



ORDO EQUESTRIS  
SANCTI SEPULCHRI HIEROSOLYMITANI

# PRAYING with the GRAND MASTER



By the Communications Office of the Grand Magisterium



**Brothers and Sisters of our Order, dig deep into your heart's imagination to see, to realize that it is Jesus who inspires and encourages our mission today.**

**Edwin Cardinal O'Brien**

**Today too, becoming a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre means witnessing to the Kingdom of Christ, and spreading the Church as well as working for charity with the same profound spirit of faith and love. Are you prepared to accept this ideal for your life?**

**From the Mass of Investiture**

**This booklet contains some reflections that could help guide the monthly meetings of the Delegations, Sections, Lieutenancies across the world and, at the same time, our personal prayer. Inspired by the words of the Grand Master, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, we want to touch on the main points of our mission and calling as members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and we hope to do so communally: within our local realities as well as globally – in the knowledge that from Taiwan to Norway and from Alaska to South Africa the Knights and Dames are praying in communion; but also individually.**

**In the following pages you will find twelve themes, one for each month of the year, that touch us closely. In a sort of annual monthly reflection, we can be accompanied in prayer by the meditations of Cardinal O'Brien and by practical reflections.**

**Blessings on both your reading and your journey!**

## Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the city of promise but also of fulfillment, a city in which past, present and future take on a theological and at the same time extremely concrete dimension. It is the city of which many passages of the Old Testament speak to us and it is the place towards which Jesus journeyed. It is there that he offered His life for every person. The Second Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* affirms: “For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery”(GS 22).

This city, which is a holy place for us Christians, is so also for Jews and Muslims. We pray that the presence of the Christian community in the city where Jesus died and rose again is always a



sign of peace, a fertile seed for the whole of society, a joyful announcement of life that conquers death.



In our special relationship to Jerusalem, we members are offered a special relationship to Jesus. What love Jesus had for his city. For the last time, Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem, his city. The palm fronds celebrating his ecstatic welcome still line the hillside road and for a solitary, poignant moment he stops: “If only you had known, if only you had known....the time, this time of your visitation.” And he weeps. [...]

What love Jesus had for His City. And how shortsighted would we be were we not to realize that he still loves Jerusalem with all that same human tenderness – yes with that same pathos that was his when he wept over it! He had walked that land, taught in its temple and synagogues, poured out his heart and all his energies to heal illness, to preach peace and offer hope to those poorest and most hopeless kindred of his. And does he not weep for them still?

His love continues today for the people in his city – people he still considers his own. And isn't it his continuing love for his land today that yearns to bring relief to tens of thousands who still suffer there?

And may I suggest to you members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre that it is this Christ's very love for his land that today breathes grace into our hearts to love those people passionately, whom he loves, passionately.



**Edwin Cardinal O'Brien**

## TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

We must start from the desire to love Jerusalem and suffer with it and therefore know it in its history, its literature, its art, its music, its cultural and social expressions, its problems and its painful historical trials.  
Jerusalem has always been a beloved city and as a result, a

highly contested one. This destiny stretches back 3000 years, to a time when the city numbered no more than 2000 inhabitants. Its existence as a peaceful capital, even in the midst of great travails and suffering, lasted 400 years. After that, its story became one of successive invasions and conquests: Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Ptolemies, Seleucids, Romans, Arabs, Christians of the West, Egyptian sultans, Turks, right up to the most recent events.

In the words of André Chouraqui “throughout its history Jerusalem has been a martyred city, the great crucified.” When you encounter Jerusalem you encounter the traces and the living symbols of this story that continues to this very day. Chouraqui writes “Jerusalem is central to Israel, central to the universal Church, to the house of Islam and this because it stands at the crossroads where Asia meets Africa and turns towards the West.”

It is from here that the tragic dilemma that has always accompanied its history arises: Is it a city of encounter, dialogue or a melting pot of tensions, of conflict like those we see today? “If there is peace in Jerusalem, there will be peace in the whole world.” Therefore, we must to come to Jerusalem with sentiments of peace, as peacemakers.

**Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini  
“Jerusalem, go in peace”, November 26, 2004**

### ***A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH***

*This month, let us take the time to learn more about Jerusalem and the Holy Land. First of all, through the Word of God, but also trying to inform ourselves so that we can discover the Jerusalem of today, with its beauties, contradictions, culture and population. May we find a special place in our heart for this city and its inhabitants, and like all the Holy Land, carry it in our prayers, aware of the fact that the gift of peace can come only from God.*

## Strengthen our spiritual life

We should never consider our spiritual life as something static, attained once and for all. Rather it is a journey through which we are formed as disciples of Christ. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may accompany us and that we may desire what God desires for us, leading us towards the Father.

Grace is the indispensable gift and we are called to collaborate so that it can take root in our lives. Day after day and with humility it helps us recognize our being creatures and it gives us the strength to pick ourselves up after each fall. In his speech to the students of schools run by the Jesuits in Italy and Albania a few months after his election, Pope Francis says: “In the art of walking it is not falling that matters, but not ‘staying fallen’. Get up quickly, immediately, and continue to go on. And this is beautiful: it is



*Many initiatives of the various Delegations, Sections and Lieutenancies allow members to deepen their spiritual life together with fellow Knights and Dames.*



working every day, it is walking humanly.” (June 7, 2013)  
Today these words are also addressed to us.

“ Every member is well aware that the first purpose of our Order is “to strengthen in its members the practice of Christian life” – that is, to grow in personal holiness. I am invariably impressed by the seriousness with which our members acknowledge this “first principle” and are seeking holiness. Of course, none of us is ever “completely holy.” We are all seeking to become more like Christ in every facet of our lives. St. Paul tells us that this is the special role of the Holy Spirit, for all of us “...are being transformed into [Christ’s] likeness with ever increasing glory, through the power of the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18), and “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). This is an ongoing interior transformation into Christ that we don’t see directly but is gradually realized by regular prayer and sacramental participation, especially in the Eucharist and Penance.

In your role as members, each of you is being summoned, invited to a deeper, richer life of holiness, making known to others the call of their Good Shepherd to follow him. To know the love, joy and protection of Him whom you choose to follow more closely today.

**Edwin Cardinal O’Brien**

## TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

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

you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.

Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (cf. *Gal 5:22-23*). When you feel the temptation to dwell on your own weakness, raise your eyes to Christ crucified and say: “Lord, I am a poor sinner, but you can work the miracle of making me a little bit better”. In the Church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness. The Lord has bestowed on the Church the gifts of scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of the saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God’s love, “like a bride bedecked with jewels” (*Is 61:10*).

This holiness to which the Lord calls you will grow through small gestures.

*Gaudete et Exsultate 14-16*

### **A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH**

*Let us consider once again the questions His Eminence addressed us:*

- *Do you see your vocation in our Order as a response to follow Christ more closely? As a step on the ladder to holiness, to sainthood, in*



*The Grand Master, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, travels to meet the Knights and Dames of the Order and support their spiritual growth.*

*pursuit of justice for the poor and weak – the vulnerable – in the Holy Land?*

- *Do you see yourselves, each one, as a message which the Holy Spirit takes from the richness of Christ and gives to His Church in the Holy Land?*

*This month let us take the time to look with mercy at our personal and fraternal life within our Delegation, Section, Lieutenancy, with the eyes of God. On the one hand, let us invite ourselves and each other to coherence and not to give into laziness along our journey. On the other hand, let us not forget that “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:8)*

## Supporting the Holy Land

**K**nights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre are driven by the desire of getting closer to the Holy Land, to their inhabitants, to the living stones who live their daily lives in that place of the world where the Son of God was made man, lived, healed, met people, offered His life and was resurrected. When a member enters the Order he/she commits to contribute to the needs of the Church in the Holy Land and to support the Christian presence in that region.

To serve God's people also requires concrete actions. Supporting the Church in the Holy Land is a way to be present in that Land, to help Christians not to leave their land and to be there a sign of hope, reconciliation and love for the whole society. As Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and



*Our brothers and sisters of the Holy Land, living stones of that beloved land, are a source of inspiration and example thanks to their faith.*

mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” (Mt 13:33) Let us help our brothers and sisters to be that yeast in their hometowns, in the place where they work, in their communities.

The Grand Master Cardinal Edwin O’Brien invites us to reflect on this concrete mission.

“ What an inspiration it should be to us to witness Christians in the Holy Land tenaciously clinging to Faith in sometimes desperate circumstances. And what a source of satisfaction it should be for us as members of the Equestrian Order, to realize that it is our solidarity with them in prayer, pilgrimages and financial help that strengthens faith of Christians there and offers them hope.

Along with our pilgrimages and prayers for Jerusalem, we pledge our special love and obligation to the Church there. And would not Saint Paul himself be pleased and grateful for your ongoing generosity to the Jerusalem Church? Indeed, your charitable contributions to the Jerusalem Patriarchate continue an Apostolic tradition 2000 years old.

On leaving Jerusalem for his first missionary journey, Paul promised the Apostle James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, that he would encourage his converts along the way to assist the Church of Jerusalem. Throughout his travels, Paul made collections for the Church there a top priority – a necessary and continuing sign of solidarity was every Christian’s spiritual debt to our Mother Church, Jerusalem. To the Romans Paul writes (15:25-27):

“At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things.”

**Edwin Cardinal O’Brien**

## TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

“If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”

**James 2:15-17**



## **A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH**

*In thinking about our contribution, let us take the time this month to learn more about the youth, elders, students, families we are supporting through our action. Let us create concrete bonds of friendship, aware of how much we receive from them by their Christian witness.*

## Holy Sepulchre

When we say we are Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, we affirm a special bond with a place the grace and beauty of which are linked to its emptiness. A “tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid” (Lk 23:53), a place so dear to us and to the Universal Church, that welcomed for a few hours the body of Jesus, true God and true man, who died on cross.

When we go on pilgrimage, we have the joy of being able to spend a few minutes inside this sacred place. Surely we remember the body of the One who offered Himself as a ransom for all of us, but our history does not end with death. Today we are here precisely because that Sepulchre is empty, because - as the psalmist recites, turning to God - “thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou then give thy holy one to see corruption” (Ps 15:10).

The Father raised up the Son and opened to us a path to follow Him.

“ Yet it is the Empty Tomb that brought them together in solidarity and celebration.

It is the same Empty Tomb that we celebrate during Easter Days. It is the Lord’s Resurrection that raises each of us out of our own self-concerns and moves us to care also for our neighbors.

As we offer the Mass on this day we are entering God’s world, a sacramental world which abolishes time and space and draws us into the very action of the death and resurrection of Christ - as if, (says the Pope) we had been there as it took place. And for us who are uniquely dedicated to that place, the Holy Sepulchre, may this Mass serve as a sacramental pilgrimage to Calvary.

**Edwin Cardinal O’Brien**

## TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

“An ancient bond ties you to the Holy Sepulchre. The perennial memorial of Christ’s Crucifixion who was laid there, and of the Resurrected Christ who conquered death. May Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen be the center of your life and of each of your personal projects. To believe in the redemptive power of the Cross and the Resurrection to offer hope and peace. In a special way, the Land of Jesus needs it very much!”

**Pope Francis to Knights and Dames of the Order  
during Consulta 2013**





## **A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH**

*Let us ask ourselves the question our Grand Master directed to us in his message of June 2018:*

*Does our special devotion to the Empty Tomb enable us to experience “the hidden presence of the Risen Lord”?*

*As we well know, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre also houses within its walls the place of the crucifixion and the deposition of Jesus. As we prepare to live Holy Week, may we find sustenance in meditating on this prayer by Pope Saint Paul VI during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1964:*

Here we are, Lord Jesus,  
we have come as the guilty who return to the place of the crime,  
we came as the one who followed You but who also betrayed You;  
faithful, unfaithful we have been so many times,  
we have come to confess the mysterious relationship between our sins  
and Your Passion:  
our work, Your work,  
we have come here to beat our breasts,  
to seek Your forgiveness, to implore Your mercy,  
we have come because we know that You can,  
that You want to forgive us,  
because You have expiated our sin for us,  
You are our redemption and our hope.

**Pope Saint Paul VI**

## Brotherhood

Christian life cannot be lived in isolation. Even for more specific calls, such as the call to cloistered life, the Christian is always a living member of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. This is the reality which unites the experiences of faith of the people of God and it is all the more felt in an institution like ours in which we grow, pray and walk together as members of the same Order, and the charitable work that we carry forward is possible only as a joint effort and accomplished within a life of shared faith.

“ Throughout my travels for Investitures, I am repeatedly inspired by the bonds of friendship that unite our members one to the other. Among members of various backgrounds, a sense of ease, of trust, and of joy. This is especially evident during our annual meetings of lieutenants from throughout Europe and America and, surely, during the week-long Consulta.

Not that this should be surprising. Ours is especially a spiritual association calling each member to a deeper personal holiness rooted in the following of Christ. The months of formation leading up to Investiture should leave no doubt that ours is a vocation within a vocation with a distinct mission nourished by common prayers and collaborative works of charity on behalf of the Church in the Holy Land. It is this “graced mission” that joins us to Christ and our members and creates deep and lasting friendships.

**Edwin Cardinal O'Brien**



### TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**Acts 2:42-48**

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**John 13:34-35**

### ***A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH***

*This month, let us dedicate our time to some of our brothers or sisters who have recently joined the Order, getting to know them better. We can take this opportunity to especially remember someone in prayer and thus strengthen the spiritual bonds that unite us.*

## Mystery of Eucharist

The Eucharist nourishes our life. We have the grace to receive the Body of Christ that is capable of transforming us so that, conquered by the love of the gift of the Son of God, ours too can become a life that is offered. After the consecration of bread and wine, the priest proclaims: “the mystery of faith” before that which is the Body and Blood of Christ. In the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* of 1965, Pope Saint Paul VI helps us to see this “mystery” with greater clarity: “The Eucharist is a very great mystery – in fact, properly speaking and in the words of the Sacred Liturgy, the mystery of faith. ‘It contains within it,’ as Leo XIII, Our predecessor of happy memory, very wisely remarked, ‘all supernatural realities in a remarkable richness and variety of miracles.’ And so we must approach this mystery in particular with humility and reverence, not relying on human reasoning, which ought to hold its peace, but rather adhering firmly to divine



Revelation.” (MF 15-16)

Let us therefore draw close with faith, love and open hearts to receive God’s gift at his altar, particularly during the feast of Corpus Christi that we celebrate during this month of June, so that we may grow in the likeness of His Divine Son.

““ The privilege of offering Mass at the Holy Sepulchre brought freshly to my mind the mystery of the Eucharist – this Eucharist we are celebrating together, for example. Listen to what St. John Paul II suggests:

“The Death and Resurrection of Jesus was so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only after he had left us a means of sharing in it as if we had been present there.”

Think of it – as singular and privileged was our touching the very soil of Christ’s physical Crucifixion and Resurrection at the Holy Sepulchre, even more spiritually profound is our intimate unity with Christ in his Death and Resurrection at each Eucharist, Sacramentally celebrated! Every Mass is an unbroken identification between the priest’s words of consecration at the altar, Jesus’ words of consecration at the Last supper and his pouring out of blood on a Roman cross. ”

**Edwin Cardinal O’Brien**

#### TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

The disciples are simply called, in short, to receive the fulfillment of a gift that has always been prepared. But it is also a gift to be prepared for. It is such a great gift that it takes time and preparation to be understood. It needs a journey that little by little makes us realize the greatness of this mystery. For this reason, the Church, even if elsewhere there are different traditions, makes access to the gift of the Eucharist only after a certain preparation and only when there can be an understanding of the gift of the Eucharist. Even in our days, where the “immediately and now” are seemingly a social

invention, the Eucharist remains a mystery that needs time, acceptance and understanding.

The Eucharist is first of all an experience of communion: what the disciples are about to experience is not only a convivial moment, it is not just the remembrance of a night of salvation, but it is the gift of life that that make love possible: it is the source by which to attain every possibility of communion. And this is the fulfillment of the covenant. In the Eucharist, love is the true food.

Without this gift, there is no communion possible because it is within the mystery of this supper that man finds the forgiveness that makes him live and capable of loving again.

There is no communion possible without participating in this broken and given body, without this body that unites us to itself in a single body.

**Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa**  
**Homily on the Feast of Corpus Domini**  
**June 3, 2018**

### ***A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH***

*How do we prepare for the Eucharist?*

*Take the time to specially prepare for the next Eucharistic liturgy in your Delegation/Section/Lieutenancy.*

*Prepare your heart, think about the time you will spend with Jesus and your brothers and sisters on that day and contribute to organizing it by helping with the details (readings, prayers, songs, flowers, etc.).*

*This is a privileged time molding our life and pouring grace on us: let us welcome the gift God offers us.*

## Pilgrimage

Following in the footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land is an experience that deeply touches the heart of every Christian. In a special way, it is an essential experience for Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. We are called to know the land and the communities we wish to support closely. Not only will our pilgrimage invite us to discover the holy places but also to spend time with the living stones of the Holy Land, to see their daily lives and to listen firsthand to their needs.

During the Jubilee of Mercy, the Communications Office of the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre published a booklet to accompany the members of the Order on pilgrimage



*The joy of walking the streets of the Holy Land, of listening to the Word of God and dedicating more time to prayer is an experience that the Knights and Dames of the Order have the good fortune to live during their pilgrimages.*



to the places of mercy in the Holy Land. It remains a valid spiritual guide that can be downloaded from our website [www.oessh.va](http://www.oessh.va) on the MEDIA page.

“ One sure, tried-and-true path to renewing our commitment to the Holy Land and its people, as many of you have and will continue to experience, is a periodic pilgrimage to that Land to visit, encourage, and express solidarity with our courageous Christian brothers and sisters, to visit the shrines that stand in the very soil where the mysteries of Christ’s life are memorialized, still brimming with graces: Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity, the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of the Transfiguration, and the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, the Cenacle of the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, and surely, the Holy Sepulchre itself. ”

**Edwin Cardinal O’Brien**

#### **TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION**

You are living the experience of pilgrimage, which is a great symbol of human and Christian life. Each one of us can either be a “wanderer” or a “pilgrim”. The time in which we live sees so many people who are “wanderers”, because they lack an ideal life and often are unable to make sense of what is happening in the world. With the sign of pilgrimage, you show the will not to be “wanderers”. [...] In fact your pilgrimage has a charitable purpose, to benefit our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, especially those most in need, who are living through a time of suffering, tension and fear.

**Pope Francis to Knights and Dames of the Order  
during Consulta 2013**

All of us are invited to resume the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, because the knowledge of, and the living experience in

the places of our redemption: walking on the steps of Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the disciples, helps us to deepen our faith and also to understand the context in which the Christians live in the Holy Land. Besides, the pilgrimages are a form of sustenance for the survival of thousands of families.

**From the Letter of Cardinal Leonardo Sandri,  
Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches,  
about the “pro Terra Sancta” Collection  
February 14, 2018**

### ***A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH***

*One question that the Cardinal Grand Master addressed to our personal and fraternal reflection in his message of spring 2018 is:*

*What effect has a Pilgrimage there had in experiencing his hidden presence – in the Mass and Holy Eucharist, perhaps?*

*Let us reflect on how the pilgrimage we have experienced has actually changed something in our lives and, if we are planning a pilgrimage to the Land of Jesus in the near future, how may we prepare our heart for this journey?*

## Education and nurturing a new generation

Being present alongside our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land is an invitation to look for the most suitable ways to help them feel our presence and our support. Through our relationship with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, we hear firsthand from the local Church of their needs and requirements. One sector in which our support is constantly requested is that of education. Indeed, the new generations will be the ones who will carry forward the future of the Holy Land and we, Knights and Dames of the Order, have the opportunity to contribute so that Catholic school students receive a quality education and can live a positive



*Cardinal Edwin O'Brien in one of the schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem supported by the Order.*

experience of growth, sharing, as well as dialogue among the different religious traditions. Over the years we have had the joy of being able to see the visible fruits of our work in this sense. During some graduation ceremonies in the Holy Land, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien addressed the newly graduated students from Catholic institutions:



I see education as:

- The flourishing of humanity, and not the scramble for certificates.
- The care of the person, and not trying to just be better than others.
- The search for Truth, goodness and beauty, and not regurgitating old knowledge... that develops almost as it leaves your mouth.

You will transform society. It is you whom we celebrate today. You are the generation to transform society in a world that needs you. You are new graduates who will transform the world, because by your studies and scholarship you are committed to do so.

What do I mean by this overused word- “transform”?

I mean change from which there is no going back. In your education you have been transformed. You cannot become uneducated. You are not just informed – you are formed – and you have been transformed. No: there is no going back. Once you are educated you are changed for life...

There is no going back. [...]

[Schools and universities are] a place where people meet, where relationships are created and developed and nurtured, intellectually, culturally and spiritually. It is these human encounters that we enjoy on a daily basis that should transform us [...]

May your singular experiences here offer peace, love and hope for many years to a world that awaits you and all the things to which you are committed.



**Edwin Cardinal O'Brien**

## TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

“If we want to have a good society, we must concentrate all our forces on the Christian education of the young. Experience has taught me that if we wish to sustain civil society then we should take good care of the young.”

**St. John Bosco**

Education is an important sector of the Latin Patriarchate. The first reason is that through education, we can target the human person in the totality of its identity; in order to strengthen the faith of the people, we must be present in society carrying values of respect, of acceptance of others. Pastorally, the schools allow us to celebrate the different Sacraments close to the pupils. Religion classes enable Christians to deepen their knowledge of the Bible and to strengthen their faith. Celebrations organised in the schools for the different liturgical seasons (something made possible by the presence of a school near parish churches) enable us to experience unity among Christians, because all Christians come, no matter what rite.

We must also understand that the school and the Church nourish one another: the parish is made strong by the visibility it is given, thanks to the school. Families get to know the Latin parish church and enroll their children here. The parish priest is visible at the school and close to the parents. In the same way, the school is present in the heart of the society thanks to the church. The parish priest makes the school known.

Muslims are welcomed in these schools and attend Islamic religious lessons throughout their academic life. Their presence in the school is a chance for the Latin Patriarchate to teach openness to others, respect, and other values which in themselves are fundamentally Christian: love of your

neighbour, forgiveness. A Muslim leaving our schools will never become a fundamentalist.

**Excerpt of an interview by the Communications Office of the Grand Magisterium of the EOHSJ in 2016 with the then director of schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Father Faysal Hijazen, who unexpectedly passed away during that same year**

### ***A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH***

*During this month in which the academic year begins in the Holy Land and many young people return to class, we especially remember in our prayers the students, teachers and staff of the schools we support in the Holy Land. Our charitable activity also passes through our spiritual closeness to these young people and to those who educate them.*

## The Cross

In the 21st century, we have become used to seeing the cross and associating salvation with it. However, in the imagery of early Christians, the cross was seen primarily as an instrument of death and torture reserved for the worst criminals. Paul needed to affirm with a full voice: “but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” (1 Cor 1:23-25)

This cross that Jesus carried on his shoulders towards Calvary and on which his hands and feet were nailed is that which we carry on



our mantle and on our decorations. From an instrument of death to an instrument of salvation.

In the sixth century, Romanos the Melodist composed a hymn for the Exaltation of the Cross in which we read: “The three times blessed wood, gift of life, was planted by the Most High in the midst of paradise so that Adam could obtain eternal and immortal life. But he did not recognize life, he lost it and discovered death. Instead the thief, who saw how this tree of Eden was transplanted on Golgotha, recognized life in it.”

More than a symbol to wield, the cross is what shapes our heart, which invites us to recognize the great love of God and to receive the gift of life that God has always wanted to give us. We pray to have the eyes of the good thief capable of recognizing the victory of Christ through death.



Lifted from Calvary to the heavens, Jesus would be the magnet, drawing, inviting, all who suffer the effects of sin to approach the glorious Cross, to touch it, to freely embrace it as our only hope for happiness.

“It is the Cross and only the Cross that provides a constant point of reference in the chaos of our world. In it there is all the poverty, helplessness and pain, taken up into the stillness of the suffering Jesus, and made into the instrument of his eternal plan.”

In the Cross, Jesus Christ gives us an example of a life lived totally for others – the foolish love of a God who gives himself away to the point of humiliation in order to save us. One spiritual writer insists: Go where you want, do what you will, arrange your life and all within it to suit your desire: wherever you go or turn, a cross will always be present, awaiting your own offering, your own free and willing addition to it.

Carry the Cross willingly throughout your life and in every circumstance and the grace of the Cross will truly carry you to where Christ, in triumph awaits to welcome you.

[...] Your very lives must preach the victory of the Cross.



**Edwin Cardinal O'Brien**



## TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

The Sign of the Cross is a confession of faith: I believe in Him who suffered for me and rose again; in Him who has transformed the sign of shame into a sign of hope and of the love of God that is present with us. The confession of faith is a confession of hope: I believe in Him who in His weakness is the Almighty; in Him who can and will save me even in apparent absence and impotence. By signing ourselves with the Cross, we place ourselves under the protection of the Cross, hold it in front of us like a shield that will guard us in all the distress of daily life and give us the courage to go on. We accept it as a signpost that we follow: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mk 8:34). The Cross shows us the road of life – the imitation of Christ.

**Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger/ Pope Benedict XVI, 2000**

## ***A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH***

*Personal prayer is a commitment that accompanies our daily life, each of us praying in the most appropriate way according to our different needs and situations.*

*This month, as we celebrate the Triumph of the Cross, let us begin each morning by meditating as we make the sign of cross. Take a few seconds longer than usual to enter the mystery of the cross, aware that with this prayer we are joining with the 30,000 brothers and sisters in the world who, like us, lovingly carry the cross in their hearts and on their cloaks.*

## Mary

As the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, we clearly have a very special link to Jesus and the Holy Land. This also implies a very close relationship with His Mother, the Virgin Mary. She who carried the Son of God in her womb for nine months and who once again welcomed Him into her arms when He was brought down from the cross. She is the woman to whom Jesus entrusted John, and with him the whole Church, from the cross. Mary, whom we especially venerate as the Queen of Palestine, patroness of our Order, is a safe haven in our history and we turn to her as children in need of support, direction, and blessing. Let us meditate together with Cardinal Edwin O'Brien on the gift received in the Mother of God and our Mother.



*A touching image of Mary created with the mosaic technique by some Iraqi refugees involved in a training project run by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.*

“ Mary, the Mother of Jesus was there in the midst of the disciples, awaiting the birth of the Church, Christ’s body at Pentecost. Just as in the beginning of his Gospel we see Mary awaiting the physical birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Mary, the Mother of Christ’s physical body, now at Pentecost the Mother of his Mystical Body, and each of us a member of that Body.

Recall, in his Passion and Death, the Lord handed over two gifts: the Eucharist, his sacramental Body at the Lord’s Supper and his final gift, when from the Cross he handed over his Mother to the Church, represented by St. John – Woman, behold your Son; Son, behold your Mother. She becomes the mother of the Church as she prays in the midst of the disciples at Pentecost.

And we are told that at the foot of the Cross, the Beloved Disciple took Mary, into his own home, literally into his own existence. So each of us is invited to admit Mary into the depths of our existence receiving her as Christ’s personal gift to us.

It cannot be that she is either in heaven or on earth: she is earth lifted up to heaven and heaven ever present to earth. It was from the Cross that Jesus entrusted every human being to Mary. He encouraged her to show to each one of us the heart of a Mother. And so she does!

**Edwin Cardinal O’Brien**

#### TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

O Mary, Mother of hope, strong with your help,  
we do not fear obstacles and difficulties;  
fatigue and sufferings do not discourage us, because you  
accompany us on the path of life,  
and from heaven, you watch over all your children, filling them  
with grace.

To you we entrust the destiny of all your people and the  
mission of the Church.

**Pope Saint John Paul II**

## **A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH**

*Blessed Bartolo Longo, the only blessed layman of the Order to date, had a special devotion to Mary. Let us accompany this Knight especially in this month of the Rosary, during which the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Palestine falls, taking the time to consecrate a few minutes each day to prayer through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.*

*As our Grand Master recalled during the Jubilee pilgrimage of Italian Lieutenancies in Pompeii on October 15, 2016,*

*Bartolo Longo was challenged by a priest: "If you look for salvation, then spread the rosary. This is Mary's promise"*

*Let us ask our Patroness, the Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Palestine to intercede for peace and justice in the Holy Land.*

*(Jubilee pilgrimage to Pompeii – October 15, 2016)*

## Going to the heart of our symbols

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre has its roots in the past and, through the living bond with its history, each day the Knights and Dames experience the beauty of the continuity and fidelity of a calling that continues to be transmitted generation after generation. Together with a mission we also receive symbols, decorations, cloaks that evoke, first of all to ourselves, our calling.



*A Lieutenant  
puts the cloak  
around the  
shoulders of a  
new Knight.*

These outward signs also allow us to be a visible witness on some occasions but our testimony is empty if it is not supported by something far more profound: our spiritual life nourished by the awareness of God's love, our commitment and our fidelity to the Church.

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

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

We should take pride in the symbols of our Order – Capes with crosses, sword and spurs banners with the cross of victory – these are rich in historical memory and content. But they lose their meaning and value if our enchantment ends there: until and unless they remind us and commit us to the awesome spiritual roots that deepen our love and devotion to the Risen Christ and his Holy Land.

**Edwin Cardinal O'Brien**

#### TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION

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

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



### **A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH**

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

*Receive these Spurs*

*that are the symbol of your Order for the honour and glory of the Holy Sepulchre.*

*Receive this Sword*

*that must remind you to defend Christ's Holy Church and to strive to guard and protect the Divine Redeemer's earthly land, and always remember that the Kingdom of God is not conquered with the sword, but with faith and charity.*

*Receive the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

*that it may protect you, and hence repeat incessantly: We adore you, o Christ, and we bless You, because with Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.*

*In virtue of my mandate, I appoint and proclaim you a Lady of the Holy Sepulchre and commit to your care this Cross, which is the sign of the protection of the Lord in this life and the pledge of future glory in eternity.*

## Hope

An experience that accompanies our Christian life in particular is that of hope. Hope in the merciful action of God and in the arrival of the Sunday of the Resurrection after having traversed the Good Fridays of our life. Just as hope is a key word of our existence and we are called to nurture and protect it, so we increasingly want to become supporters of hope in the lives of others.

May we announce hope to young people, students, families, communities, and the elders of the Holy Land. May we become concrete vehicles of God's listening to the cry that rises from the small and the weak. The Father listens to and knows their sufferings (Ex 3: 7) and is often present through those who make themselves available to carry His Word.





In this month of December, we prepare our hearts to welcome with joy the One who is the Prince of Hope and who has chosen to come among us in smallness and humility. Hope does not impose itself but knocks on the door of our life and invites us to look at the world with new eyes.

“ Do we, can we, Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem catch this uniquely Christian spirit of hope? Is our Faith alive in us enough to fill our hearts with thanksgiving for this Glorious Mystery of Christ’s Resurrection? As members of this Order we have a special claim on this Mystery! In spite of the darkness, the wickedness and the hatred that threaten to capture lives and hearts in the Holy Land, in the midst of it all there is an Empty Tomb – empty because Christ has emerged from it eternally and fully alive. Whatever the darkness there – or in our hearts – he announces the message of hope: “Do not fear! I have overcome the world!”

To accept the Cape of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is solemnly to commit ourselves to announcing that message of hope by the way of life we lead as Catholic women and men and by the steps we take to bring hope to the Holy Land



**Edwin Cardinal O’Brien**

### **TO DEEPEN OUR REFLECTION**

Indeed, first the Word of God leads us to turn our gaze to Jesus, to know him better, and to conform ourselves to him, to resemble him more and more. Second, the Word reveals that the Lord is truly “the God of steadfastness and encouragement” (Rom 15:5), who remains ever faithful to his love for us, i.e., who is steadfast in his love for us. He never tires of loving us! He is steadfast: he loves us always! And he takes care of us, covering our wounds with the caress of his goodness and mercy, that is, He encourages us. He also never

tires of encouraging us.

From this perspective, we also understand the Apostle's initial statement: "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom 15:1). The phrase "we who are strong" might seem presumptuous, but according to the logic of the Gospel we know that it is not. Indeed, it is just the opposite, because our strength does not come from ourselves but from the Lord. Whoever experiences in his own life the faithful love of God, and his encouragement, is able – indeed, he is obliged – to remain close to his weakest brethren and bear with their frailty. If we remain close to the Lord, we will have the strength to be close to the weakest, the neediest, and to encourage and strengthen them. This is what it means. We can do so without complacency, but simply by feeling we are like a "channel" that transmits the Lord's gifts. In this way, we concretely become "sowers" of hope. This is what the Lord asks of us: through this strength and capacity to encourage, to be sowers of hope. Sowing hope is needed today, but it is not easy.

**Pope Francis, general audience of March 22, 2017  
on Christian hope (Rom 15:1-6)**

### ***A COMMITMENT FOR THIS MONTH***

*Questions for personal and community reflection:*

- *Do I live the theological virtue of hope in my life and make it a central element in the experience of my Delegation / Section / Lieutenancy?*
- *How can I / we be a vehicle of hope for others in our family, work, community and in the Holy Land?*

## NOTES

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