



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN  
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF  
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

**“Everything happens according to God’s will and His timing”**

The long-awaited pilgrimage of Stephen and Renetta Torres



**Deir Rafat** is a special place for the Knights and Dames of the Order: there in 1927 the then Patriarch Luigi Barlassina wanted to have a shrine erected in honor of Mary Queen of Palestine who is the patron saint of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. For almost a century, therefore, this place has attracted faithful Christians from Israel, Palestine and beyond, especially on the **feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Palestine** which falls on October 25 but is normally celebrated by the local community the first Sunday after this date.

Yet **Stephen and Renetta Torres d’Albuquerque** did not know this when they arrived at Deir Rafat on October 29, 2017, together with more than 2000 other faithful. “What a joyous coincidence! We were there but did not know there would be the feast of Our Lady of Palestine. God wanted us to be there at that moment: it was what He willed for us”. This is how Stephen Torres describes the experience he had with his wife during their pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a pilgrimage that served as a balm for the couple after a particularly harrowing period for them.

Originally from the state of New Mexico (USA), Stephen and Renetta, Knight and Dame of the Order had desired to go as pilgrims to the Holy Land since 2005 but the illness and the subsequent death of their son meant they had to postpone this dream. In Renetta’s own words: **“We had been trying to come to the Holy Land for 12 years but our situation was never tranquil enough. I think everything happens according to God’s will and His timing.** Here at Deir Rafat, I feel the hand of the Lord so close. We are here to participate in this Eucharistic celebration in our capes as Knight and Dame of the Holy Sepulchre and we could never have believed that this would happen. All of this is a gift from God. I think it is our deep faith in Him that guides our steps. We lost a son six years ago and this trip is really special for us. He wanted to come with us but the complications first and then his death made it impossible. It was the Blessed Mother of God who helped us through these trials of life. She is so important to us and, of course, to the people of this country as well.”

**From an interview by Vivien Laguette**

*(Spring 2018)*