

News Letter

ORDO EQUESTRIS SANCTI SEPULCRI HIEROSOLYMITANI

MESSAGE FROM THE CARDINAL GRAND MASTER

Dear Knights and Ladies,

As I noted already in a letter sent to all Lieutenancies asking that a Mass or Prayer Service be offered for the intentions of our Holy Father and the Universal Church on or near the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul on June 29, Msgr. Hans A.L. Brouwers, the Chancellor of our Order, and I had the privilege of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land during Holy Week.

In addition to taking part in the liturgies in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre on Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday (at the altar on Mount Calvary), Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday (when I offered my Mass celebrated with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem for all of our Knights and Ladies), we were able to visit a number of the works sustained through the generosity of our Order – including the wonderful seminary in Beit Jala, and parishes and schools in the Palestinian Territories and in Galilee in Israel.

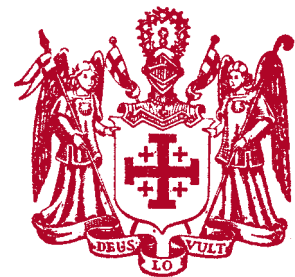


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IMPRESSUM
GRAND MAGISTERIUM
OF THE
EQUESTRIAN ORDER
OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE
OF JERUSALEM
00120 VATICAN CITY



MESSAGE FROM THE CARDINAL GRAND MASTER

It was inspiring and consoling for me to see plaques on the walls of some institutions indicating assistance from the Order of the Holy Sepulchre as far back as the 1950s.

On the day before Holy Thursday, we were privileged to be present in Jerusalem for the announcement of the appointment of Msgr. William Shomali as Auxiliary Bishop of the Latin Patriarchate. As many of you know, Bishop Shomali, who will have been ordained to the episcopate in Jerusalem by the time you receive this correspondence, has worked very closely with our Order on projects for the spiritual and material welfare of the Christians of the Holy Land. We were happy to honor him at the recent meeting of our Grand Magisterium in Rome.

It was very distressing to note that, on Holy Saturday morning, pilgrims and Palestinian Christians were rebuffed by the Israeli military at the gates of Jerusalem and were prevented from going to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and to the other holy places within the walled city. Because of our special status, Msgr. Brouwers and I were permitted to enter the Old City and to take part in the procession from the Latin Patriarchate, but it later seemed that the police outnumbered the pilgrims in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. I am sure that we can all understand the need to guarantee security, but we would also hope that all people could be treated with courtesy and respect – since gruffness and indeed roughness can only foster resentment. It is certainly necessary for all of us to continue to pray and work for peace and justice in the Holy Land.

Because the Secretariat of State has informed us that we should also be mindful of the welfare of Latin-rite Catholics in Lebanon, we joined Msgr. Robert Stern and the officers of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association and Pontifical Mission for Palestine, Archbishops Timothy Dolan of New York, Terrence Prendergast, S.J., of Ottawa and Alexander Brunett of Seattle,



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on a visit to Lebanon and Syria. In Damascus, I also offered Mass for the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre in the chapel in the wall of the city which reportedly marks the place where St. Paul was lowered over the wall to begin his ministry to the Gentiles.

We met in Lebanon and Syria with Patriarchs of both Catholic and Orthodox churches, and it was a reminder to all of us of how important it is for us to work together for the benefit of all Christians and indeed as a witness of Christian love to all those among whom we live.

By the time you read this letter, our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI will have visited Cyprus, which also forms part of the territory of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. As Grand Master of our Order, I have been honored to be invited to accompany the Holy Father and about seventy members of our Order are also expected to take part in the pilgrimage.

Finally, please continue to pray for the Christians in the Holy Land – and please know how much your prayers and sacrifices mean to them – and to the Holy Father himself.



*John Cardinal Foley
Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre
of Jerusalem*



FROM THE REPORT
PRESENTED TO THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM
BY THE LATIN PATRIARCH
OF JERUSALEM

At the Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium on 23 April this year, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem again reviewed the situation of the Church and Catholics in the Holy Land. Here are some excerpts from his report:

Certainly the Knights and Ladies, when they come to the Holy Land, see the vitality of the Church and the many projects the Church sponsors, thanks to the Order's assistance. Within our frail human limits we are carrying out a mission of love and service. The Holy Father noted this when he addressed us in Amman saying: "Fidelity to your Christian roots, fidelity to the Church's mission in the Holy Land, demands of each of you a particular kind of courage: the courage of conviction, born of personal faith, not mere social convention or family tradition; the courage to engage in dialogue and to work side by side with other Christians in the service of the Gospel and solidarity with the poor, the displaced, and the victims of profound human tragedies; the courage to build new bridges to enable a fruitful encounter of people of different religions and cultures, and thus to enrich the fabric of society."

...

It has now been one and a half years since I began my service as head of the Church of Jerusalem. Today, I would like to share with you some of my reflections on the important challenges that face us: you and me and all who love the Church of the Holy Land:

...

The first challenge facing any pastor of the Church, of course, is the critical question of evangelizing and catechizing the Christian people, preparing them to take their place as leaven in society, witnessing to new life in Christ. But we also have to do this in a very particular historical, religious and political context.

– Undoubtedly, the major factor in this context is **the lack of peace**. This situation threatens all but especially the Christians who are so few in number and so powerless. As the Holy Land continues to bleed, we continue to lose the best of our flock as they seek a more stable environment and a more secure future for their children. The continued violence and hostility, racism and extremism mean that our flock is under constant threat. Families cannot be united, the Wall cuts communities in two, unemployment soars and poverty grows. In addition, we are forced to



admit that there is no apparent short-term solution and so we must prepare the Church to face these continuing challenges.

Jerusalem is the center of the conflict. The present Israeli government is not hiding its intention to make Jerusalem exclusively Jewish in character by building settlements especially in the Arab part of the city, and by defining much of Jerusalem's historic heritage, as uniquely Jewish.

...

Practically speaking, **land** is a make or break question for our survival:

- Land is an element that will determine in some ways, our continuing to exist or not to exist as a Church. It is the only way to provide options for Christians who want to stay and also to insist on our legal, juridical presence in front of the state.
- Land is a necessary factor to preserve and promote our identity. A solid immovable presence will make it possible for our communities to act not just individually in front the power of the state, but as those who speak with a substantial and visible patrimony.
- Land is what will give to our witness more credibility.

...

Up till now the Patriarchate has sought to help its people by concentrating on its parishes, schools and hospitals. But we have come to see how essential it is, that we be pro-active in the field of economic opportunity as well, creating jobs and making it possible to earn money for themselves and their families. They want to work, and thanks to our educational system, many of them have good skills. It is apparent that just giving them money creates a culture of dependence.

Particularly in the area of the Palestinian Authority, there is a distinct lack of an effective health system. It is necessary to think of establishing a private health insurance program.

A never-ending challenge, of course, is to identify **new sources of funding and aid** that can make all of this become a reality. We are profoundly grateful for all that you give already and yet I come as a prophetic beggar – can we take a leap of faith forward? Can we move from charity based giving, to real investment in the future? Since we are aware that the weight of such a project cannot rest solely on the shoulders of the Knights and Ladies of the Order, we must seek other collaborators, other lovers of Jerusalem and her Church.

We are undertaking **two huge projects**, blessed by His Holiness during His last pilgrimage in Jordan:

The Church of the Site of Baptism: This is the only major pilgrimage site in Jordan that the Patriarchate oversees; and

The University of Madaba which is of course a very major undertaking.



FROM THE REPORT BY DR. CHRISTA VON SIEMENS

WAs is usual at every Spring session of the Grand Magisterium, on 24 April the President of the Holy Land Commission reported on the Projects submitted by the Latin Patriarchate for financial support from the Order.

These include two major projects, i.e.

Construction of a church at **Aqaba in Jordan**, and the first phase of the school extension at **Rameh in Northern Israel**.

In addition, there are plans for **renovations at the schools in Kerak, Al Wahadneh and Naour**, all in Jordan and **renovation of the Rosary Sisters' convent in Reneh** (Northern Israel).

Some of these Projects, such as the church in Aqaba, are so large overall that finance cannot be provided entirely in one year but must be apportioned over a number of years. Currently we are looking at which parts of these major Projects can be put in hand this year and which must wait until later.

It has been decided to make available € 1.7 million in total to cover all the constructions works in the present year, this sum to be allotted in two stages.

The church in Aqaba is needed because of the influx of people seeking employment (including Christians). Aqaba is a free trade area and, owing to its location on the Red Sea, there is also a notable increase in tourism. Members of the Holy Land Commission were able to meet a Christian family who themselves had recently moved here from Amman, thanks to a favorable job offer.

School renovations or extensions are clearly always required. Many of the schools were built some time ago and are in need of modernization in order to provide better education. In addition, parents want to send their children to Christian schools so they put up with high school fees. As foreigners we find this idea particularly strange, since public schools in our own countries generally guarantee a good all-round standard of education. School extensions are required because parents want their children to attend the same school throughout their whole period of education, with the result that the number of pupils in the schools is always rising.



The reason for improving convents and priests' houses is the desire to provide a decent standard of accommodation for the parish priests and nuns who devote their lives to caring for the communities. This is the case with the Rosary Sisters' convent in Reneh.

All the other measures to support and assist the Patriarchate are also important and their significance should not be diminished. However, the construction projects – whether renovation works, kindergartens, school extensions, parish halls or even churches – are and remain the places where the Christians in the Holy Land, that small but vigorous community, meet and come together with a sense of joy and of their own identity. In the Holy Land as in the whole of the Near East, they see themselves as a minority threatened daily by the two other great monotheistic world religions. The Christians represent an active and convincing minority who must continually profess and bear witness to their faith. For them all these construction works are visible evidence of their presence. The Christians can also be regarded as peacemakers in this region, because they talk not about occupation or security but about reconciliation. It is our special mission to assist their efforts to remain in their homeland and it should always fill us with joy and gratitude.

There is something else. Something very special, as Dr. von Siemens said in her report: “... *the secret of the Holy Land that you can see in the laughing eyes of a school child, who of course speaks only Arabic, when he sees his new school computer. The same secret lies in the warmth of the people, in their openness and hospitality: all deeply Christian virtues... moreover, the secret of the Holy Land is present in all its churches. So we can only emphasize the statement made by Richard Millet in an article on the future of Christianity in the East: ‘When you enter an eastern church you will learn what is hidden in the tranquility of the churches in the East: the beat of an angel’s wing.’*”

Dr. von Siemens made one final remark. When talking to Christians in the Holy Land, they always say to her, “Madam, We don’t just want to share your happiness; we want to share your sorrows too.” Thus, our Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land don’t just turn our ideas of them upside down; they also show very clearly how deeply the spirit of Christ is rooted within them.



ONE LAPTOP PER CHILD PROJECT

by *Thomas E. McKiernan, KGCHS*

Member of the Grand Magisterium

At the April, 2010 meeting of the Grand Magisterium I gave a report about a pilot project recently commissioned by the Order in cooperation with the Latin Patriarchate Schools and the non-profit **One Laptop Per Child**, commonly known as OLPC.

The “XO” laptop computer, designed by OLPC in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, is revolutionizing how we educate the world’s children in emerging countries and some of the world’s troubled areas. It is a rugged, low-cost, low power, connected laptop which belongs to the student, not the school, and it enables the student to access the Internet, an enormous source of knowledge.

By giving children their very own laptop we also give them ability to connect to the rest of the world. They become engaged in their own education and learn to share, create and collaborate.

In 2009 I met Argentinean Antonio Battro, M.D., Ph.D., at the Domus Sanctae Marthae in Vatican City. Dr. Battro is one of the world’s leading experts in the functions of the brain and learning. A member of the prestigious Pontifical Academy of Sciences he is also the Chief Educational Officer of OLPC. I was captivated with the OLPC concept and the sincerity in his comment that education is a human right for every child, rich or poor, everywhere, and not just a privilege for a few.

With the approval of the Governor General, I established a conversation with officials at OLPC and several months later, Dr. Battro met with Governor General Borromeo and Vice-Governor Rinaldi and it was decided to propose a pilot project to the schools of the Latin Patriarchate.

In February, 2010, I joined the Governor General and Dr. Battro in the Holy Land where we made presentations to elementary schools in Jordan, Palestine, Israel and Gaza. The XO computer was enthusiastically received by the teachers, students and administrators of the LPJ schools.

Just recently on the 27th of May the Holy Father gave an address entitled EDUCATION: HELPING NEW GENERATIONS RELATE TO THE WORLD in which he told the participants “never lose faith in the young... concern yourself with all areas of life, including those of the new communications technologies which now permeate culture in all its expressions.”

This is not a laptop project...it is an education project and also a project about justice. The Order agrees with OLPC that education is a human right for every child, rich or poor, and not just a privilege for a few. Education is power, an instrument of dialogue, and a springboard to brighter futures. I believe this project is an opportunity for our Order, in collaboration with the Latin Patriarchate, to develop educated and empowered children who will be the next generation of Christians, and peace advocates, in the Holy Land.

