter, the arrival of a second wave of the pandemic compounded the urgent desire for a healing of our world... a full and complete recovery. On December 21, on the occasion of the traditional Christmas greetings, in front of the Roman Curia, the Holy Father gave a spiritual eulogy of the crisis, exhorting us to hope beyond what is visible. “The crisis is no longer a commonplace of conversations and of the intellectual establishment; it has become a reality experienced by everyone. The pandemic has been a time of trial and testing, but also a significant opportunity for conversion and renewed authenticity.” “In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, which we cannot evade: our belonging to one another as brothers and sisters,” he concluded.

As we hope to emerge from this terrible situation in 2021, Francis proposed reflecting on the meaning of the crisis, which can help each of us. “We see this in the etymological root of the verb *krino*: a crisis is the sifting that separates the wheat from the chaff after the harvest”, he noted, commenting that “the Bible itself is filled with individuals who were “sifted,” “people in crisis” who by that very crisis played their part in the history of salvation.”



*A time of meditation for the Pope in front of the icon Salus Populi Romani, to request the intercession of the Virgin on behalf of all people sick with the Coronavirus.*

He cited Abraham, who leaves his land, and Moses, who distrusts himself, or Elijah, the prophet who in a moment of great crisis even desires death, then John the Baptist, gripped by doubt about the messianic identity of Jesus, as well as Paul of Tarsus, shaken by the dazzling encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus ... “Yet the most eloquent crisis was that of Jesus”, he added, evoking the experience of temptations: when he was led by the Spirit into the desert (*Mt* 4:1), the one experienced subsequently in Gethsemane and finally the extreme crisis on the Cross, during which he delivered his spirit into the hands of the Father (cf. *Lk* 23:46).

“Hope gives to our assessments an aspect that in our myopia we are often incapable of seeing”, the Holy Father specified, inviting us to consider the crisis in the light of the Gospel. “If we can recover the courage and humility to admit that a time of crisis is a time of the Spirit, whenever we are faced with the experience of darkness, weakness, vulnerability, contradiction and loss, we will no longer feel overwhelmed. Instead, we will keep trusting that things are about to take a new shape, emerging exclusively from the experience of a grace hidden in the darkness.”

The crisis that changed the world in one year has allowed us to feel we are members of one great family, understanding that the only solution to defeat planetary evil is to collaborate and live together. We have become better aware of the presence of Christ inside our homes, resurrected in the very place where we live, in the domestic churches, from where “the world after” will start again: May 2021 be a year of hope for us all a year of hope.

**François Vayne**



# “Fratelli tutti”?

*A reflection by the Grand Master on the encyclical of Pope Francis*

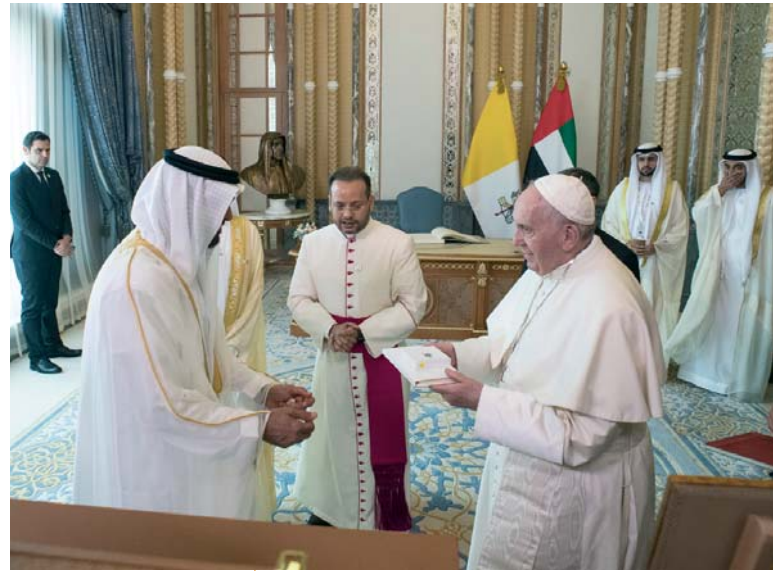
*“If the conviction that all human beings are brothers and sisters is not to remain an abstract idea (...) then numerous related issues emerge” (FT 128).*

The first of these challenges is to understand if and why we are all brothers and sisters. Faced with daily wars, hatred of all kinds, past and present, terrorism, personal and collective wickedness, one wonders if and how one can speak of fraternity; a word that has also given rise to ideological and political misunderstandings and the French Revolution itself of the eighteenth century made it a cornerstone of the “new” era; an era in which violence, racial segregation, colonialism, war and, subsequently, the exploitation of labour, the birth of complex ideologies of domination and supremacy (Nazism, communism and dictatorships of various inspiration) were not spurned.

For Christ and for the culture that originates in him, fraternity has another history – the biblical one – which is profoundly human and existential, and does not ignore the assertion of homo homini lupus (maxim derived from Plautus’ *Asinaria*, II, 4, 88), which was intended to explain human selfishness and to designate the condition in which men fight each other to survive.

The vision – a truly novel one – that Jesus traces is “other”. And it is in this perspective that the expression removed from the Admonitions attributed to St. Francis must be understood, who asked his brothers to look to Christ to grasp the sense of fraternity he wanted among them.

Biblically speaking, the idea of fraternity (prior to any form of brotherhood which has a somewhat curtailed and seemingly comradely flavour) arises not simply from sharing the same biological maternity / paternity, but from the overcoming of the biological aspect well expressed existentially by Psalm 51, which he confesses: “sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (v.5). For the same Psalm, the human being is aware that in life he becomes the companion of thieves and adulterers,



*Pope Francis’ encyclical Fratelli tutti is, in a way, an extension of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, signed in 2019 in Abu Dhabi, a document which constitutes an immensely important stage of the dialogue between Christians and Muslims.*

of fomenters of deceptions, and might even kill his own fellow man in the greatest contempt of God (cf. v.16 et seq.). A bad conscience almost leads Cain to bluff the Eternal One, trying to call himself out of the brotherhood of Abel; this story continues in humanity. Instead, we carry original sin (now almost discarded in contemporary theology and preaching) with us.

Moreover, without it, we cannot receive baptism from above (cf. *John* 3:3-8), according to the teaching of Jesus to Nicodemus: he intended to understand what was the “newness” preached by Christ; nor would there be a role for that “Lamb of God ... who takes away the sin of the world!” (*John* 1:29), Jesus, whom John the Baptist pointed out when he saw him coming towards him.

What was this novelty? Jesus was teaching the crowds and disciples the heart of relationships with God, with society (including religious) and with

others; then he firmly affirms: “You are all brothers” (*Mt 23:8*). Here it was not meant simply because of the common Jewish identity; He was widening his gaze, since “there is only one Father, and He is in heaven” (*Mt 23:9*). Thus, with Jesus the question becomes transcendent. Fraternity – says Jesus – originates from the heavenly Father and, for this reason, overcomes all discrimination relating to the colour of skin, culture and traditions; origin which, even in the ecclesial sphere, seems to be downgraded or ignored. If the appeal to transcendence were to fail, fraternity would shatter; equality would not resist various pressures, including economic and social ones, and freedom would selfishly lock itself in on itself. Fraternity has a transcendent significance. The papal encyclical also recalls this, citing John Paul II’s *Centesimus Annus* (cf. FT 273).

**“ Without God the Father, fraternity goes into crisis and continually needs props: tolerance, pacts, norms, judgment, strength. Reason alone cannot establish fraternity ”**

A further challenge arises: if transcendence were true, what God are we talking about? The question was posed to me in a simple but profound way by a Christian who lived in Iran at the time of my service in that country and who had to continually confront himself with the “God of Islam”: “Is the God of Jesus Christ – he said not without perplexity – the same as the God preached by Muslims?”. It was a pertinent question. The concrete contradictions, the fact of being called “unbeliever/kāfir”, were/are real. Abu Dhabi, for relations between Christians and Muslims (*Document on Human Fraternity for world peace and living together*, February 4, 2019) is a new step, at least not to make war and not to create more humanitarian crises. Terrorism and extremism are against Abu Dhabi. But the hope that the Abrahamic root of the three monotheistic religions, of which the Second Vatican Council speaks (cf. LG 16), can bear fruit has not withered. Therefore, in this context it should not be risky to think that the Abraham Accords (between United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Israel and possibly others in the near future) are an initiative that could imply previously inconceivable consequences at a

diplomatic as well as economic, cultural and religious level. Emerging from the logic of conflict means thinking differently and at a higher level.

When Jesus speaks of the “heavenly Father” he certainly refers to the God of Abrahamic revelation. He did not speak of an abstract or philosophical God; to the Samaritan woman (remember that there was no good blood between Samaritans and Jews!) who asked him which God should be worshiped, Jesus replies by going beyond the issue of the nearby Mount Gerizim on which the Samaritans worshiped “their” God, but also the mountain of Jerusalem on which the Jews worshiped the Most High. Instead, Jesus speaks of a “Father” who wants to be adored “in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must



worship in the Spirit and in truth” (*John 4:23-24*). This God is then revealed by / in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, whom we can no longer leave out of consideration. Without him we return either to pantheism or to the irenic-theosophical divisions of a God with a Platonic or esoteric flavour. The God of Jesus Christ has the characteristics of the Father who in the Son illuminates, redeems, reconciles us and on the cross opens us up to fraternity. But which?

To remove any further misunderstanding, to the Doctor of the Law who asked for explanations, Jesus tells the splendid parable of the good Samaritan (cf. *Lk 10:25-37*); there is no theory, but exemplification, and above all that powerful one: “Go and do this too” (*Lk 10:37*); Pope Francis’s

encyclical illustrates with undoubted clarity this parable which represents the theological heart of Jesus' teaching on fraternity and is at the centre of the pontifical document (cf. nn. 56 et seq.). The parable – the Pope explains – highlights the trust “in the best of the human spirit” (FT n. 71) which takes shape and originates in truth.

In truth? Once again, the Christian thinks of Christ: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (*John* 14:6). In understandable terms, we say that Jesus perfects his teaching for us, so to speak, by speaking of the most difficult human acts, such as (cf. *Mt* 5:20 et seq.) revenge (“But I tell you, do not resist an evil person ...”: *Mt* 5:39), human relations (“... If anyone forces you to accompany him for one mile, go with him two miles”: *Mt* 5:41), the attitude towards those who are in need (“and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you”: *Mt* 5:42) or the relationship with an adversary (“... If my brother commits sins against me, how many times will I have to forgive him? Up to seven times? ... I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times”: *Mt* 18:21-22). Pay attention! – Jesus says – a certain interested fraternity could exist also between the “tax collectors” and the “pagans”, but for a Christian fraternity has “your heavenly Father” as a reference (*Mt* 5:48)!

The fraternity of which Jesus speaks, therefore, cannot be reduced simply to an anthropological or sociological datum; for the Christian the question is theological, transcendent (cf. FT 85); that is, it needs God the Father, the principle point of reference and keystone of all fraternity. Without God the Father, fraternity goes into crisis and continually needs props: tolerance, pacts, norms, judgment, strength. Reason alone cannot establish fraternity (cf. FT 272).



*Pope Francis encyclical Fratelli tutti illustrates the evangelical parable of the Good Samaritan which represents the theological heart of Jesus' teaching on love of neighbour (Vincent Willem van Gogh, The Good Samaritan, 1890, oil on canvas, Kröller-Müller Museum).*

Jesus, as a Master, is the guarantee of a vision that transcends the anthropological limit in itself. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, speaking to a nun who wanted to leave the Congregation because she could no longer bear the stench of the poor, asked who was that poor man whom she had picked up that day: “Didn't he have the face of Christ?”, she asked, and the nun remained in the Congregation. “For Christians – says the Pope –... recognizing Christ himself in every brother” (FT 85) allows us to overcome the many motivations and questions

that ensnare us. This calls into question the third of the theological virtues, charity, which warms every relationship. Charity goes far beyond any sociological or biological dimension; it has its seat in a God to be loved “above all things for oneself, and neighbour as ourselves for love of God” (CCC 1822); charity is fulfilled in Jesus who loved his own to the end (cf. *John* 13:1).

The Letter to the Hebrews provides an interesting explanation about the humanity assumed by Christ, commenting splendidly “it was fitting” (decèbat, éprepen) (*Heb* 2:10) the redemptive incarnation of Jesus, “he who sanctifies” and “he is not ashamed of calling us brothers” (*Heb* 2:11).

One last challenge: Are we all brothers and sisters, but “different” brothers and sisters? Yes. Diversity does not undermine the social sense of existence or the conviction of the dignity of each person, nor does it affect the dimension of spirituality (cf. FT 86). Diversity promotes human wealth and beauty. In other words, let us think of a diversity not of a generic philanthropic or universalistic flavour, but the creator of a true form of social “friendship” which generates, through righteousness of heart, truth, the common good and peace.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

# It is fundamental to establish the Church's priority to announce Christ

*“Evangelization and missionary spirit cannot be disguised; they are an expression of life”*

During the lockdown Pope Francis in one of the morning homilies recalled that “faith is either missionary or it is not faith” and the Grand Master’s contribution builds on the *Lectio Magistralis* for the inauguration of the academic year at Rome’s Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum on “Evangelisation and missionary spirit”. The interest in this text

prompted Cardinal Filoni to propose a summary of it below in light of the World Mission Sunday 2020 held on October 18 on the theme “Here am I, send me” (Is 6:8).

The first missionary, in the sense of someone who leaves one’s own certainties and land to announce Jesus Christ, was Saint Paul. While the other Apostles evangelized in the Jewish sphere, with his three apostolic journeys, Paul gave ample scope to his missionary work in the Mediterranean, which at the time was under the dominion of Rome. With him, evangelization took on a ‘missionary’ feature: that is, open to the people; in this way there was a shift from a preaching restricted to the Jewish sphere, to that open to pagans; the Church of the peoples was born, the Church of the pagans with a universalistic, Catholic vision. The preaching of the unknown God, which Paul brought to Athens and then to Rome, still allows us to see in him the



The Preaching of Saint Paul in Athens symbolises the missionary dimension of evangelisation open to pagans (Raffaello Sanzio, 1515-1516, tempera on paper, Victoria and Albert Museum).

enthusiasm, beauty and determination in bringing the Gospel: “For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach – he wrote to the Corinthians – Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). This may perhaps appear to some a subtlety;

on the other hand, I consider it a very appropriate, lexical and necessary distinction in a time of confusion.

Evangelization is the task of all the baptized and involves giving an account of our faith, especially with the witness of our life; missionary spirit is the generous and constant commitment which, in the context of evangelization, adds a specific willingness: that of announcing the Gospel wherever the name of Jesus has not been proclaimed, the bearer of God’s blessing and the grace of the Gospel.



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Establishing the priority of announcing Christ is fundamental in the Church. Without this announcement, which should – at least in intention – accompany all other forms of outreach, the Church loses its missionary nature and places itself on the same level as organizations with various kinds of purposes, be they humanitarian, civil or religious. The centrality of announcing the Gospel is fundamental, particularly in an era when we witness its decline across all ecclesial levels, or worse, its being relegated to the margins in favour of social and civil factors, albeit of great importance. The announcement is the centre and the end is Christ.

The inclusion of the laity in missionary life represents a growing novelty; men and women and even families more and more often allow themselves to be involved in the missionary commitment, bringing with them, beyond the variety of professional skills, the witness of life and a new approach to proclaiming the Gospel and encountering Christ.

The announcement of the risen Christ must be lived by making eschatological tension the root of a

*Through fraternal witness and charitable action with foreign workers in Israel, whose living conditions are precarious, the Vicariate of St. James for Hebrew-speaking Catholics carries out an important activity in the Holy Land, supported by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre as are all the pastoral initiatives of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.*

faith and charity animated by hope and, for this reason, capable of a witness of fraternal, merciful and solicitous life for the good of all. Against all discouragement, it must be kept in mind that no transmission of the Gospel of Jesus would be possible if the Word and the Holy Spirit were not the first witnesses of the Gospel. In its announcement by the Church and Christians, the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent protagonist of the realization of this work in mankind and in the history of the world; “*The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church’s mission.*” (*Redemptoris Missio* 21).

The Church needs to rediscover this trust in Her mission, that is, to be clear that she is the “Body of the Risen Lord” cf. CCC 787 et seq.), sometimes wounded by violence and persecuted, but always the bearer of a gift for the human race, of a spiritual and moral mission to be an instrument of peace, of union between peoples, without ideological and political calculations; above all an instrument of salvation for the human being overwhelmed by inner restlessness, changes and imbalances, but also by violations of our own dignity. Evangelization and missionary spirit cannot be disguised; they are an expression of life. The Church that announces is always the space of grace in which God, who gifts and who gives, goes to meet humanity.

We need to place Her evangelizing and missionary identity back at the heart of the Church.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

# “The Spirit upsets plans”

*The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem talks to us about Saint Joseph in this meditation which he agreed to write especially for the magazine of the Knights and Dames of the Order.*

Saint Joseph, the husband of Mary and the putative father of Jesus, is mistakenly considered the unknown among the saints. Yet, in their magisterium the popes ceaselessly referred to this great biblical figure. Pius IX, to mention just the latest popes, declared him Patron of the Church, with the bull *Quemadmodum Deus* (1870). Indeed, it was in recognition of the anniversary of this bull that Pope Francis declared the year dedicated to Saint Joseph on 8 December last. Saint John Paul II in 1989, published *Redemptoris Custos*, on the occasion of the centenary of a previous encyclical, also dedicated to Saint Joseph, by Pope Leo XIII, entitled *Quamquam pluries*. St. Pius X also wrote about the “unknown” spouse of the Virgin, as did so many others. In other words, the list is long.

It is, in fact, a great figure of the New Testament. It is true that we have few passages referring directly to him, in the so-called childhood gospels, but those few passages are full of information and also of biblical references to the Old

Testament.

The Gospel according to Matthew most widely presents the various moments in Joseph’s life. I would like to single out one particular aspect of this precious figure. Joseph is a person who has been *called*.

This vocation is the gift from the Lord to take part in His plan of salvation. It is the place that everyone has in history that God manifests with His people. First of all, God calls Mary, and she answers with her yes, and thus the Lord’s plan advances a step.

Joseph is faced with these unexpected events, and he does not enter them, he does not take them on as his, until he is called to do it, he does not enter until it is the Lord who introduces him. No one can enter the mystery of God except through the door of one’s own vocation, except in the way that God chooses. And the same happens for Joseph, who remains outside the complex and incredible story of Mary, until he understands that God is calling him to enter it. Then he obeys immediately and, like Mary, he says yes to the Lord.

Mary is called to nurture the



*“O blessed Joseph, be a father to us, too, and lead us on the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage, and defend us from all evil. Amen”. (Margarita Sikorskaia, painting on Fatherhood).*

## A special year dedicated to St. Joseph

The Apostolic Letter *Patris corde* (with a father’s heart), signed on December 8 by Pope Francis, suggests a special year dedicated to Saint Joseph, until December 8, 2021. The Holy Father thus remembers the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the universal Church by Blessed Pius IX.

In the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, not only those Knights who are fathers of families but also the pastors – fathers from whom we receive spiritual support – and the Dames, we all have the opportunity to deepen our reflections on this Apostolic Letter. It helps each and every one to draw closer to St. Joseph, “this extraordinary figure, so close to our own human experience.”

Son of God in her womb, to be Mother of the Lord. But what is Joseph called to?

In the Gospel of Matthew, there are three episodes in which Joseph is spoken of. The first apparition in a dream (*Mt* 1:18 et seq.), the flight into Egypt (*Mt* 2:13 et seq.) and the return from Egypt (*Mt* 2:19 et seq.).

There is an almost identical expression that recurs in each of these three passages: “Joseph, take it with you.” This is what the angel repeats every time he meets Joseph, every time he calls him to give him a task, he always tells him the same thing: “take the child and his mother.” The angel explains to him that what happened is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In each of these three passages, Matthew reports that Joseph, awakened from sleep, obeys the command received, and takes the child and his mother with him. He says nothing, he does nothing but he takes them with him.

The vocation is to take upon oneself, to assume and to do precisely what God works, what the Spirit works.

It is not doing something. The vocation is not our work, but it is the leap that makes us move from our work to His work, in us and for us. It is taking with us, within our life, God’s plan, it is living from this.

Joseph is this docile man, capable of putting aside his own ideas, his own projects, even if they are just projects, even if they are obedient to the



*The city of Saint Joseph, Nazareth, in Israel, is best known to pilgrims through the Basilica of the Annunciation which houses the house where Mary received the visit of the angel.*

## Prayers to St. Joseph proposed by the Holy Father

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,  
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
To you God entrusted his only Son;  
in you Mary placed her trust;  
with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,  
show yourself a father  
and guide us in the path of life.  
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,  
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

— + —

*Glorious Patriarch Saint Joseph, whose power makes the impossible possible, come to my aid in these times of anguish and difficulty. Take under your protection the serious and troubling situations that I commend to you, that they may have a happy outcome. My beloved father, all my trust is in you. Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain, and since you can do everything with Jesus and Mary, show me that your goodness is as great as your power. Amen*

Law of God, and he opens himself to God’s plan and His newness. He is the courageous man, who when he is sure that what happens comes from God, he puts himself on the line, and accepts all the consequences, even the insecurity that comes from such a situation.

Usually the Spirit upsets the plans and takes us where we don’t think we should go. The Spirit knows other measures, other ways, which we do not always understand.

What will Joseph have understood of the angel’s speech? Probably not much, but he understood the essential thing, namely that what was happening was the work of God. And, trusting, he welcomed life and welcomed Jesus.

The Spirit fulfils the life of Jesus in us: forgiveness, acceptance, gift, gratuitousness, love.

Redemption, this great project of God, passed through Mary’s yes and Joseph’s obedience. Confident, silent, active obedience. It is an important lesson from the school of Nazareth, from which we want to begin anew today.

**Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa**  
*Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem*

# Three pillars re-establish the life of the Order

The new Constitution signed by the Pope,  
the book on spirituality written by the Grand Master,  
and the new document on the liturgy.

## POPE FRANCIS APPROVES THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF THE ORDER

*A letter from the Governor General to all the Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates.*

Excellency, dear Confrère  
and dear Consoeur,

It is my pleasure to inform you that on May 11, 2020, His Holiness Pope Francis approved the new Constitution of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. It is the fruit of an adaptation undertaken in light of the ongoing reform of the Curia, aimed at emphasizing the commitment to promote the spiritual growth of the members of the Order and at highlighting the charitable element in favour of Catholic Sites and Institutions in the Holy Land.

The new Constitution indeed grants primary importance to the vocation to holiness of every Christian and aspires to be an instrument for the deepening of the spiritual life and progress in personal sanctification, in a context in which faith is practiced and lived in all of its aspects. Furthermore, the new Constitution underlines how, by means of its structure and activity, the Order directly participates in the solicitude of the Roman Pontiff for the Holy Sites and Catholic Institutions of the Holy Land, in a framework of charity and apostolate at the service of the dignity



*The Palazzo della Rovere, headquarters of the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.*

of the human being.

Finally, the new Constitution formally confirms the legal status of the Order as a Central Body of the Catholic Church.

The Italian text is the official version of the new Constitution. The Cardinal Grand Master has arranged for it to be translated into various languages which will be reviewed by the Vice Governor Generals before their distribution to all the Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations together with its implementing Regulation.

While thanking you for your kind attention,

**Leonardo Visconti di Modrone**  
*Governor General*



# THE GRAND MASTER'S BOOK ON THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE ORDER

“**E** tutta la casa si riempì del profumo dell’unguento” (“And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume”): this is the title of the book by Cardinal Fernando Filoni published by the Vatican Publishing House which is available in bookstores in Italian from the second half of December 2020. Other language versions are following in 2021.

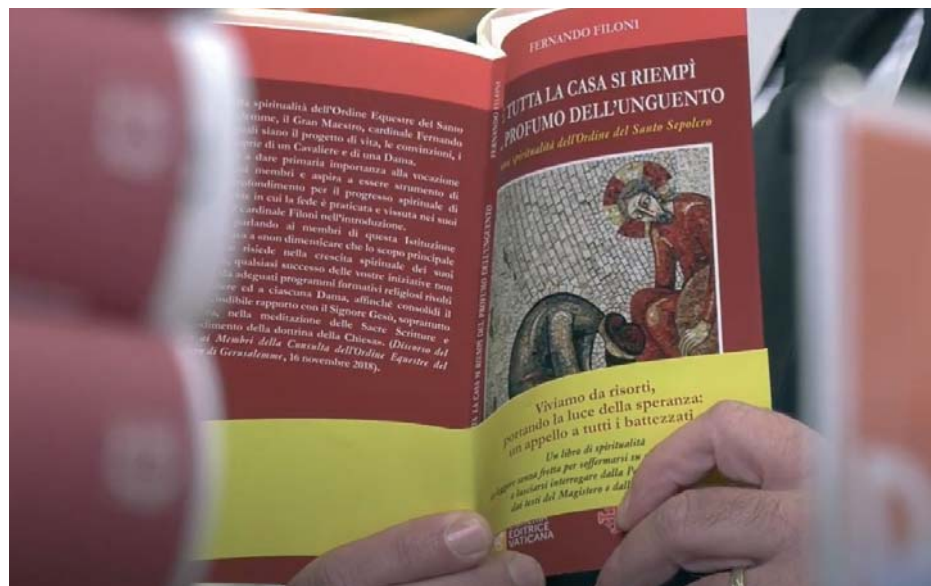
During the lockdown the Grand Master of the Order dedicated himself with attention and care to drafting this text which aims to sustain Knights and Dames in living their spirituality daily in the light of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the prologue, Cardinal Filoni writes: “Often members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem pose the question as to whether membership of this ancient and noble institution implies a specific ‘spirituality’. This is a pertinent question given that it is not a simply honorific chivalric Order; rather it is a vital and active entity with responsibility and commitments that have been gradually entrusted to it by Pontiffs.”

The text then takes the reader by the hand and accompanies him in the discovery of the two central dimensions of the spirituality of the Order: the biblical and the ecclesiological. From the anointing of Bethany to the foot of the Cross, from the empty tomb to the stretch of road travelled with the disciples of Emmaus, Cardinal Filoni invites us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus in the land we cherish so much and in the holy land of our daily lives. The grace granted to us in baptism introduces us into the life of the Church, the mother who accompanies the journey of the

Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. It is in this ecclesial dimension, firmly attached to the Word of God, to prayer and to the sacraments that the spirituality of the Order grows, matures and becomes a gift for the Universal Church.

We thus discover that the ointment with which Mary ardently desires to anoint the body of Jesus, is in our hands today. We can choose what to do with it, and over the centuries Knights and Dames



*The book on the spirituality of the Order, written by the Grand Master, first came out in Italian bookstores in December 2020 before being translated into major European languages in Spring 2021.*

have been offered one proposal: “Membership of the Order allows us to continue the same work of Mary of Bethany, that is to anoint ourselves the ‘Body of Christ’, which is the Church, in which Jesus now lives. I refer to the Church in its universal and local reality, but, in particular as members of the Order, to the Mother Church of all the Churches, that of Jerusalem with its faithful, pilgrims, refugees, the poor that Jesus left to us,” the Grand Master affirms.

By fulfilling this mission, anointing the Body of Christ today, we will contribute for our small part to spread the perfume of the ointment in the house we have the joy of living in, our Church.

## A NEW ORDER OF THE LITURGICAL RITE IN THE EOHSJ

*In 2021, a new document on the liturgical rite in the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is published. Below we present the preface signed by Cardinal Filoni, Grand Master, which highlights the link between this Order of the Liturgical Rite, the new Constitution, the General Regulations and the book on the spirituality of the Order.*

This text takes into account the practices and experience gained in the Investitures of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. With the revision of the Constitution and the General Regulations, as well as with the publication of the *Lineamenta* on the spirituality of the Knights and Dames of the Order, it seemed appropriate to revise the Order of the Liturgical Rite too, to adapt it to the principles of simplicity and solemnity, that admission to the Order entails.

The revision of the order of the Rite also intends to trace the fundamental lines to which every Lieutenancy must abide. This does not mean that some useful adjustments cannot be made while respecting the fundamental lines traced here. This will allow for a unity of style in all the Lieutenancies that favours the cohesion and beauty of the liturgies of the Investitures.

The Rite of the Prayer Vigil and the Investiture ceremony are two parts of the same solemn Act.

It is of great significance that a new Dame and a new Knight experience these moments with a spirit of meditation and joy, supported by the esteem and affection of the other members, similar to the ancient practices of which the history of the Investitures themselves is rich. Being aware that the Risen One calls us by name and chooses us for a noble ecclesial mission also helps us to respond

generously to the commitment that we take on and to grasp the richness of the rites of which this moment is rich.

At the beginning of the Prayer Vigil and the Investiture ceremony, some appropriate general indications were introduced to help the liturgical celebration, so that it always appears an expression of the highest praise of God and the commitment that the members of the Order assume in front of the Church towards the Holy Places and the



Christian community of the Holy Land.

The liturgy is always the highest expression of community prayer addressed to the Lord. It is not an expression of a formalism to satisfy appearances, on the contrary, it tends towards the fundamental nature, which is praise of God. Therefore, both the rites and the environment must be consonant with the purpose of the solemn moment.

# Faithfulness, openness and transparency

*Interview with Governor General, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone*

**Y**our Excellency, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, after almost four years at the helm of the Order, how would you assess your activities, first and foremost from an internal point of view, i.e., regarding the Grand Magisterium and the Lieutenancies?

The task of the Governor General, as defined by the Constitution is to be responsible for the direction of the Order and its financial and economic management, as well as coordinating the Grand Magisterium, which constitutes its Government.

Three and a half years ago, when I took on the role of Governor General, four great problems dogged the Grand Magisterium: the stalemate in the approval of the new Constitution, the Patriarchate's debt caused by the University of Madaba, the dispute with the tenant at the Palazzo della Rovere and the painful split within the Lieutenancy of France. Today those four problems have been resolved and the Order's Government can look to the future with confidence. The benevolence of the two Grand Masters whom I have served, as well as the proximity of the Assessor, have been decisive factors in this. However, I must also thank the guidance of my predecessor, professor Agostino Borromeo who accompanied me during my first steps, the support of the four Vice-Governors who closely look after the four geographical areas in which we are present, the members of the Grand Magisterium and in particular those who make up its Presidency, the Chancellor and the Treasurer, as well as the



*The Governor General at his office in the Palazzo della Rovere.*

various members of the Consultative Commissions that I wanted to accompany me in my work.

From the beginning, I have sought to base my work on the principles of collegiality, dialogue and the utmost transparency, in a spirit of voluntary service, aware that I am managing the resources of brothers who are far away and would like to contribute in different ways but all with the same zeal, to help the Holy Land and the Christians who live there.

**With regard to relations with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, your mandate is characterised by a change in strategy in the Holy Land: you have given**

**priority to small projects of a more human dimension. Could you explain this new direction to us and tell us about the initial results?**

The great and delicate problem of our charitable strategy is to establish the priorities of where to intervene in the absence of infinite resources. In agreement with the leaders of the Latin Patriarchate, I proposed the formula of "small projects", rather than constructing large buildings that are both costly and difficult to manage. Small projects have the advantage of being spread over a vast territory, addressing the most diverse needs, even in small communities. Furthermore, each project can be undertaken entirely by a Lieutenancy, who thus takes ownership of it and has greater incentive to invest resources in it.

The formula has been so successful since the first year that we have had to set a limit of only one project per Lieutenancy, in order to avoid diverting too many resources to this form of aid, to the exclusion of covering the necessary and regular institutional expenses of the Patriarchate (\$300,000 per month) and contributions to the schools (\$290,000 per month) and to the Beit Jala Seminary (\$57,000 per month).

**Why has the big project of a new church in Jordan, in Amman, suffered so many delays? What is the importance of having such an active construction site in this Muslim country?**

The project to construct a large church in Jubeiha, near Amman, dates back to decisions made before my mandate. It is a precise example of what those “big projects” used to be. It has proved itself to be insufficient for the needs of that growing Christian community. During the course of the project, variations and extensions were proposed, leading to delays and more costs. I remember that when I visited the church during construction they wanted to start again almost from scratch, moving walls that

*The Order of the Holy Sepulchre supports education in the Holy Land, especially Bethlehem University which trains future officials of the State of Palestine in a spirit of dialogue and peace.*

had already been built and creating galleries in order to increase the capacity to welcome people. I objected and asked that the changes be limited to the essentials. Let us not forget that when the Pontiff needs space for special occasions, he celebrates Holy Mass in St Peter’s Square, even though he has the largest cathedral in Christendom. I don’t see why the same cannot be done in Jubeiha, on occasions when there might be an exceptional presence of the faithful.

**The members of the Order wish to receive more information about the projects that the Order itself supports in the Holy Land, not only those related to the Latin Patriarchate, but also all of the others. What do you see as the most significant projects, for example among those carried out with the Congregation for the Eastern Churches?**

The information that we provide on the projects is transparent and widespread, and each Lieutenancy is able to access it through a user-friendly website, choose the project and commit to fund it. However, in addition to the Latin Patriarchate projects, each year we contribute to funding projects in the Holy Land proposed by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches through ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches). In general, we prioritise projects in

Palestine, Israel and Jordan, but this year, following the tragic explosion in Beirut, we decided to help fund projects in Lebanon as well. There are also other worthy institutions that we help. I am thinking for example of the University of Bethlehem or the CNEWA (Catholic Near East Welfare Association). We also co-finance the Order of Malta’s hospital projects. The resources, despite the generosity of our members, are never sufficient, but I have calculated that in the last ten years we have sent over one hundred and fifty million dollars to the Holy Land.

**Sometimes, the Grand Master**



*Among the projects that the Grand Master of the Order wanted to support in 2020, is the construction of a hospital and an orphanage in the new city of Cairo, a Catholic establishment promoted by the association "Bambino Gesù del Cairo Onlus" ([coptcatholic.net/bambinogesueg/](http://coptcatholic.net/bambinogesueg/)). Egypt, where the Holy Family stayed, is part of the Holy Land, in the broad sense, like all the biblical territories from the Nile to the Euphrates.*



**makes a decision directly over a project, like this year in the case of the hospital in Cairo, Egypt. What did this involve? How do these projects of the Grand Master fit in with the others?**

The Grand Master has the final say on any proposal of the Grand Magisterium, but he generally tends to approve the projects that are proposed to him, which are the result of a careful comparative examination, aimed at establishing, as far as possible, priorities among the various needs. However, he has at his disposition a proportion of the budget “for the Grand Master’s intentions” from which he can draw in order to finance projects chosen personally by him. With such resources, he can decide to accommodate, among the many specific requests he receives, those he considers to be worthiest of his attention.

**You are very busy with the restoration of the hotel in Palazzo della Rovere in Rome, whose premises belong to the Order. How much money do you plan to invest in this project and how is it essential for the development of the Order itself?**

The Order received Palazzo della Rovere as a gift from the Holy See. It is a historical building in Via della Conciliazione, just a few steps from the Vatican, which dates back to the fifteenth century, with marvellous frescos by Pinturicchio. It is a

precious gift that was offered to the Order to help support its charitable activities.

I would like to recall that in the famous parable of the talents, the master distributed different amounts of money to his servants “according to each one’s ability.” I believe that if the Church wanted to donate this precious gift to the Order it is because, like the evangelical master, She appreciated its “ability” to bear fruit from it. For this reason, over the years, upon the initiative of the then Grand Master, Cardinal Foley, funds were set aside to establish a reserve for the restoration and maintenance of the Palazzo. The budget for the work on the building is therefore completely separate from those destined for the Holy Land.

For 2021 we are planning aid for the Holy Land for a total of 13,289,000 euros and work on the Palazzo della Rovere will amount to 5,450,000 euros. When the work is finished, part of the Palazzo can be rented out as a hotel, to serve the needs of the Church. My dream is to obtain sufficient revenue from the “talent” entrusted to us, to cover the running costs of the Grand Magisterium so that the donations we receive from our 30,000 members from all over the world can be entirely devoted to the Holy Land. At the same time, the frescoed halls of the Palazzo will be able to host events regarding the mission of the Church and the Order and to spread knowledge about it, promoting its charitable work.

**The Order received a new Constitution, signed by the Pope last spring. What is the importance of this document, how does it differ from the previous one, and what perspectives does it outline?**

The new Constitution contains two fundamental aspects compared to the previous one: the first is a stronger emphasis on the spirituality that must characterise membership to the Order; the second is the formal recognition that the Order is a Central Body of the Church. We are not a group of faithful who gather in prayer and on pilgrimage, but rather, we are an integral part of

relations with foreign countries, has brought me a series of contacts with the institutional world, both Italian and international, that I would like to put to use for the purposes of the Order. I believe that the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is little known and deserves to be better known for what it really is, and above all for what it does, to the benefit of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Our network of Knights and Dames, our marvellous headquarter, the prestige of our Grand Master, can and must be put at the service of the goal of strengthening the Christian presence in the Land where our Faith has its origin with the preaching of the Gospel. The Order must not remain closed in on itself, it must open itself to contacts with the outside world, make itself known and, in a spirit of humility, it must promote its charitable activities in a modern and effective manner.

**To conclude, what has changed in your personal life as a result of belonging to the Order, both from a spiritual point of view, but also on a simply human level?**

When I retired from my diplomatic career, I felt that I still had the energy to dedicate myself to a form of voluntary service for a noble cause. The opportunity was offered to me, without my expecting it, from a meeting many years ago with Professor Agostino Borromeo, my dear friend from childhood, who was then the Governor General of the Order and a scholar of Church history. I knew that I did not have his experience and the depth of his knowledge and so I was hesitant when he first proposed that I succeeded him in the post. Then I took heart, and today I am happy with that decision: I dedicate all of my energies to the Order, rediscovering the enthusiasm of the early years in my career, a humble worker in a fertile field where, in addition to the good that one can do, there is the spiritual enrichment that belonging to the Order brings day by day.

**Interview by François Vayne**



*The Palazzo della Rovere, near the Vatican, allows the Order to organise events during which the public can find out about the activities and the mission of the Knights and Dames in the Holy Land, at the service of the Mother Church in Jerusalem.*

the Church and an instrument of Her solicitude for the Land dear to our Faith, where Our Lord was born, lived, died and rose again. A great honour for us. A great responsibility. A great commitment.

**You have sought to establish relations between the Order and other institutions, both civil and religious. How are these transversal relations evolving and what events or meetings do you envisage in this regard, after the current health crisis?**

My professional training as a diplomat, who has served his country for more than forty years in its

# The Grand Master's appeal to support the Holy Land in times of Covid and its aftermath

**In spring 2020, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master, launched an appeal to all Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations around the world to face the emergency of the health crisis generously with contributions to the Grand Magisterium's "Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Fund". The sums collected were quickly transferred to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem according to established procedure.**

In agreement with the Latin Patriarchate, and following the suggestion of several Lieutenants, the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has decided to launch a special "Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Fund" specifically dedicated to the consequences of the pandemic. The virus had a severe impact on the Holy Land, especially in Palestine and Jordan. It was urgent for the Christian families living there to be supported for their basic needs, especially for those people who lost their employment, due to the collapse of pilgrimages and tourism and the impossibility to daily commute to Israel for work. Financial aid support was equally necessary in order to provide the cash flow to keep operational the 38 LPJ schools in Palestine and Jordan with their over 15,000 students and over 1,300 teachers and staff employed.

As it might be remembered an ordinary humanitarian fund financed by the Order and amounting to € 600,000 for 2020 was agreed between the Presidency of the Grand Magisterium and the Latin Patriarchate, before the outbreak of the pandemic. Such amount is clearly inadequate in the present circumstances. Therefore, while keeping that fund for ordinary humanitarian activities already established, – and increasing the amount at year's end, thanks to the generosity of



*Cardinal Filoni at a press conference in May 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic.*

the members, exceeded one million euros – it has been agreed with the Patriarchate to respond to the two aforesaid new emergencies – the families in need and the

functioning of LPJ schools – through this new fund.

Throughout 2020, the members of the Order donated more than 2.5 million for the Covid-19 humanitarian support fund aimed at aiding those who have lost their jobs to meet the basic needs of their families such as food, hygiene and baby care products and medicines. Humanitarian aid to families was provided by the Patriarchate through the support and guidance of about 30 parish priests, in collaboration with local councils.

Furthermore, in December 2020 with the funds received, the Latin Patriarchate was able to support about 2,500 families with the payment of school fees at the LPJ schools. Part of the resources allocated were also used to provide 10 centres that welcome more than 600 elderly and children in difficulty with the necessary personal protective equipment in this phase of the epidemic.

The generosity of the aid sent meant that also in 2021 the Patriarchate could draw on this money to continue to meet the needs of about 10,000 people.

# Archbishop Pizzaballa thanks the Order of the Holy Sepulchre

**Before being appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Pizzaballa wished to thank the Order for the help it gave him during his tenure as Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate.**

In these four years of service to the Latin diocese of Jerusalem, in the Latin Patriarchate, I have been able to personally ascertain the role of the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre for this Church, not only in the context of educational and pastoral activities, but in general for the life of the diocese as a whole.

Four years ago, at a particularly difficult moment for the Patriarchate, the Knights and Dames – through the Grand Magisterium – showed their solidarity and closeness by encouraging and also concretely supporting the processes of revision and control of the administrative life of the diocese, which had become urgent and necessary.

During these four years, through pilgrimages and with initiatives in their respective territories, the various Lieutenancies have nurtured their bonds with the various realities of the Latin Patriarchate, not only in words but also with tangible facts.

All of this has been reconfirmed in this last year marked by the Covid-19 pandemic and during which the Patriarchate found itself facing a new emergency, just as we had believed our situation to be improving. As a result of the measures decided by the various governments to tackle the pandemic, in fact, a large part of our population found itself facing a drastic cut in wages, and a general

economic situation even more fragile than usual.

Thanks to the support of the Grand Master with the Grand Magisterium, our appeal to the Knights and Dames had a response that went far beyond our expectations and that gave us the necessary breathing space to manage this emergency with greater serenity. We were all amazed and humbled by the immediate response and its scope.

2020 was also the year that, despite the many emergencies, nevertheless marked the end of a tiring path of restructuring and resolution of difficult pre-existing situations. The large debt which the Patriarchate owed to the Saint John the Baptist foundation, linked to the University of

Madaba, has been fully repaid. This has reduced the overall debts that burdened the Patriarchate administration by almost 60%. It was possible thanks to the painful relinquishing of some property, which however, was not essential for the Patriarchate. We now have a structured plan to conclude the remaining



commitments soon as well.

Much remains to be done, but we are now at the end of a positive path for the life of the diocese of Jerusalem.

I wish to thank the Grand Master, both the current one and his predecessor, for their support and encouragement; through them, our thanks extends to the whole Order of Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, without whom all that we have accomplished to date would have been impossible.

Thank you for being, for this small but important Church, the concrete and tangible sign of Divine Providence!

**+ Pierbattista**



# Two major events in honour of Our Lady of Palestine

Since 1994, at the behest of Pope Saint John Paul II, the feast of Our Lady of Palestine, Patroness of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is celebrated every year on October 25.

On the last Sunday of October, the annual celebration is particularly marked in the Holy Land, at the Marian shrine of Deir Rafat, inaugurated by Patriarch Barlassina in 1928, halfway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. In 2020, despite the situation linked to the pandemic which prevented a large pilgrimage, Bishop Giacinto Boulos Marcuzzo, Patriarchal Vicar in Jerusalem and Palestine, officiated, recalling the centenary of the consecration of the diocese to Our Lady of Palestine, whose traditional image shows her blessing the entire Holy Land, from Mount Carmel in Haifa to Jerusalem.

On that occasion, the Grand Master of the Order usually welcomes his guests at Palazzo della Rovere, in Rome. The day

*The Marian shrine of Deir Rafat, dedicated to Our Lady of Palestine, is halfway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.*



for that annual reception is always fixed closed to the feast, as part of the Grand Magisterium's Fall meeting which brings together the Order's authorities.

This year, due to the Covid-19 health crisis and the restrictions imposed, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master, proposed to live the Order's feast in an even deeper way, allowing everyone to participate through communications means. In that spirit, he celebrated a mass in St Peter's Basilica, at the intentions of Christians and all the inhabitants

of the Holy Land, and also for the Knights and Dames. The mass was held on October 21 at the Altar of the Chair of Saint Peter, and was broadcast live on the Facebook page of the Order's Grand Magisterium (it is still available on the YouTube page of the Grand Magisterium).

"In venerating Mary Queen of Palestine, let us reflect briefly on this title initially attributed to her by Patriarch Barlassina (1920) and then definitively established by the Congregation of Rites in 1933," suggested the Grand Master during his homily. "By love for the Holy Land, we





*Live-streamed, the annual Mass in honour of Our Lady of Palestine, Patroness of the Order, was celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome on October 21, 2020.*



then still Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, on the following theme: "Holy Land and Middle East. Current events and possible perspectives".

This excellent conference, with simultaneous English translation, and broadcast live on the site of the



Grand Magisterium, was also available to Italian speakers via the Facebook page of the Grand Magisterium (it remains available on the Youtube page of the Grand Magisterium). The meeting of the Grand Magisterium took place the next day, virtually, under the coordination of Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone.

do not mean an attachment to historical-archaeological sites, which are certainly always fascinating, nor even a love that has its locus in the genre of philanthropic relationships, however noble they may be", he then clarified, adding that, "love for the Holy Land is situated in the context of that love that God had for humanity; a love that was fully manifested in a region, in a concrete, geographically determined land, precisely Palestine; a place where God wanted to reveal himself".

On the afternoon of October 21, the Grand Master and the Governor General hosted a conference at Palazzo della Rovere by Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa,

*During the conference, Archbishop Pizzaballa revealed that the response of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre to his call linked to the Covid-19 crisis went well beyond his expectations, allowing aid to be delivered to thousands of families hit by the health crisis.*



# The 2020 Spring and Autumn meetings of the Grand Magisterium

## The “virtual” Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium

The Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium, the first to be chaired by the new Grand Master, His Eminence Cardinal Fernando Filoni, should have taken place on April 21-22, 2020, with its customary pattern and agenda. As in the past, the two-day working session would have started with a Holy Mass in Palazzo della Rovere. The meetings would have taken place in the building of the Pontifical Council for Culture, after the meetings and during the working luncheons the members of the Grand Magisterium would have exchanged informal opinions and evaluations. Circumstances linked to the coronavirus pandemic have forced us to change all this. Since meetings in person were impossible, we met virtually.

Among the themes that emerged in the reports sent and shared (which did not lead to a direct exchange), the presentation given by the then Apostolic Administrator, Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa deserves particular mention. He provided a clear analysis of the situation in the Holy Land, in terms of the current health crisis and political problems (with specific criticism of the American Peace Plan). He also outlined measures taken to cover the debts of the Patriarchate.

In the same line the Chief Executive Officer of the Patriarchate, Dr Sami El-Yousef presented the administrative data and those concerning the



*The streets of Jerusalem, usually brought to life by the presence of pilgrims, were horribly deserted during the pandemic.*

running of the schools in a detailed report. The report revealed how, even under the current circumstances and also thanks to the Order's

support, the Patriarchate is able to guarantee the wages of 1850 employees and over 100 ecclesiastics as well as financial aid to a number of Christian families left without an income because of the pandemic, and to face the difficulties of virtual schooling being offered to children online.

The Assessor, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, focused on the ongoing review of the Statute, a task he was entrusted with at the beginning of his mandate and which he has pursued with notable energy. The review is being carried out in close contact with the Cardinal Grand Master, and the process will

resume once the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus are lifted allowing for the final series of meetings with the Secretariat of State (the new Constitution was approved by the Holy Father in the following months).

The enhanced role in terms of coordination and support taken on by the four Vice Governors was evident in their respective reports.

The budget of the Order, submitted by the Treasurer, Dr Saverio Petrillo, illustrated a correct and well-balanced management and an increasing allocation of funds to the Holy Land. The budget shows a surplus of 6,853.60 Euros for 2019, achieved thanks to the contributions from the Lieutenancies, amounting to 14,743,685.77 Euros, with an increase of 1,461,190.67 Euros from the previous budget. We have therefore been able to send 14,106,087.34 Euros to the Holy Land, 1,805,125.76 Euros more than in 2018.

Ambassador Alfredo Bastianelli, as Chancellor, has provided the statistical figures of the Order, confirming roughly a membership around 30,000 units. He singled

*Presentation of the pastoral activities of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem at a meeting of the Grand Magisterium organised thanks to new means of distance communication.*

out the efforts of some Lieutenancies in encouraging the participation of young people in the Order's activities, a subject which is particularly dear to the Grand Master.

The team work of the Grand Magisterium was underscored by the reports of the other Commissions set up by the Grand Master to support the task of the Governor General.

The reports to the Grand Magisterium ended with the contributions of the persons in charge of two offices working in close coordination on the information about the Order and on the promotion of its image: the Communications Service and the Office for External Relations.

In short, we can safely assume that the Coronavirus emergency has not interrupted the activities of the Grand Magisterium. On the contrary, it has stimulated its commitment: the results of the virtual meeting, translated in different languages, will provide the Lieutenancies with subjects for reflections and encouragement for the future and with useful references and incentives for Knights, Dames and Ecclesiastics belonging to the Order worldwide, to the benefit of their charitable activities in the Holy Land and the support for the Christians who live there.

**Leonardo Visconti di Modrone**  
*Governor General*



## The Grand Magisterium's Autumn Meeting

The day after the celebration of Mass in honour of Our Lady of Palestine, on October 21, 2020, which was presided over by the Grand Master of the Order in Saint Peter's Basilica, the Autumn meeting of the Grand Magisterium was held. Members met virtually, due to the ongoing health crisis, while the Grand Master, the Governor General, the Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Lieutenant General and the Chancellor participated live from Palazzo della Rovere in Rome.

The meeting emphasised the willingness of those responsible for the Order to step up support for the Holy Land by increasing the budget by 3.5% for 2021, building on the undeniable generosity of the Knights and Dames, splendidly demonstrated in recent months through the extraordinary help given by about 3 million euros to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in order to respond to the humanitarian needs of its faithful.

Cardinal Filoni's emphasis on the spiritual dimension of belonging to the Order promotes

awareness among members of their great and beautiful vocation and, at the same time, it stimulates a renewal of their material commitment through the contributions made by the Lieutenancies to the life of the Mother Church in Jerusalem. Now that the main problems of the Order are resolved, in particular those related to Patriarchate's long-standing debts – as Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone has pointed out – it is important to look ahead and strengthen the development of the Order in countries where it is still under-represented. This is being achieved thanks in particular to the ongoing and direct relations between the Grand Magisterium and the Lieutenancies, as well as the prolific activity of the commissions created over the past three years.

For further details, we invite you to read the speeches given by the Grand Master and the Governor General during the meeting of the Grand Magisterium, as well as the important conclusions of Cardinal Filoni, almost a year after Pope Francis appointed him as head of the Order.

### Extracts from the Grand Master's message

From the very outset of my appointment as Grand Master, I have tried to understand what I can do for the Order and what, perhaps, is expected of me. The Constitution is clear in indicating the task of the Grand Master. But is that really all there is? A body without the spirit, however perfect it may be, is lifeless. When God gives form to Adam, an artefact of earth, he only came to life after the Most High infused him with his Spirit. With it, Adam becomes a living being, intelligent and endowed with a high dignity. By infusing the spirit, God opens a dialogue with man.



Thus, continuing in this vision, I attempted to open a space for dialogue with the Members of the

Order through the means of communication at our disposal in order to establish relationships, respond to questions, prepare spiritual reflections; among the initiatives launched, I would perhaps underline the “Grand Master’s Corner”, the reflections on the occasion of liturgical celebrations, the publication of the “Spirituality Guide” for the Members of our Order, the ongoing revision of the General Ritual for the Liturgies of Vigils and Investitures, the ongoing evaluation of the inclusion, in some form, of young people and men and women religious; moreover, through some interviews with press, I have tried to boost awareness of our Order and improve its perception in the wider public. Among the topical initiatives, I would also like to mention the beautiful and generous response on the occasion of the extraordinary collection of

financial aid to subsidize the difficulties created by Covid-19 in the Land of Jesus.

It would be my desire that our Order renew its zeal and enthusiasm in supporting the Land of Jesus and in particular the Christian presence which, for various political and social reasons, at times seems to fade. However, while we help the Holy Land economically with noble sentiments of charity, we must also have at heart the life of our Members, Dames and Knights, whose membership of the Order would seem, in various cases, to fail or be experiencing a time of crisis; I recommend closeness, fraternity, attention to human, social and religious situations, all indispensable aspects if we consider ourselves one great family spread across the continents.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

## Extracts from the talk by the Governor General

The major issues on the table for the future are: first of all, obviously, how to overcome the effects of Coronavirus, an unexpected variable that has upended our lives and our plans, but has also allowed us to discover a generosity above all of our expectations.

The appeal addressed by the Cardinal Grand Master to the members of the Order has resulted in

the collection of three million euros for emergency humanitarian aid linked to the pandemic in the Holy Land. The generosity was such that, paradoxically, it has resulted in some difficulties in collecting resources for ordinary and institutional expenses, since all destinations chosen for the donations by our members were aimed at the Coronavirus emergency.

A gradual rebalancing is now necessary, also to avoid making a massive recourse to the statutory reserves.

A second element that has characterized these last months is the strong impulse given by the Cardinal Grand Master to the promotion of spirituality in the Order, through the publication of a booklet that will soon be distributed to all the Lieutenancies and which



*The Governor General insisted on the effort to expand the Order through the opening of new Magistral Delegations and Lieutenancies around the world.*

will give a solid reference to what it means to belong to the Order and to the commitments such a decision entails.

His Eminence made a similar effort on the communication front, not only through the media but also through a direct dialogue with the faithful, launching “The Grand Master’s Corner” a new column in our website.

A third element that must be mentioned is the great renovation of Palazzo della Rovere to restore the dignity deserved by the seat of the Order and to start a new season of hotel hospitality in the future, hopefully more successful than the previous one.

The rules introduced by the Holy See in the last weeks with the New Procurement Code have

determined a pause in the schedule of works to allow appropriate investigations with the Vatican authorities on the procedures applied.

But we are moving forward with determination on the path we have traced and soon we are expecting to start renovation.

I cannot fail to mention also the ongoing expansion effort of the Order both through the contacts made to assess the potential interest to the establishment of new Magistral Delegations and Lieutenancies, and through an action aimed at fostering greater knowledge of the Order and its charitable work.

Contacts with the Lieutenancies are constant, thanks also to the support of the Vice Governors, whom I want to expressly thank here.

## Giving an active and positive image of the Order

### *Excerpts from the Grand Master’s final reflections*

Concluding the Grand Magisterium meeting last October 22, the Grand Master’s first invitation to reflection regarded those who are already Knights and Dames. “My perception is that there are various members of the Order who live on the margins of our institution and Pope Francis has accustomed us to look at those who live on the margins. Why did the enthusiasm, generosity and participation of these Knights and Dames cool? It is up to us to examine what we can do so that their participation in the Order rediscovers the same spirit as when they made their commitment to God, the Church and their brothers and sisters through charity.” Leaving this question to the reflection of the members of the Grand Magisterium, Cardinal Filoni did not hesitate to recall that reaching out to the less active members is our responsibility so as not to forget those on the margins and that this “rapprochement” can be supported by strengthening our spirituality which the Grand Master is extensively supporting in his ministry.

A second point that Cardinal Filoni has particularly at heart is that of inclusiveness. “Who could we possibly include and thus make the Order even more alive and participatory?” he asked the members of the Grand Magisterium who are the small governing body in representation of the entire Order which has 30,000 members in various continents. In this regard, he mentioned two directions.

“Our Order needs to focus on seeing if we can do something more for the young. We are not alone – he said – an Order of people who have reached a certain level and a certain age. We can enrich ourselves through the presence of young people, with their energies, ideas and commitment.”

In addition, the Grand Master recalled the reflection inaugurated in the Grand Master’s Corner on the website of the Grand Magisterium ([www.oessh.va](http://www.oessh.va)) regarding the possible participation of women religious within the Order.

His last word was of thanks for all the members of the Order and for their openness to the outside, in that dynamic of an outgoing Church so often suggested by Pope Francis: “I thank you for the help you give to the Church of Holy Land and not only. This is why we are working to give a different perception of the Order which, at times, can be negative or reduced to its specifically external aspects. This is not the case and I believe that being able to show our active and positive image is to the advantage of God, the Church and the Order itself.”

# Two members of the Order created cardinals and two new members for the Grand Magisterium

A public ordinary consistory was held on November 28, 2020, on the eve of the first Sunday of Advent, during which the Pope created thirteen new cardinals from Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and North America. They include two Knights Grand Cross of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre: these are Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, the new prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and Cardinal Wilton Daniel Gregory, Archbishop of Washington. With immense love for the Church, the Knights and Dames of the whole world spiritually accompany



*Cardinal Semeraro and Cardinal Gregory entered the College of Cardinals in Autumn 2020.*



these two close collaborators of the Supreme Pontiff, as well as the entire college of cardinals. During the mass of November 29 in St. Peter's Basilica, in the presence of the new cardinals, the Holy Father particularly insisted on the vigilance of prayer and charity. He described charity as "the beating heart of the Christian": "Just as one cannot live without a heartbeat, so one cannot be a Christian without charity... these are the only things that win us the victory, since they are already aiming towards the future, the day of the Lord, when all else will pass away and love alone will remain."



*Professor Vincenzo Buonomo and Lawyer Michael Scott Feeley enrich the Grand Magisterium both with their skills and their sense of the Church.*

By decision of the Grand Master, Professor Vincenzo Buonomo – rector of the Pontifical Lateran University – and lawyer Michael Scott Feeley – former head of the Western USA Lieutenancy – were appointed members of the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Vincenzo Buonomo and Michael Feeley – both born in 1961 – are both Knights Grand Cross. We wish them a happy and fruitful mandate in the service of the Holy Land, in the context of the advisory council which aids Cardinal Filoni and spreads his provisions regarding the important direction of the Order.





**GUCCIONE**

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DECORATIONS OF KNIGHTLY ORDERS



Order of the Holy Sepulchre

Papal Equestrian Orders

Order of Malta

Italian Dynastic Orders and Orders of the Italian Republic



*Mass in honour of Our Lady of Palestine  
presided over by the Grand Master of the  
Order of the Holy Sepulchre, in Saint Peter's  
Basilica in Rome, on October 21, 2020.*



# Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master, and the authorities of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as all the Knights and Dames in the world, have welcomed the appointment of Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa as the new Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, a title attached to his new function. The news was a good surprise because of the bonds of trust developed between the Order and Msgr. Pizzaballa during his delicate mission as Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate accomplished with success since the summer of 2016.

Therefore, the Holy Father has decided to offer Msgr. Pizzaballa the very important role of Patriarch of the Mother Church which is located in Jerusalem, thereby establishing him as the pastor and main leader of the Latin Catholic community present in the vast territory including Jordan, Palestine, Israel and Cyprus.

Pope Francis had the opportunity to appreciate Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa's human and spiritual qualities as the Franciscan Custos of

the Holy Land, especially during his Pontifical pilgrimage in May 2014, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem, and then during the interreligious prayer for peace organized in the Vatican gardens in June of the same year (For reference visit [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/institutions\\_connected/oessh/ad/annales2014/annales-2014\\_en.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/institutions_connected/oessh/ad/annales2014/annales-2014_en.pdf) to access our annual magazine from 2014).. The esteem between the two men both marked by the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi was undoubtedly born during that unforgettable 'pilgrimage of prayer', six years ago. Father Pizzaballa had been Custos since 2004, but his service to the Custody, as a Franciscan friar, had already started in 1999.

His action as Custos of the holy places was rewarded in 2016, when the Greek Orthodox Patriarch awarded him the rank of Grand

Commander in the Orthodox Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, in recognition of his efforts to bring the

*The Patriarch of Jerusalem is also Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.*





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Christian confessions closer together, an ecumenical step forward which allowed the agreements to restructure the tomb of the Lord in the Church of the Resurrection.

Before being Custos, the new Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem had worked on the publication of the Roman Missal in Hebrew (in 1995), serving then as Vicar General to the Latin Patriarch for the pastoral care of Hebrew-speaking Catholics in Israel.

Present since 1990 in the Holy Land, Msgr. Pizzaballa, who is only 55-years old, has already spent more than half of his life in the Holy Land where he settled after his solemn profession in the

*The reception of the new Patriarch at the Holy Sepulchre.*

Order of Friars Minor and ordination to the priesthood in Bologna from the hands of Cardinal

Giacomo Biffi. Native of Cologno al Serio, in the Province of Bergamo, he is the eighth Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem of Italian origin, in the list of the ten prelates who have held this function since the restoration of the Patriarchate by Pope Pius IX in 1847. The Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre keep entrusting his ministry to their Patroness, Our Lady Queen of Palestine, whose liturgical Feast providentially coincided with his appointment as Patriarch.

## Warm wishes from the Grand Master and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre to the new Patriarch

**F**rom its ancient name, a vast territory between Syria and the Sinai desert, Palestine was chosen to welcome divine revelation and Jesus' life; a land which still evokes extraordinary beauty and spiritual attraction, geography and history of salvation. At the same time, it is a melting pot of peoples and religions, tensions and conflicts, for centuries home to fervent Christian populations, monastic communities, renewed ecumenical commitment, and relations with the Jews and the Muslims.

His Excellency Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Franciscan, becomes today the new Latin Patriarch.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, of which he is now the Grand Prior, extends its warmest wishes.

The Order intends to support him in his pastoral service and welcome his suggestions in order to be significantly involved in the vocation of Jesus' Land as an open and welcoming place, loved by all, where people and hopes coexist.

Congratulations.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

# The Holy Land and the Middle East: Current events and possible perspectives

*A historic meeting with Archbishop Pizzaballa*

**O**n Wednesday 21 October 2020, in the evocative setting of Palazzo della Rovere in Rome, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre held a conference titled “Holy Land and the Middle East: Current events and possible perspectives.”

The keynote speaker at the conference was Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa – former Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem – who was interviewed by the journalist Piero Damosso, chief editor of the Italian newscast TG1. The event, broadcast in live streaming, took place just two days before Pizzaballa himself was nominated as Patriarch of Jerusalem. Cardinal Filoni, Grand Master of the Order, introduced the meeting.

The questions touched on various topics, from the management of the pandemic and its consequences in the Holy Land, to the crucial support offered by the Order during the emergency, to the most delicate political issues

affecting the region. In this regard, the new Patriarch delineated his vision beyond geopolitical ambiguities, arguing that the stability of the Middle East cannot be separated from a clear and dignified solution to the Palestinian question.

Archbishop Pizzaballa, the emergency that has enveloped us over the past several months has spared no one not even the Middle East and the Holy Land. How has the pandemic affected these areas already marked by many tensions? And what lesson can we learn from this crisis to promote dialogue and better coexistence in this potentially decisive reality for building peace throughout the world?

The pandemic has hit us, the nations of the Middle East, just as it has the rest of the world. In addition to the healthcare emergency, we too have suffered from the economic and social crises this has provoked. The countries of our diocese have kept their borders closed for a long time, Jordan



*Cardinal Filoni introducing the conference of Archbishop Pizzaballa at the Palazzo della Rovere.*

until today (mid-October, ed). For the Palestinian reality, which is the most socially and economically fragile, it was a very hard blow, pilgrimages have essentially disappeared resulting in great economic difficulty for thousands of families.

Then the second Israeli lockdown inevitably also had repercussions on Palestinians who work in Israel, and therefore on their families.

In Jordan, the lockdown lasted many weeks and greatly impoverished the families who were already struggling financially. It has been a very hard blow that we haven't emerged from yet and we still do not know how we will recover from this.

**The Italian Church, faced with the need to protect people's health, has chosen to collaborate with the State, keeping the churches open for personal prayer but not allowing the people to participate in mass. We thus witnessed the new reality of streamed masses online. Do you think this was a right decision or not?**

We have very different dynamics compared to Italy, so I am unable to judge whether what the decision made here in this circumstance was right or wrong, whether the chosen methods were right or wrong.

I can tell you what we did. It was a very difficult challenge not only for us (Christians, ed), but also for the Jewish and Islamic religious authorities. It is evident that in the face of a situation of objective difficulty, one cannot help but collaborate. On the other hand, however, it had to be clear that freedom of worship and access to prayer is not secondary. With us, faith, prayer and worship have a public dimension that perhaps Europe no longer has. So the churches have always remained open, albeit with very small numbers, more symbolic than real. We also had streaming, but the idea that churches or synagogues or mosques would remain closed was difficult to digest. So we managed to obtain permission to keep the places of worship open for a very limited number, precisely to



*Blessing of Jerusalem by Archbishop Pizzaballa during the Paschal Triduum, in Spring 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic.*

maintain the idea that worship and prayer are an important part of social life. Of course with all the attention to healthcare measures and in compliance with the laws.

**We recently witnessed the agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates announced by US President Trump, the suffering of Lebanon, the endless war in Syria. How can we move towards a solution?**

It is not easy; they are all very different issues. The agreement between Israel and the Emirates with Trump mediation has resulted in the further isolation of the Palestinians, making them feel even more pressured. I think that although regional issues are changing enormously – for example in Syria, in Lebanon, in Iraq – until there is a clear and dignified solution for the Palestinian people, there can be no stability in the Middle East. The Palestinian question persists, even if at the moment it is not at the heart of the international agenda or even in that of the Arab world, apparently. There is a population of millions of people waiting for a clear pronouncement on their future as a people and as a nation.

**For a resumption in building a lasting peace and coexistence, would you argue that we can no longer ignore the “two peoples - two States”**



**and, in recent years, as Administrator of the diocese of Jerusalem, you must have reflected on a possible path towards a solution.**

All of our efforts must be long term. Right now it would be utopian to speak of peace between the two sides because there is no mutual trust. The wall that divides them is the clear sign of this lack of trust and lack of prospects. At the institutional level, we must start anew, bearing in mind the lessons of the past, the failures of the various agreements including those of Oslo, and rebuild a political

leadership on both sides that has a vision. But this will inevitably take time.

For the moment, the only thing we can do is work on the territory, in micro-situations: schools, hospitals, cultural centres, even if they may seem like a niche reality with little impact on the social fabric. We must start from here, rebuilding step by step, with concrete gestures of trust. I cannot foresee changes in the short term.

**You spoke earlier of a network of works: schools, hospitals, etc. In this field, the commitment of the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is significant. What role did they play during these months of the pandemic?**

Their role in recent months has been extremely relevant. I knew of them indirectly even before I became Administrator. Then in the last four years I have had the opportunity to get to know the reality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre from within, for their service to the realities of the Holy Land. And I noticed that they have a very nice relationship of closeness, interest, and also of affection with this land that they frequently visit with pilgrimages, always well attended and well organized. They are present in a very concrete way supporting the various activities of the Holy Land.

We must be pragmatic: if there are schools, hospitals and parishes there will also be expenses to be maintained, resources to be identified and so

**solution as the starting point?**

The “two peoples - two States” solution is the only non-solution possible. I am referring to the fact that Palestinians cannot be told that they have no right to a land and a nation, it is clear that they do. Technically, however, I wonder how this is possible today, given the current political situation. It is very difficult to say that the “two peoples - two states” solution is no longer viable, but at the same time we must ask ourselves how it can be put into practice. At this moment it is very difficult to achieve it because there is no dialogue between the parties. Israel and Palestine have not spoken to each other for years, there is no trust. The international community, apart from slogans and statements, is in fact no longer present. Therefore, what we are experiencing is a situation of waiting. The “two peoples - two States” solution would ideally be the only possible one, but, under the current conditions, I believe that today it is technically impracticable.

*“I think that until there is a clear and dignified solution for the Palestinian people, there can be no stability in the Middle East,” declared Mgr. Pizzaballa during his conference organised at the headquarters of the Order in Rome and live-streamed across world in collaboration with EWTN television.*

**For 30 years, you have been committed to the Holy Land as a man, as a priest, as a religious**





*It was the editor-in-chief of TG1 (from the Italian television RAI), Piero Damosso, who interviewed Archbishop Pizzaballa in the prestigious setting of the Palazzo della Rovere on October 21, 2020.*

on. And the Knights and Dames in this have always lent themselves in a very concrete and very practical way, showing closeness even in very difficult moments. It is not only those who make the processions with their cloaks (he smiles), they are also those who, in their thousands, are present with prayer, pilgrimages, with concrete help and support. Ultimately, I have learned to greatly appreciate this Chivalric Order which is very religious and very present.

Furthermore, during the pandemic, we made an appeal as Patriarchate. I admit that I have always believed little in this kind of initiative, because they often fall on deaf ears. But the appeal we made to the Knights and Dames for the Covid emergency had an unexpected response for me, which went well beyond our expectations; it has allowed us to be truly close to thousands of families who were left without work and without future prospects.

**Although it would appear impossible to us right now, looking ahead to a resumption of pilgrimages, what commitment do you envision in terms of sharing and visits by European pilgrims to the Holy Land?**

I don't know when pilgrimages can be resumed,

I hope soon. Knowing the Order, I am sure that the first thing to do is to resume the visits. Before we spoke of trust: we need to restore trust among Christians and the first thing to do is to come. When our Christians see pilgrimages will resume, the return of Christian communities from around the world to the Holy Land, then the trust will also return that, together with prayer, is the first element to reactivate all activities.

**You are a son of St Francis. Eight hundred years ago the saint of Assisi met the Sultan of Egypt and after this trip he turned to the friars leaving for the Holy Land, recommending them not to seek disputes. What does this part of the 1221 Rule of St. Francis, which the Pope even recalls in the last encyclical, teach us today?**

St. Francis said that there are two ways to be among the Saracens: the first is to be subject to every human creature, avoiding quarrels and disputes; the second is that it is necessary to announce that Christ is Lord every time the Spirit suggests it.

Already eight hundred years ago, St. Francis suggested to us that Christian witness, that before direct proclamation, it is life lived. Living as Christians in the reality in which we find ourselves.

After the Abu Dhabi declaration, a path has certainly opened with the Islamic world that perhaps in the past we would not have even imagined.

It is a journey that is still at the beginning. To find an encounter similar to that in Abu Dhabi over time, it was necessary to go back eight hundred years, with St. Francis. Eight hundred years not simple; so we are once again at the beginning of a path that promises to be very complex because it involves the concrete acceptance of the content of these historical meetings (such as that of Abu Dhabi, *ed*) in the lives of billions of people, us and them. It will take time, but it is the first step on a long road.

# Parish life in the Holy Land during the pandemic

*Testimonials of the Holy Land parish priests supported by the “Covid-19 humanitarian support fund”*

Last October, concluding his experience as Apostolic Administrator, Archbishop Pizzaballa described the commitment of the Dames and Knights of the Order of Holy Sepulchre to the Holy Land as the “concrete and tangible sign of Divine Providence.”

A few days later, during an interview at Palazzo della Rovere, Abp. Pizzaballa renewed his gratitude to the Order, for the extraordinary response given to the appeal launched by the Latin Patriarchate in Spring 2020, during the most critical moments of the pandemic. That appeal had in fact an “unexpected response, which went well beyond expectations.”

The request concerned help for the families in need of the Latin Patriarchate in Jordan and Palestine: the response proved to be a success of

solidarity, involving thousands of members of the Order from all over the world and collecting about 3 million euros.

The generous contributions sent to the Holy Land have been widely distributed by the Latin Patriarchate to over thirty parishes in Palestine and Jordan, allowing to

*More than thirty parishes in Palestine and Jordan as here, for example, the parish of Saint Catherine of Bethlehem, were able to limit the disastrous effects of the crisis linked to Covid-19 thanks to the extraordinary aid sent by the Order to the Latin Patriarchate.*

stem, at least in part, the very serious economic crisis that has hit the families most in difficulty. Overall, there were about 2,400 families supported on the territory of the diocese.

The stories shared





with us by parish priests all photograph the same disheartening dynamic. In addition to the health emergency, there was a long and prolonged curfew that prevented many from going to work. The closure of the borders has also had an impact on an already perilous situation, so much so that the entire tourism sector and its economic activities have been completely wiped out, especially penalizing tourist resorts such as Bethlehem.

**Father Rami Asakrieh**, parish priest of St. Catherine (the Catholic parish located in the complex of the Basilica of the Nativity), describes a desolating situation for Bethlehem, a city that thrives on pilgrim tourism. When the Coronavirus came, everything stopped: hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops. The consequent closure of the checkpoints then penalized all workers commuting with Israel, who were left without employment

*Basic needs, especially food, were met in the communities of the Holy Land, which demonstrated a communion between the local Church and the universal Church through the international support provided by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.*

and, therefore, without salaries.

For some time, the families relied on their savings and then on the funds available through the parish Caritas, which however soon ran out. “We have received hundreds of phone calls from families who lacked essential goods, from people who had lost their jobs. [...] **In the darkest moment**, just when we ran out of resources, **the providential support of the Knights of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre arrived** through the Latin Patriarchate.” Thanks to this help, the needs of the community were met for about two months, supporting those who were at home and had nothing left: “mothers without milk for their children, elderly people at home alone to whom no one brought medicines, food for families who had nothing to eat.”

The appeal launched by the Patriarchate last spring, which was followed by that of Cardinal Filoni, highlighted the importance of the institutional presence of the Church in the area; a presence “capable of offering a significant contribution especially in the areas of education, health and social services.”

The first and most important among them is undoubtedly the school, a place of inclusion and dialogue, but also a structure that in this time has paid the highest price. The health and economic emergency prevented many families from paying school fees, with negative consequences on the cash flows of the institutions and, consequently, on the payment of salaries to staff.

To avoid paralysis and guarantee the provision of the service until the end of the school year, the general director of the schools of the Patriarchate, **Father Jamal Khader**, has prepared a plan for sharing tasks and responsibilities involving the General Administration, principals, teachers, parents and school students.

During the same days, the Latin Patriarchate set up an emergency committee to deal with the consequences of the pandemic. There was a reduction in salaries for two months which made it possible to save jobs and guarantee the monthly payment of wages.

All this was possible thanks to the precious help of the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre who “**have given further proof of being real support to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem as**

well as friends on whom to count in times of difficulty,” reports Father Jamal, who is also pastor of Holy Family church in Ramallah. His parish community suffered a lot from the crisis but “the Church was close to them,” providing for their basic needs, from food to health. “The solidarity among faithful and the support of the Order, have shown us the true meaning of being Church, in communion with one another, one body in Christ.”

In **Jordan**, the situation was no better. The pandemic hit the population particularly hard there, including its Christian minority. However, the closure of the churches for three long months did not reduce the enthusiasm for solidarity, which was expressed in constant care for the needs of the weakest.

In Al-Zarka, a very poor village 30 km east of Amman, this emergency is seen as an opportunity by **Sister Carmela**, one of the four Dorotee sisters who assist **Father Eyad Bader** in parish life: “What we are going through can be read as a sign from the Lord to teach us to help more, to be closer to the people and to get to know each other.”

During these months, help has never failed the 600 families who comprise this reality, not even moral help: “often people came knocking on our doors just needed to be listened to and we did an apostolate of listening!”

Like “a field hospital” – the parish priest “Abouna” Eyad tells us – the church of Al-Zarka has responded to all kinds of needs, receiving from the Patriarchate, and therefore from the Order, about 10,000 euros to pay for bills and provide food and medicines, and a figure of around 40,000 euros for school fees, thus supporting families and teachers.

The precious help of the Knights and Dames also arrived at the parish of Christ the King of Amman. Even before the emergency, the order regularly provided financial support to sixty families in the parish. With the crisis caused by Covid-19, the situation has worsened, so much so that only thanks to the help of the Order many have managed to survive.

“ *The Patriarchate has set up an emergency committee to deal with the consequences of the pandemic* ”

First, 6,640 Jordanian dollars (JD) arrived and were distributed in tranches to 110 families. The parish priest, **Father Marwan Hassan**, devised an ingenious method to ensure that the funds that were received fed a virtuous circuit in the area: upon agreement with the owners of the most troubled shops, he converted the money into shopping vouchers to be used in these same commercial establishments. “These coupons allowed us to support even poor businesses, helping those who needed them most,” said Father Marwan, who continued: “with this solution we have helped these families to live with dignity, allowing them to independently choose what they need to buy, rather than forcing them to accept what was available,” referring to the practice of distributing food packages. After two months, an additional 2,240 JDs arrived, distributed in the same way for a month, to 59 families. “You cannot imagine how much, and to what extent, these donations from the Knights and Dames have helped these poor families,” he concluded.

**Father Firas Aridah**, parish priest in Aboud (Jordan), where the unemployment rate rose exponentially during the pandemic emergency, also speaks of dignity. For the first few months his parish resisted but, over time, the situation worsened. “With the support of the Patriarchate we have managed to guarantee help for everyone, every day, for ever growing needs.” Among the most varied, he points out the healthcare costs offered to the family of a boy suffering from osteosarcoma: “these donations meant we avoided having to have his legs amputated,” he tells us.

Being unemployed does not only mean losing one’s source of income, but also suffering from inactivity. This inspired the parish not only to address basic necessities but also, as far as possible, to create opportunities: “we proposed to two people to come and help the nuns to clean the church twice a month; in this way we also give them the opportunity to re-employ themselves, entrusting them with tasks, giving them dignity.”

**Filippo di Grazia**

# A year with so many needs to face

*An overview of the support of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre during 2020*

2020 was an exceptional year. This has been true for everyone, worldwide, on a number of counts. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre also found itself having to manage an emergency situation involving unforeseen and crucial support for the communities of the Holy Land at a time when many are facing great financial challenges due to a reduction in commercial and manufacturing activity.

The priority was therefore to respond to humanitarian needs, and the special Covid-19 fund, together with the funds already provided for humanitarian aid, made it possible to accomplish this with a total of around 3.4 million Euro sent in recent months, about 2.5 million for the Covid-19 fund and 1 million for humanitarian aid.

As always, we must not forget the ongoing and permanent support given for schools, the various institutional expenses, and the Latin Patriarchate seminary. This substantial portion of the funds raised by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, to a total of 7.8 million US dollars, permits the regular and fundamental actions of the diocese of Jerusalem to continue

*IT and science laboratories in different schools of the Latin Patriarchate are one of the ongoing projects.*



uninterrupted.

At the beginning of 2020, various small projects with a more local focus had been agreed on with the Patriarchate. Local conditions, as well as the need to invest more in the humanitarian field, have prompted us to reconsider our priorities, in line with the flexibility required during this period. Seven projects are underway, while another eight that the Lieutenancies have already sponsored, but delayed due to the pandemic, will begin as soon as conditions permit.

The ongoing projects include new equipment for computer and science laboratories in various schools of the Latin Patriarchate. Access to digital tools that means children can grow and acquire the skills needed to use these tools is vital at this time and it is important that schools are better prepared to offer students a quality education. Moreover, despite the difficulties in carrying out structural projects during a pandemic, the renovation of the school run by the Patriarchate in Safout, Jordan, is progressing with 60% of the work already completed.

Among the major projects, one worth highlighting is the Church of Jubeiha, currently being completed, where Christmas Mass was celebrated. A medium-sized project has also been launched: the renovations to part of the Sisters of the Rosary Convent in Beit Jala, Palestine.

Alongside these initiatives, we are happy to announce that the support provided by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for the increase in teachers' wages in Jordan and for the teachers' pension fund in Palestine, agreed and initiated in 2016, at a total of 4.2 million US dollars, has been successfully implemented and the last instalments of these adjustments were paid in 2020. We are well aware of the important work done by these teachers who contribute in a fundamental way

to the growth of the children and whose competence and commitment had to be recognised and adequately rewarded so that their remuneration is on an equal footing with that of their colleagues in the state system.

Furthermore, as every year, we cannot, not do we wish to forget the contribution sent for the benefit of other entities of the Holy Land with which the Order has been collaborating for many years through its participation in the ROACO, Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches. In this regard, nine projects were supported in 2020, for a total of 477,500 euros, most of which benefit initiatives and facilities of the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church (renovations inside churches or parish centres in Kfar Cana, Kfar Yasif, Fassouta and Acre in Israel and funding to update the computer lab of the Peter Nettekoven primary school in Beit Sahour in Palestine). There are also other projects supporting Latin Catholic institutions that do not belong to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: the expansion of the neurology department of the Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem; the renovation of some areas in the monastery of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate

*The Order, within the framework of the ROACO, sent a financial contribution for the renovation of the house and the school of the Daughters of Charity in Ashrafiye, a district of Beirut, in Lebanon, a city which was devastated by the explosion in Summer 2020.*



*Education is always at the heart of the Order's acts at the service of the Church in the Holy Land.*

Heart of Mary in the Aida refugee camp; and the relocation and modernisation of the kitchen at the Hospice of the Daughters of Charity of

St. Vincent de Paul in Jerusalem.

Also, in connection with the ROACO, this year the Order of the Holy Sepulchre was involved in another emergency following the explosion that took place in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 4, 2020. At the end of August, the Congregation for Eastern Churches organised a meeting chaired by the Prefect, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, with the participation of the Apostolic Nuncio in Beirut, Msgr. Joseph Spitteri and about twenty representatives from the ROACO Agencies – including the Order – to reflect on possible ways of

helping the local population which was so severely affected. With the determined desire to show closeness and support, the Order has undertaken to finance the renovation of the house and school run by the Daughters of Charity in Ashrafiye, a neighbourhood in eastern Beirut, to the tune of about 95,000 US dollars.

The 30,000 Knights and Dames of the Order have continued this year and will continue to open their hearts to heed the needs of those who appeal for help from the Holy Land, becoming partners with that hand that binds wounds, “pouring on oil and wine” (Luke 10:34).

*(article published in January 2021)*



# A place of worship for the whole growing Christian community in Jubeiha, Jordan

Some projects are particularly dear to the heart of the members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for many reasons. Without doubt, the Church of Saint Paul the Apostle in Jubeiha is one of those.

About 10 kilometers northeast from Amman, Jubeiha is a neighbourhood where the population has been constantly growing over the past years. With the rise of prices in Amman, many families left the capital city to move here where houses and the cost of living are more affordable. Furthermore, as Abuna Butrus Hijazen, parish priest of Jubeiha, explains, “with the construction of the parish school, the number of Christians who live in the Jubeiha area increased, because it is the only Catholic and Christian school in the northern sector of Amman.” The church is and continues to be a place of worship open to the whole Christian community, Catholic and non-Catholic, which counts a few thousand people.

“This Christian community was without a church where people could gather to pray. They were like the first Christian community, as they met in each other’s homes to pray and live a life of joy and sharing,” comments Abuna Butrus thinking about the past. The parish was established by Father Labib Daibes almost 40 years ago, in 1984 when there was still no building.

Many years passed by and the growing community actively looked for some solutions to have a more stable place of worship. “The first stone of a church was placed 20 years ago – shares Father Butrus – and since then there has been support from the parishioners, who strongly desired to build the church, and also from the entire Christian community around Jordan.”

As a result of these efforts, there was a good outcome that contributed to the launch of the project in its early stages. There were also some individual donors who greatly supported the project. Omar Naber, a parishioner and member of the Jordanian Parliament, is one of them.

The idea of the church was first discussed

between Father Labib Daibes and Omar Naber and then received approval and blessings from the Latin Patriarchate. The Naber family owned the church land and initiated the church project by paying for original designs, excavation, and the structural work as well as some marble work. The contribution made by Omar Naber (pictured on the next page) to St. Paul’s Church ranges between 310 and 330,000 US dollars. Father of three, Omar Naber has been invested Knight of the Order the Holy Sepulchre and he joins his confreres and consœurs in the faithful service for the Church in the Holy Land, the Land where he lives.

However, more contributions were needed to conclude the project. On the occasion of his first visit to the Holy Land in September 2017, the Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone and the delegation accompanying him visited the construction site of the church and committed to support the project by complementing the efforts of the local community who has been longing to have a dignified place where to attend services and live a Christian communitarian life and thus boosting the project.

In fact, as Father Butrus explains, “the place where the Christian community celebrates today is the school hall. Unfortunately, we cannot celebrate all the sacraments of the Christian life (First Communion for the children, marriage, etc.), and in order to celebrate these sacraments, Christians have to go to other parishes. This makes them feel sad because they live in a parish, but they have to celebrate the sacraments of their Christian life in another parish.”

Nevertheless, there is a vibrant parish life: there are different youth groups – the Catholic Scouts Movement is the largest counting about 200 youngsters and then there is the Christian Youth Group gathering youth of all ages – the Committee of Mercy, a group caring for poor and families in need, and a group of mothers.

Samer and Tamara recently got married. They have been part of the Jubeiha community since



*Construction is finishing at the Saint Paul de Jubeiha church, built in a growing district in the North-East of Amman. It will be able to accommodate several thousand people for celebrations. The local Christian community have already had the joy of coming together for Christmas 2020.*

and meeting as one family,” Sami and Mai comment. “Nonetheless – another couple of parishioners continues – we believe that these difficulties helped our Christian community to live another experience of the

their childhood and both attended the Christian youth group. “It is beautiful that our son, who was born a year ago, will grow up in this church, receive the sacraments here and participate in the parish activities as we did before him – they say – but the difference is that he will go to the church and not to the school hall or people’s homes to pray. He will have another ‘ecclesiastical history’, different from ours.”

“After a long wait, we can finally see the dream come true that this Christian community in the Jubeiha area will have a place for prayer, worship

Christian faith: that we can be faithful in all situations of our life, as the Christian community of the first centuries did as they lived a common life.” “We would like to thank all those who helped us make this dream come true,” they concluded.

Since 2017 the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has largely invested in this project with more than 1 million 500,000 € and now that the works are being completed, all Knights and Dames look forward to the inauguration of the church of Saint Paul the Apostle.



# An intensive and fruitful peace education

*The schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem are continuously supported by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre*

Since the restoration of the Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem in 1847, young people and families have been at the heart of the pastoral project in the Holy Land. In the twentieth century, almost simultaneously with the founding of parishes, the priests who were sent on mission throughout the diocese, set up schools open to all to meet the educational needs of the inhabitants.

Today, the about 40 establishments that make up this dynamic network compete in inventiveness to provide high-quality academic and personal formation to all the young people they welcome without discrimination. Despite the difficulties linked to the pandemic, this educational network continued to function, thanks to virtual means of communication. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre dedicates a large part of the donations it receives to supporting the life of these schools, regularly funding teachers' salaries, and pensions ...

## Meeting the needs of the population

In the three vicariates of the diocese where there are patriarchal schools, Palestine, Israel, and Jordan, these are systematically attached to a parish and very often the school and the church form a single architectural whole. This situation can be explained by the pastoral choice made by Patriarch Valerga and his successors in founding the parishes. The priests sent to the villages were tasked with offering a Catholic presence but also



*Since the Latin Patriarchate was re-established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, schools have been part of parish pastoral care throughout the territory of the Holy Land.*

with opening a school to cover genuine educational needs. Thus, in Beit Sahour, when Father Morétain opened the mission in 1859, he had to share his room with the schoolmaster for several months, which served as a

home, school, and chapel at the same time! This service to families was a tremendous means of evangelisation, and several of them thus moved from Orthodoxy to Catholicism.

Even today, the mission of patriarchal schools is to meet the needs of the population. In a society where unemployment affects many households, a good education is a safeguard against forced inactivity. Bishop Marcuzzo, Patriarchal Vicar for Jerusalem and Palestine, regularly explains to passing pilgrims that support for patriarchal schools is direct support for the population. “The schools are a tool for the Latin Patriarchate by

which they can support the faithful in their socio-economic difficulties, he explains.” In fact, in the Holy Land, the social mission of the Church is still deeply rooted in tradition, and the faithful expect their Church to help them in their daily life.

The Arab population also needs to live as far as it can in an atmosphere of peace and dialogue, which is why from their foundation, schools have welcomed any child without religious or social distinction. “Our schools aim to bring together young people at the beginning of their intellectual life,” explains Fr. Johnny Abu Khalil, parish priest of Taybeh. “They have a message to give to the entire population and this message is predominantly heard by our Muslim students.” This Palestinian priest, currently serving in a totally Christian village, has long served the parish of Nablus where Muslims are in the majority. “In Nablus, I had the opportunity to support Muslim families who were facing difficulties, and today some young people from these families still turn to me for advice,” he says.

Finally, school is a place where faith is alive. The parish priest, when he is not the principal of the school, is a full member of the teaching team. He is not just the one who celebrates Mass for Christian students, but the one the students meet in the playground or the hall and who shares in all the events of the school. It is worth noting that many of the children from his parish are here and he also sees them in parish activities such as the various groups of the JEC (Young Catholic Students),

scouts or altar servers. For the young Christian, everything is done to establish a faith transmitted culturally by their family, and the schools are thus a real breeding ground for priestly and religious vocations.

### **A single network with disparate realities**

While there is the same spirit in each school whether it is in Jordan, Israel, or Palestine, their social or economic reality sometimes differs greatly. In Palestine as in Jordan, the percentage of Christians varies from one city to another. It might be 10%, 75% or 100%, unlike schools located in Israeli territory where Christians are almost always in the majority. But when Christians are in the minority, it does not change anything, there is no distinction between the students. In addition, Muslim families make a real choice by putting their children in a Catholic school. What these schools offer in terms of disciplined education, an above average academic level, a focus on the student that is not always found in public establishments, and a desire for dialogue, is important to them.

The network is also marked by a big difference in its deployment in the three territories, like the deployment of parishes: there are thus 5 schools in Israel, 13 in Palestine but 24 in Jordan.

For priests who are likely to move from one territory to another, there is also another significant difference that they must face: the political context. In Palestine, a state under occupation, in Israel, a



*Many parishes of the Latin Patriarchate are linked to a school that depends on it, forming a human whole which seeks to develop the individual in all of his or her dimensions.*



democracy which does not look very favourably on Christian institutions, and in Jordan, a monarchy. Of course each country has its own specific regulations. Each territory therefore has its own leadership, even the schools in Israel which until recently were run by the Palestinian leadership.

*The network of Catholic schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem encourages young people to strive for excellence in the service of all the inhabitants of the Holy Land.*

The economic context is also vastly different in Israel: the government finances 70% of the operating costs, which allows establishments to balance their annual budgets. In Palestine and Jordan, this government support does not exist, and school fees are therefore higher for parents. Father Samer Mdeinat, chaplain of the large establishment (nearly 1,000 students) built in 2000 in Wassieh to accommodate children from towns in southern Jordan, is worried about this issue. “Families often have difficulty in paying the fees. We have to take this growing problem into account,” he explains. In addition, this year, Jordan faced a social crisis affecting the teaching force. This social movement meant that all teachers could have their salaries reassessed but, at the same time, it increased the salary costs for all schools. This increase has partly damaged the economic efforts undertaken in both Jordan and Palestine.

### **Nurture the student, nurture society**

Despite these political and financial barriers, the schools of the Patriarchate remain open to anything that can advance children or young

people, with the belief that everyone has a part to play in advancing society.

The pupils are considered as citizens in the making and are called to participate in the life of the country: the youngest develop their awareness of the local culture by having a day olive-picking, and learning songs and traditional dances, while the older children in middle and secondary schools come together in the “Students’ Senate”, a committee that brings together elected students called to carry out constructive actions for their school. A certain number of these elected representatives also sit as municipal councillors for children. Care for the environment is also being initiated in primary and secondary schools where people learn to take care of the shared spaces. For its part, the Ramallah high school offered three days of conferences on the United Nations Model, like distinguished universities and high schools in different countries. During this meeting, one hundred and fifty students from the Schools of the Patriarchate formed delegations by country and met in committees to try to find solutions to the problems that face our societies today (human rights, social and economic difficulties).

Additionally, students are invited each year to take on challenges by participating in arts, sport, academic or religious knowledge competitions. Schools regularly send their students to represent them in giving the best of themselves.

### **Improving the education system**

But the students are not the only ones to take on challenges: the adults who supervise them and lead the network are constantly looking for ways to improve the quality of education. From training sessions leading to diplomas for school leaders, twinning or sponsorship by American (Hope programme) or French (Barnabé Network) establishments, to meetings for teaching teams with external speakers, everything is done to develop teaching expertise and thus provide students with knowledge and skills of the highest level.

From this year, the network has also acquired an intranet system, *Edu-nation*, allowing the various stakeholders, administrations, teachers, students, and parents to communicate together to

enable better monitoring of establishments and of each young person.

This focus on the individual is not evident in local culture where it is the family that is at the centre of society. The Christian vision shifts this focus onto the child as a unique being, who deserves special attention.

This same young person is also at the heart of the Child Protection Charter launched by the Palestinian leadership. This document prepared with the NGO *World Vision* made it possible to review all the attitudes and actions that need to be taken to protect the child, their integrity, their freedom from any form of violence of which they could be a victim, whether verbal, physical or moral.

### Living together

In territories such as Palestine, Israel, or Jordan where the place of religion can create segregation and discrimination, the work of the Schools of the Patriarchate is essential. And although welcoming everyone is already a big step, it is still necessary to facilitate dialogue and peaceful coexistence every day. It is in this perspective that, more than fifteen years ago, the Arab Educational Institute of Bethlehem (an organisation which is part of the *Pax Christi* network) and the Ministry of Education started a programme called “Citizenship and Diversity: Muslim-Christian Living Together”. The Schools of

*The student graduation is always an important moment in the life of the schools of the Latin Patriarchate.*

the Latin Patriarchate are part of this programme (and institutions in Jordan are starting to replicate this type of action) and offer common times of reflection around the values shared by Christianity and Islam. The *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Common Coexistence*, signed in February 2019 by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, was an especially rich source for sharing on the common need to live in peace. In Israel, and more particularly in the northern region where Jews, Christians, Muslims and Druze coexist in the same territory, the Office of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior organises a “Tolerance Week” each year in November in which the schools participate. Father Raed Abusahlia, chaplain of the Reneh school, near Nazareth, thus goes to different schools to present the Christian religion.

These forty-one schools which share the same motto “Ut cognoscat te” – (“That they might know you”, implying the one true God, in reference to John 17:3) – take on many challenges every day: witnessing and bringing to life the Gospel which was born on the Earth they inhabit, developing tenacity and peace in the young people who will tomorrow be the men and women called to rise above the consequences of a conflict that drags on, and providing high-level academic training. Signs of success are visible growth in religious vocations, high success rates in high school leaving examinations, intellectuals and poets who have passed through these schools and who have played or continue to play an influential role in their country. But all this would be

impossible without the prayers, as well as the technical and financial support of the 30,000 Knights and Dames who daily turn their eyes and their hearts to the Holy Land. An extraordinary collaboration for our young Living Stones who can truly bear witness to the Love of God for his people.

**Cecile Klos**



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## When the Order prepares for the future

*The spirit of youth at the Lieutenancy for Canada-Montreal*

The new Grand Master of the Order strongly desires that each Lieutenancy be inventive to allow the young people to join in the activity of Knights and Dames, following the example of what has been seen in France for many years with the successful experience of the Squires and Maidens. The Lieutenant for Canada-Montreal testifies here to his efforts in this regard, supported by Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli, responsible for the question of admissions and promotions on behalf of the Grand Magisterium.

Over two years ago, I was appointed Lieutenant of the Lieutenancy for Canada-Montreal. No sooner was I installed than I flew to Rome for five days, where I participated in the Consulta, the quinquennial meeting of all the Lieutenants and the authorities of the Grand Magisterium. This new experience became a unique opportunity for me at the start of my mandate, to interact with Lieutenants from all over the world. I was very well received, particularly by the Lieutenants from France and Belgium. I had already heard of the experience of these two Lieutenancies with young people.

I had the privilege of speaking privately with

our Grand Master and our Governor General. I told them about my priorities, which included the creation of a youth section at our Lieutenancy. My discussions with my two French and Belgian colleagues had shown me that not only were these experiences promising, but that in recent years, the new Investitures in these two Lieutenancies had mainly come from their youth sections. I quickly came to the conclusion that this experience could be adapted and put into practice at the Lieutenancy for Canada-Montreal.

When I returned, I was eager to take the first opportunity to convince colleagues on our board of this possibility. Two of them were then appointed to look into the question of setting up a youth section at our Lieutenancy. And so, in February 2020, they submitted a report to us which concluded that the project was feasible. Consequently, in August 2020, we unanimously accepted the principle of creating our youth section,

“Squires and Maidens”.

We have therefore resolved to establish such a section for a period of three years “ad

*The successful experience of the Squires and Maidens in France inspires other Lieutenancies around the world.*



*experimentum*”, with certain conditions. So, we are going to set up a discernment and training programme to support young people (aged 18 to 30) for a minimum period of one year. At the end of this period, on acceptance of their candidacy by the Lieutenant and the Grand Prior, they will be received as “Squires and Maidens” during a liturgical celebration. They will then receive the symbol of their commitment, a particular cloak of their own. Their objectives will be to deepen their faith, to acquire a thirst for nobility of heart and a love for the Holy Land. They will have to make themselves worthy of their admission, participate in eight annual retreats, and make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, before becoming a Knight or Dame in the Order, if they wish, but not before reaching 30 years of age. No membership fee will be required of them, but they will have to bear the cost of acquiring their cloak and the cost of the pilgrimage. Collective activities will be organised to raise the necessary funds to cover these costs.

Last May, our new Grand Master reaffirmed the need to rejuvenate our ranks and to be open to young people and to our inspiring mission. Our Christian sisters and brothers in the Holy Land need us so much, it is our duty to ensure the succession of the Order. Young people today

should find this adventure inspiring and able to give new meaning to their lives. Newly appointed, our Patriarch Bishop Pizzaballa affirmed that, “Christian hope is not the simple optimism that means everything is fine ... Christian hope gives meaning to what we experience.” This is what we want to share with those future “Squires and Maidens” who will come to join us. Our challenge is also to recruit these young people, and the need to arouse in them a taste for the “divine”. Our prayers are essential in this and only our faith in this project will allow us to find the means to achieve it. All the members of the Board of Directors of the Lieutenancy for Canada-Montreal are unanimous in believing that this experience of establishing a section of young “Squires and Maidens” is essential to ensure the growth of our Lieutenancy. I would even add that the presence of young people in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is essential to ensure its sustainability. All Lieutenancies around the world should set up similar youth sections in the short term.

Let us pray to Our Lady Queen of Palestine that our wishes come true.

**Luc Harvey**

*Lieutenant for Canada-Montreal*

## Some original initiatives in spiritual life and solidarity

### Joining an Investiture Weekend retreat “remotley”

**Valencia Yvonne Camp, Lieutenant for USA Middle Atlantic, tells us about the spiritual experience in her Lieutenancy. Her story is interesting for all members of the Order because it illustrates how, around the world, rather than admitting defeat by the pandemic, Knights and Dames were able to remain close to one another through prayer, and continue to be united in the Mystical Body of Christ.**

The Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy, USA, celebrated the 25-year anniversary of its first Investiture Weekend in 2019. Its creation and establishment were approved in 1993 and dioceses from the Eastern and Southeastern Lieutenancies were ceded to form the Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy. Commemorating our 25 years as a Lieutenancy, we were blessed to return to the site of our first Investiture Weekend liturgies which were held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington in

1994. However, 2020 was quite a jolt: activities planned for the 2020 Investiture Weekend were cancelled due to Covid-19. Rather than lose the momentum we have built in the Lieutenancy, the leadership looked on this moment as an opportunity. If we couldn't gather in person, we could personally be present through prayer and spiritual exercise in a unique and special way during that weekend.

The Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy initiated a Spiritual Reflection Series in 2018. To foster the spirituality of the Lieutenancy, spiritual reflections are sent throughout the year on Solemnities, high holy days and holidays. The spiritual reflections are sent Lieutenancy-wide to the Knights and Dames via an internet platform ("Constant Contact") and US mail, as well as made available on our website. The reflections provide an opportunity for Knights and Dames to quiet our busy day and be united in prayer and reflection throughout the days and seasons of the year.

These are also an opportunity to engage our Knight Chaplains more fully in the life of the Lieutenancy.

In addition, again starting in 2018, books have been distributed during and following our Investiture Weekend. In 2018, we

provided the books "Advent with the Saints" and "Lent with the Saints". In 2019, the book "The Parish as a School of Prayer: Foundations for the New Evangelization" was provided. These books provide for personal reflection and growth.

The Lieutenancy built on these two initiatives to rise above the potential isolation of the COVID year. Even though we could not gather physically, there are no barriers to our gathering spiritually! To preserve the Investiture Weekend spirit, foster unity, and pray for relief from this pandemic, the Lieutenancy created an "Investiture Weekend Retreat – An Opportunity for Structured Private Prayer" for the same weekend during which our Investiture activities would have taken place, on October 23 and 24, 2020. The "Investiture



*Valencia Yvonne Camp has organised spiritual retreats for members of the Order, in the Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy which she leads in the USA. Her testimony reflects what many other Lieutenancies experienced during the pandemic.*

Weekend Retreat" asked the Knights and Dames to be united at designated times throughout those days for prayer and spiritual reflection. The theme was "Father of mercies and God of all comfort" taken from the encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, second Encyclical letter by Saint Pope John Paul II, published exactly 40 years ago (on November 30, 1980). The retreat program with schedule, prayers and reflections, letter of invitation and explanation, and a special prayer card was mailed to all the Knights and Dames to facilitate participation.

From the comfort and safety of their homes, Knights and Dames (with their families and friends) could follow the schedule which included the times to pray and read the reflections. At the appointed time, our members were joining together across 12 dioceses in 12 states and two time zones. These unifying times of prayer and reflection allowed Knights and Dames to share

prayer individually but together. It is like Investiture Weekend, but with one important difference: all the Knights and Dames of the Lieutenancy had the opportunity to "attend," even those who for reasons of age or infirmity or other business cannot attend Investiture Weekend.

The twelve spiritual reflections offered over two days were presented by a Knight Chaplain from the different dioceses in the Lieutenancy. There were also morning and evening prayer, as well as the recitation of the Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy both days. The schedule allowed for attendance or participation at the Noon Mass as appropriate to health safety guidelines of their jurisdiction, preceded by the Angelus.

Rather than be defeated by the pandemic, this Investiture Weekend Retreat allowed us in an unexpected way to be close to each other in prayer and walk together the spiritual path of mercy.

**Valencia Camp**  
*Lieutenant for USA Middle Atlantic*

# The example of solidarity of Knights and Dames in Colombia

**The head of the Order's Lieutenancy for Colombia, Adriana Mayol Abondano shared news with us about the virtual communication media that have made it possible to organize spiritual retreats for a much wider audience. She also stressed the participation of the members of her Lieutenancy in charitable works in their country, a necessary activity in all Lieutenancies, as the Grand Master himself recently recalled.**

For over fifty years, the Bogota section has contributed to the running of an Institute for Blind Children, on both the management team and the board of directors, as well as through financial support. Over one hundred children live at this Institute, they are blind children who have suffered mistreatment and violence, as well as having been abandoned by their families. Local elected representatives contribute very significantly to this support, but the excellent assistance, affection and dedication of the administrative team

ensure a Christian approach to this greatly loved institution.

Knights and Dames who wish to do so can offer donations, in addition to the contributions they already give for the Order.

The Medellín section – through the Maria Madre Foundation – assists a particularly disadvantaged sector, supporting a day centre, work with the elderly and other charitable works. Again, Knights and Dames give gifts.

In the Popayán section, it is common for members of the Order to help the Saint Vincent de Paul Foundation individually, bringing joy to those most in need.

These activities are added to those of the Order, helping members understand that commitment and concern for the less fortunate are expressed above all with continuous support for local initiatives, without ever neglecting our primary duty for the Holy Land.

**Adriana Mayol Abondano**

*Lieutenant for Colombia*



*Adriana Mayol Abondano, on behalf of the Lieutenancy for which she is responsible in Colombia, wished to demonstrate the solidarity of the Order towards the charitable acts of the local Church, in particular towards blind children.*





# “In the Order, we truly are one big family”

*Innovating to live out our faith in a time of crisis:  
the experience of the Lieutenancy for Switzerland*

**A**n exchange of ideas during a conversation between Mgr. Felix Gmür, Bishop of Basel, President of the Swiss Bishops' Conference and Prior of the German-speaking Swiss section of the Order, and Mrs. Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger, Lieutenant for Switzerland

**Donata: Bishop Gmür, dear Felix, the year 2020 has been marked by the Covid-19 pandemic. What have been your experiences of this crisis and especially in the context of your ministry as president of the Bishops' Conference? How were you, as the highest representative of the Roman Catholic Church, able to influence how the crisis was managed?**

First of all, the crisis forced me out of my routine and once again made it clear that the only thing that is truly certain in life is change. With crisis comes a lot of uncertainty. The Bishops' Conference, therefore, had to assess the consequences for the spiritual support of the faithful and adjust ecclesial life by liaising with the authorities and reacting to the unfolding situation. An important finding was that churches need to improve their digital presence on the internet. The last few months have seen a burst of innovation in this area. During lockdown, parishes had to use new lines of communication. For example, a multimedia impetus on social media networks, digital prayer cards to provide opportunities for daily reflection during Holy Week, masses live-streamed via video, and video conferences as platforms for dialogue. In the future, we will need to plan digital and analogue platforms even more flexibly by adapting them to specific situations.

**Donata: In the current crisis, coming together as an Order and as a Church represents a particular challenge for the members of our**

**Order, but not only for us. What opportunities do you see to improve or to diversify religious activity within the Order?**

Whenever possible, members of the Order should come together at their meetings. Most of the time, this has been possible in small groups, for example to pray the Rosary or on first Fridays for the prayer to the Sacred Heart. Young people have also organised times for common prayer or online Bible meditations. I am happy about that, and members of our Order should pay more attention to this. It is also touching that active charity – such as shopping for older members, visiting a sick person etc. – is something that is seen every day in our Order.

**Bishop Felix Gmür: Dear Donata, what has been your experience of this year in the Order, in light of the Coronavirus crisis?**

It was moving to see how, during this crisis, valuable signs of a deepening attachment were demonstrated in our Order. In such an extraordinary period, we had to stick together and support each other. It splendidly proved that in the Order we are truly one big family.

The oldest members, the weakest or the unattached, in particular, have not been forgotten. With imagination and a desire to innovate, the leaders of the Order have endeavoured to maintain social contacts.

So, there were phone trees, where Presidents or the Priors contacted members. The younger members offered to help the older ones, for example with shopping. The telephone came back into its own as did the postal service which was used to reach members of the Order. In addition, WhatsApp group chats have been created within the sections. From home, it was also possible to be united in prayer at set times with the Delegation or

the Prior of the Section, or you could attend a celebration of Mass via YouTube.

We were pleased to learn from some members of the Order, especially older members, that through the Order they had been able to come into contact with other people and with the outside world.

**Bishop Felix Gmür: The planned Investiture in Basel and other major events could not go ahead. What have you missed the most as a Lieutenant?**

It was the first time in the 70-year history of our Lieutenancy that an Investiture had to be cancelled. Generally speaking, the whole life of our Order has been severely restricted this year. Many events that are important to us could not take place. Whenever possible, I tried to attend the rare events that have taken place since March. I was so happy to be able to meet members to talk with them! I really missed the personal contact and the meetings with my members.

And what I particularly missed were the pilgrimages to the Holy Land to meet the people who live there. This has been a great loss in the life of our Order.

**Bishop Felix Gmür: As Dames and Knights, we must take care of the Christians of the Holy Land who are entrusted to our personal care. Without being able to get there, how have you managed to maintain contact with the people of this country this year?**

On many occasions during this period, I have been in contact with a wide range of people in the Holy Land, and I have expressed our deep attachment to them. The leaders of the Latin Patriarchate, the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, the Sisters of the Rosary, the priests at the seminary of Beit Jala, and many more were all happy to receive these signs of our loyalty and our compassion. As I am personally extremely attached to all the projects of the Swiss Lieutenancy, I suffered a lot from not being able to visit in 2020. I had planned to go twice this year. As soon as it is possible to travel to the Holy Land again to visit the local population and to find out for myself about current circumstances and situations, I will do so immediately. During this time especially, Christians in this region need us, Dames and Knights, to give them signs of hope and solidarity. Currently, pilgrimages from our three Sections are planned for 2021 and 2022. After the pandemic, it will be all the more important and urgent to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

**Donata: Bishop Gmür, it is not only as prior of the German-speaking Swiss Section of our Order that you have a special connection with the Holy Land, but also as protector of Caritas Baby Hospital. You hold this position jointly with the Archbishop of Freiburg im Breisgau. Like me, you go to Bethlehem once or twice a year and meet the local leaders there. I imagine that, like all of us, you were prevented from going to the Holy Land this year. How were**



*From left to right: The Grand Prior, Bishop Charles Morerod, Donata Krethlow-Benziger, Bishop Felix Gmür, Jean-Pierre de Glutz-Ruchti, in 2019.*



**you able to maintain contact with the hospital and the people there?**

I have maintained personal contact with the Holy Land, albeit under difficult conditions, through a variety of channels. Unfortunately, I have not had direct contact with the Caritas Baby Hospital, but only with their office in Switzerland. Unfortunately, the trip to the Holy Land planned for January 2021 with the *Holy Land Coordination* has been cancelled, but in Autumn 2021, I will be on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and I will also visit Bethlehem.

**Donata:** In agreement with the Swiss Bishops' Conference, Christmas fundraising throughout Switzerland has been assigned, for many years, to the Caritas Baby Hospital. How do you see this instant loss of donations for the Bethlehem

*The installation of the new provost, Father Harald Eichhorn (member of the Order) by Bishop Felix Gmür, accompanied by a group from the Waldstätte Delegation, at the Collegiate Church of the Canons of Beromünster, seat of the Swiss Lieutenancy, in 2020.*

**hospital? How do you assess the situation for the future?**

I fear a significant loss of donations in 2020. This has already been demonstrated during the collection for the Holy Land in Holy Week. That is why I am going to record a video and call on the faithful to donate through this channel. The children's hospital is important and constitutes a concrete commitment to the Holy Land which deserves all our support.

**Donata:** Monsignor Gmür, to conclude, allow me to quote the Grand Prior of the Order, the Latin Patriarch, His Beatitude Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who thanked all the Dames and Knights from around the world for their prayers and their tremendous financial support, especially during this pandemic. According to his words, he is very fortunate to have the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem at his side, and he concludes, "Thank you for being the concrete and tangible sign of Divine Providence for this small but important Church!"

# The Holy Shroud's message of hope for our world in crisis

*Interview with Emanuela Marinelli, author of the book “Nuova luce sulla Sindone”, (New Light in the Shroud, published by Ares Editions in Italian)*

**W**hat is new in your book about the Holy Shroud of Turin, what “new light” does it offer into its mystery?

In recent years the mystery surrounding the Shroud has sparked new in-depth investigations, which have resulted in interesting discoveries which are presented for the first time in this volume.

In order to understand this particular relic, we have to follow two routes, historical and scientific, which are amply developed in the first part of this text.

The Shroud (from the Greek *sindon*, sheet) is a long linen cloth (442 cm by 113 cm) which certainly covered the corpse of a man who was beaten, whipped, crowned with thorns, crucified with nails and pierced by a spear in the side. The negative imprint of the body that was wrapped in it is visible on it, in addition to the stains of blood, which turned out to be real human blood of the AB group, which oozed from the wounds of the corpse in a lapse of time estimated at around 36-40 hours. Ancient tradition considers it to be the burial shroud of Jesus Christ.

The history of the relic is retraced in the first three chapters of the volume, while the fourth chapter analyses the interpretations that associate the liturgical linens used in rites to the linen used in Christ's burial, through the analysis of the three terms that describe them in liturgical commentaries, according to the lexicon transmitted by Jerome's Vulgate: *sindon*, *linteamina*, *sudarium*. The term *sindon* reveals the most interesting change from the end of the 11th century to the



*The Shroud of Turin remains an inexplicable mystery to science.*

definite and incisive allegories of the 13th century. The allegorical reading of the liturgy, in fact, rediscovers and explicitly strengthens the bond between the linens used for the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sepulchral linens that wrapped the body of Christ.

These first four chapters therefore illuminate the darkness of the first centuries, when the Shroud was hidden and venerated in different ways. On the other hand, the following three essays develop the aspect of the scientific research conducted on the Shroud

The fifth chapter lists the reasons for confirming the authenticity of the relic: the preciousness and rarity of the fabric; the great abundance of Middle Eastern pollen and aloe and myrrh; the presence of aragonite similar to that found in the caves of Jerusalem; a side seam identical to those existing on 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish fabrics; conspicuous traces of Middle Eastern and Indian DNA, confirming the possible origin of the

sheet; the traces of blood from a body that has suffered precisely the torments described in the Gospels; the short time lapse of the corpse in the shroud; the mysterious image, due to dehydration and oxidation of the superficial fibrils of the linen, which appears projected by a photo radiant effect, an indication of an inexplicable phenomenon probably connected to the resurrection. Furthermore, two chemical dating methods, based on vibrational spectroscopy, and a mechanical dating method place the origin of the Shroud in the time of Jesus.

The peculiar characteristics of the blood form the subject of the sixth chapter. The blood existing on the Shroud has a redder than normal colour due to the presence of bilirubin and it has been shown by scientific experiments that this is due to an irradiation of ultraviolet light. Furthermore, methaemoglobin, a product of the degradation of highly oxidized and aged haemoglobin, is present on the Shroud confirming that it is ancient blood. The theory of an artful realization of the bloodstains by a medieval forger is also disproved, with valid

*The highest officials of the Church as well as the faithful share their wonder at the veneration of the Shroud, touched as they are by the tenderness of God whose love is manifested by signs that leave everyone free to welcome and interpret them (In our photo, Msgr. Cesare Nosiglia, Archbishop of Turin).*



arguments that have been confirmed by experiments presented in the next chapter. In the seventh chapter we discuss the probable dislocation of a shoulder that can be inferred from the Shroud imprint. But the most sensational news comes from a statistical study that nullifies the validity of the radiocarbon dating of the Shroud.

The historical and scientific investigations presented in the first part of this text therefore definitively dispel all doubts about the authenticity of the Shroud. At this point we enter the second part of the volume, which presents five chapters of spiritual meditation on the Shroud, read as a fifth Gospel of Christ's passion, death and resurrection.

The contributions collected in this volume therefore help the reader to make a journey of discovery on these complex issues, which are dealt with in a clear and comprehensive way, with the possibility of further exploring the topic thanks to rich bibliographic notes. It is a journey through history, science and faith which sheds new light on the mystery contained in the Shroud.

**Some years ago the Carbon 14 dating method discredited the authenticity of the Shroud and now many people believe that it is a fake, fabricated in the Middle Ages ... Why is this thesis now considered scientifically outdated?**

The methods of the sampling operation, the sampling area and the reliability of the method for fabrics that have undergone vicissitudes such as those of the Shroud were considered unsatisfactory by a significant number of scholars. The choice of the area from which the samples were taken was wrong: from a very polluted corner, which had also been mended. On the other hand, a sheet of fabric has a total area of contact with the environment, it is impossible to select an area that has not come into contact with external environments. Therefore, any investigations on the Shroud will necessarily be multidisciplinary by nature, precisely because of the complexity of this object. The

lack of multidisciplinary approach was one of the reasons for the failure of the radiocarbon dating conducted on the Shroud in 1988.

An important article, written by myself together with researcher Tristan Casabianca, data analyst Dr. Giuseppe Pernagallo, and Prof. Benedetto Torrisi, professor of statistics at the University of Catania, appeared in *Archaeometry* in 2019. This work examines the raw data of the radio carbonic analysis of 1988 from a statistical point of view, that is, the data derived from individual measurements. The laboratories refused, for almost thirty years, to disclose the raw data. Only in 2017 was Casabianca granted access after he took legal action. Statistical analysis shows that the samples were not homogeneous, therefore they could not be considered representative of the entire sheet. The result of that test, therefore, does not allow us to consider the Shroud as a medieval product, as it was stated in 1988. It is remarkable that the publication of this new article took place precisely in *Archaeometry*, a University of Oxford magazine, home to one of the three laboratories that dated the Shroud in 1988.

**Could you briefly retrace the history of the relic and tell us how it miraculously reached us?**

Since 1578 the Shroud has been custodied in Turin. It was in the possession of the [Royal Italian] Savoy family from 1453 until 1983, when Umberto II gifted it to the Pope.

The first certain historical records of the existence of this relic date back to the mid-fourteenth century, when Crusader knight, Geoffroy de Charny, delivered the Shroud to the

canons of Lirey, near Troyes, in France. Her wife, Jeanne de Vergy, was a great-granddaughter of Othon de la Roche, a Crusader knight who most likely removed it from Constantinople during the sacking of the Fourth Crusade (1204).

The ancient history of the Shroud is one of the most fascinating mysteries of this precious linen. An ancient tradition attributes the transport from Jerusalem to Edessa (now Urfa, in south-eastern Turkey) of the miraculous likeness of Christ to Saint Jude Thaddeus the Apostle, where it healed

the king of the city, Abgar, of his infirmities. It is precisely from these initial moments of the relic's existence that the first historical and iconographic investigation contained in the volume begins: a research that demonstrates how the relationship between the numerous literary testimonies and the figure of Judas Thaddeus is possible. Even the pictorial analysis of an ancient icon, preserved in the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, tends to justify this hypothesis.

The existence of a cloth with the likeness of Jesus imprinted on in Edessa reported in numerous Arab sources, both Christian and Muslim ones, is the

subject of the second chapter in the volume. These texts always speak of a *mandil*, a small handkerchief, on which only the face of Christ is visible. Yet this is not an obstacle to identifying this cloth as the Shroud, as other sources, the subject of the third chapter, report that the cloth referred to as *Mandyllion* by the Byzantines, was *tetradiplon* (folded four times). It is therefore legitimate to believe that this mysterious cloth was the Shroud, folded so as to show only the face. Traces of



*Jesus wrapped in the Shroud during his burial (Painting by Jean Gaspard Baldoino, 17<sup>th</sup> century, exhibited in the Chapel of the Shroud in Nice).*

ancient folds have also been identified on the linen preserved in Turin, making this identification plausible. The *Mandylion* that arrived in Constantinople on August 16, 944 from Edessa could therefore probably be the Shroud. This is confirmed by the iconographic investigation: the copies of the *Mandylion*, and in general all the representations of Christ from the 4th century onwards, are inspired by the venerated relic.

The casket that contained the *Mandylion* may have been opened during the long permanence in Constantinople from 944 to 1204. Thus, it would have been possible to see not only the face of Jesus, but his whole body with the signs of the passion. This could justify the appearance, in the course of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, of a new iconographic type, called *Imago pietatis* in the West. This new typology depicts the dead Christ in an upright position. In the East this iconographic type is known by the denominations of *Akrà tapinosis* (the Great Humiliation) and of *E apocathelosis* (the Deposition). Another iconographic novelty of this period is the representation of the dead crucified Christ with his head reclined. Another representation that emerges is of Christ taken down from the Cross, lying on the funeral shroud, called *Epitaphios*, especially embroidered on liturgical veils. At the same time, many frescoes appear in Byzantine churches depicting Christ lying on a cloth, with his arms crossed, in the scene of the deposition. The particularity of these representations makes the hypothesis of a progressive unveiling of the *Mandylion* plausible.



*"We all need to be reached by the light of the resurrection that heals our wounds, be they physical or spiritual."*

**If I am not mistaken, Jews in the time of Christ were not allowed to keep bloodstained linens, so how was it possible for the Virgin Mary and the first Christians to preserve the burial cloth?**

Yes, the Jews of the time of Christ considered a blood-stained linen to be impure, but not all the norms respected by the Jews passed to Christians: just think of circumcision. Then the case of Jesus was very particular: a sheet that had touched a corpse was considered impure, but that corpse was no longer such, the resurrection had introduced an

unpredictable novelty. The Shroud was the only precious witness of that extraordinary moment and certainly had to be preserved.

**What message does the Holy Shroud transmit to humanity today?**

In March 2020 I was on lockdown at home, like many others, and I was correcting the drafts of my new book "New light on the Shroud" when an unexpected news filled me with joy: Holy Saturday, April 11, the Archbishop of Turin, Msgr. Cesare Nosiglia, would lead prayer liturgy broadcast live worldwide via TV and social networks in front of the venerated relic. Announcing the liturgy Mons. Nosiglia said that "this time of contemplation will allow everyone, throughout the world, to

meditate upon the image of the Sacred Cloth, which reminds us of the passion and death of the Lord, but which also opens our hearts to faith in his Resurrection."

It was an extraordinary Holy Saturday: about a billion people worldwide were able to follow those moving moments of invocation to the Lord, in front of the Shroud that shows us his tortured body. I felt part of a vast choral presence

meditating on the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. The eyes of the world focused on a single image that speaks of him in the silence.

We all need to be reached by the light of the resurrection that heals our wounds, be they physical or spiritual. The Shroud helps us find something solid to hold onto, like a sail in a stormy sea. Like the cloak of Jesus, which the sick woman wanted to touch to be healed. The hands of all humanity were represented by the hand of the Archbishop of Turin, who gently touched the glass that protects the relic.

In the Shroud we see all the stations of the Way of the Cross in one single image: the traces of the scourging, the crowning with thorns and the beatings that prelude the death sentence; the dirt left in the wounds of the knees, caused by the falls; the traces on the shoulders of the *patibulum*, the crossbar of the cross. We can imagine the torment of his Mother and the emotions of the pious women in seeing the atrocious torture to which Jesus was subjected. We can understand the tradition that hands down the delicate gesture of a woman, Veronica, who wipes the face of Jesus: precisely the Shroud, the unexplained image on a cloth inspired this episode. And again we see the reopening of the wounds of the scourging, when Jesus' tunic is removed; the nail holes in the wrists and feet, an evident trace of the crucifixion; the sign of death, in the great wound on the side from which blood and serum flow. Finally, the deposition and burial in the white sheet procured by Joseph of Arimathea.

We need the physicality of those wounds, which make Jesus so close to us and ignite the hope – which becomes certainty – that death is not the end. “Love is stronger,” said Mons. Nosiglia. It was the motto of this exhibition. And he continued: “This is the Easter proclamation that the Shroud leads us to relive and fills our hearts with gratitude and faith.” “Faith in his Resurrection,” these are the comforting words of the Archbishop of Turin.

On the Shroud we not only see the wounds of the Lord. We see the image of his body, composed

and solemn in death, but imprinted in a mysterious way by a phenomenon that has yellowed the linen as the light does. The remaining crusts of blood, partially dissolved, testify to a time of contact estimated at about 36-40 hours. The hours of the evening of Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter dawn. No longer. That body did not remain in the tomb, there are no signs of putrefaction.

At a time when we felt the fear of death stronger, in the lingering risk of a contagion that snatched so many loved ones from our affection, the Shroud enveloped us with the warmth of the love of the One who gave his life for us.

Msgr. Nosiglia reminded us strongly: “Yes, the love with which Jesus gave us his life and which we celebrate during Holy Week is stronger than any suffering, any disease, any contagion, any trial and discouragement. Nothing and no one can ever separate us from this love, because it is faithful forever and unites us to him with an indissoluble bond. Yes, the Shroud always repeats it to our hearts: love is stronger.”

The vision of the Shroud on Holy Saturday comforted our hearts that were experiencing abstinence from the Eucharist.

When we returned to receive it,

we did it with a new awareness, after the suffering of being far from the Body of the Lord. That Body that our eyes see imprinted on the Shroud, dripping with the blood of his wounds, for which we are all responsible. But the closed eyes of the Face, serene amidst so many torments, speak to us of the mercy of God, who does not want to look at our sins.

“The love that the Shroud reveals to us sustains us in believing that in the end light will overcome the darkness of discouragement and fears,” said Msgr. Nosiglia, “and life will conquer death and every other evil that haunts humanity.”

Before the Shroud, on an unforgettable Holy Saturday, contemplating that body, that blood, that Face, we could feel the great comfort of this certainty: Love is stronger. This is the message of hope of the Holy Shroud.

**Interview by François Vayne**

**“ The love that the Shroud reveals to us sustains us in believing that in the end light will overcome the darkness of discouragement and fears ”**



# The Holy Land in the hearts of artists

*The knighting of the painter Horace Vernet, 14 December 1839*

**Jean-Maurice Durand, Knight of the Order, offers us a historical account based on the book by Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet entitled “*Voyage d’Horace Vernet en Orient*” (Challamel Editeur, 1843).**

Specialised in the representation of military and orientalist scenes, Horace Vernet was the favourite painter of the French king, Louis-Philippe I. The sovereign ordered many paintings from him, some of which still adorn the rooms of the Palace of Versailles. Vernet, who was also the director of the Villa Medici between 1829 and 1834, undertook the trip to the Orient from October 1839. Following in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor Chateaubriand, he thus emulated the romantic artists and writers of the

nineteenth century, for whom this long adventurous journey was a sort of rite of passage, or initiation.

After crossing Italy, Greece, and Egypt in the company of his nephew Charles Burton and photographer Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet, Horace Vernet arrived in Jerusalem in December 1839. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of the same month, the three travellers visited the Holy Sepulchre. Goupil-Fesquet, who published a detailed account of their journey in 1843, reports that at the end of this visit, guided by the Custos of the Holy Land, the latter proposed making Horace Vernet “*a knight of*

*the Order*”. Since the pontificate of Alexander VI, the power to confer a knighthood at the Tomb of Christ had been entrusted to the Custos. Godefroy de Bouillon’s sword and spurs, which are used for this ceremony, were then presented for the first time: “*The glorious blade is straight and sharp on both sides; its handle is lined with fluted wood; the cross guard bears two branches spiralling around the base. The spurs are copper, long and armed with large rowels. This simplicity is consistent with historical accounts, which report that the Turkish emirs had difficulty recognising this king dressed as a soldier and lying on the straw.*”



*Photograph of Horace Vernet by Adrien Tournachon called Nadar (1858) and his portrait in oriental costume during his trip to the Holy Land, by Frédéric Auguste Antoine Goupil-Fesquet, designer and pioneer of photography (1843, Hellenic Library - Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation).*



After attending mass in full dress, the illustrious painter was ready for the actual investiture: “They put some very worn booklets into our hands with which we were able to follow the ceremony by singing with the monks.” Goupil-Fesquet then continued his story, including a few errors as to the titles attributed to the celebrants: “The most reverend bishop arrives in full episcopal dress, holding the sword and spur of which we have spoken and wearing the collar of the Order around his neck [he is actually the Custos]; we bow. He sits at the back of the Chapel of the Flagellation to the left of the column on a platform with several steps [...]. H. Vernet approaches the holy father, and, kneeling before him, prepares to read, from a venerable

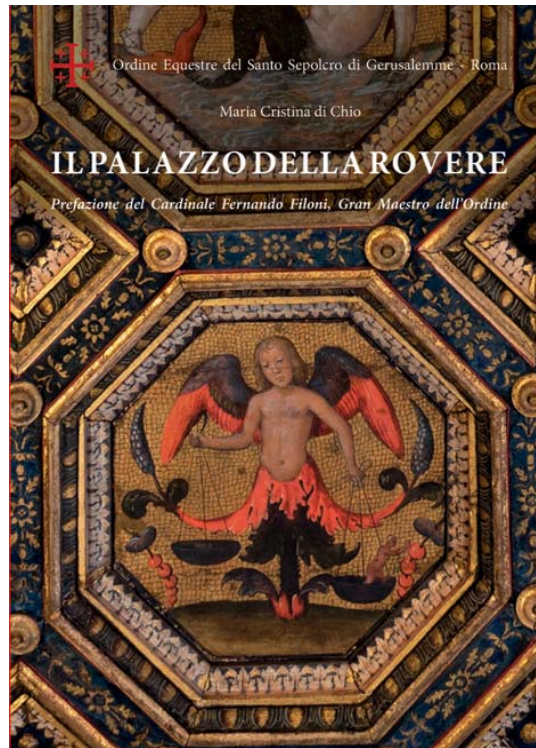
*Jeremiah on the ruins of Jerusalem, by Horace Vernet (1844 oil on canvas, Amsterdam Museum).*

*volume of parchment, the oath that every neophyte must know.”*

Moved, the artist had some difficulty in reading the words of the ritual, as his travelling companion recounts with gentle humour. “The Reverend first asks the questions in a serious tone; the prescribed responses are written in the book in such bizarre and subtle characters that the eyes of the great painter have difficulty deciphering them; he tries nonetheless, but he gets confused despite being prompted by Brother John. Then, using the eyeglass, he is no happier; finally he confesses to the Most Reverend that he forgot his glasses, and is going to send someone to fetch them, when an old monk with a head ravaged by time, and possessor of an immense pair of glasses straddling an equally colossal nose, offers them to Horace Vernet; the precious appliance is set in place, but it squeezes the cartilage so much that the words, spoken with all possible seriousness, make the Reverend smile with their nasal intonation; stifled laughter wins over the monks; and to restore the necessary respect to the ceremony, the patriarch [this is again the Custos, the Latin Patriarchate not having been re-established until 1847]

*decided to read the questions and the responses himself.”* Shortly after, having drawn the sword from its scabbard, he “strikes three blows on the back of the knight whom he then kisses; then he unties the belt from the scabbard, and girds it himself around Vernet’s body; he also detaches the spur to decorate him; our companion is then armed as a knight of the Holy Sepulchre; after taking the oath. The precious blade goes back into its scabbard and is returned together with the spur to the convent treasury.”

When he took leave of the Franciscans on December 20, 1839, Horace Vernet received his knight’s certificate and fulfilled his duty by making a donation to the Holy Land, which the brothers “accepted as alms to be distributed to the unfortunate whom they continue to help through every possible means.”



## The book created by the Grand Magisterium on Palazzo della Rovere has been published

The text features a preface by the Cardinal Grand Master. The volume, edited by the External Relations Office in collaboration with the Communication Service, contains introductory articles by Lieutenant General Agostino Borromeo and Governor General Conte Leonardo, Viscount of Modrone, and an extensive historical-artistic description of the Palace by the art historian Dr. Maria Cristina di Chio, who voluntarily collaborates with the Order. The texts are accompanied by ample photographic documentation both of the frescoes and of the works of art present in the halls of the palazzo, and of the main events of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem held in recent years. The book also includes a brief report of the Office of the Superintendent of Archeology, Fine Arts, and Urban Landscaping of the City of Rome on the recent discoveries underneath the area, dating back to the Imperial period and the late Middle Ages.

The book is currently available only in Italian.  
For information, the Lieutenancies should contact  
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