Palazzo della Rovere: official communiqué from the Order

Palazzo della Rovere

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, signed on March 10, 2023 the agreements with a Benefit Company of the Fort Partners Group for the entrustment of a portion of Palazzo della Rovere, in via della Conciliazione 33 in Rome, for lease for hotel use under the management of the Four Seasons group.

After this portion was released by the previous tenant, the Order in 2020 had launched in the press an investigation into expressions of interest of Italian or international economic operators, to select the one to whom to entrust the renovation and management of the hotel.

An International Commission of the Order has identified, among the many offers received, with a strict transparency procedure the most convenient offer for the Order in the one presented by Fort Partners.

Since this is an act of extraordinary administration, the Order has requested and obtained from the competent Authorities of the Holy See, the authorization to start negotiations with the aforementioned group.

The subsequent negotiation ended with an agreement under which the chosen company will fully bear the costs of the renovation of the Palace, allowing the Order to donate in full to the Holy Land the voluntary contributions received from its members.

(Vatican City, 14 March 2023)

With regard to reports in some media and in response to requests from commercial operators regarding the selection procedure for the management of a portion of the Palazzo della Rovere, owned by the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, we would like to clarify the following:

The "*Norms on Transparency, Control and Competition in the Procedures for awarding Public Contracts of the Holy See and of the Vatican City State*", adopted on 19 May 2020 by means of an Apostolic Letter in the form of a *Motu Proprio*, do not apply to the aforesaid procedure, both because the Order is not included in the list referred to in Article 2, letter a) of the aforesaid Norms, and because the selection procedure began in 2019. Moreover, the Norms do not require a competitive procedure for active leases.

Nevertheless, the Order considered it to be in its institutional interest to ensure the maximum participation of possible bidders. On 10 November 2020, therefore, the Order published a notice in the newspaper "*L'Osservatore Romano*" and entrusted the evaluation of the bids to an international commission of experts.

Contrary to press reports, the selection procedure for the hotel management of the Palazzo della Rovere has not yet concluded, although the Order has received some offers of interest and identified them in order of preference.

Upon the conclusion of negotiations currently underway and under the vigilance of the Bodies of the Holy See appointed for this purpose, the Order will communicate its decision. This decision will be reached exclusively on the basis of the offer which best meets the underlying interests of the Order's institutional aims, eschewing all undue external interference which will be countered with recourse to all legitimate action in the appropriate fora.

Any news that is not based on an official communiqué issued by this Order is to be considered unfounded.

(Vatican City, 14 June 2022)

By Constitution, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is a Central Body of the Catholic Church, with approximately 30,000 members – Knights and Dames – worldwide. Its mission is to support, through donations, the pastoral, educational and social works of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (that includes the territories of Jordan, Palestine, Israel and Cyprus).

The charitable dimension of the Order's life goes hand in hand with an intense spiritual commitment on the part of its members as well as their participation in pilgrimages to the Holy Land, which strengthen the bonds shared between the universal Church, the local Churches and the Mother Church of Jerusalem.

All the Order's leaders and members are volunteers. The Order has only one property at its disposal, donated by the Holy See: the *Palazzo di Domenico della Rovere in Borgo*, located in Rome, in *Via della Conciliazione*. As a faithful and prudent administrator, the Order has the duty to preserve all that has been entrusted to it and to manage it with complete transparency. The historic building dates back more than five centuries and was built before the present St. Peter’s Basilica.

Until recently, part of the building was rented to a hotel company in order to cover, through remittances, the running costs of the Order, so that all donations received can be directed to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. That was the purpose from the beginning.

Since fall 2020, according to the rules of transparency indicated by the Holy See, the Order has been looking for a new company that can manage the hotel and take charge of the necessary restoration work, with the approval of the Superintendence and the Municipality of Rome.

An international Commission was established by the Grand Master of the Order. This Commission indicated its preferences and chose – in accordance with the norms provided by Pope Francis for the Holy See – the expressions of interest, following market research, that best correspond to the needs and objectives of the Order. Each step has been reported to and approved by the Secretariat for the Economy. The Order is aware of its responsibility to preserve and manage the property with care and transparency, in light of its mission of evangelization and protection of the Holy Land.

This ethical line of conduct is clear in the preliminary discussions underway with the candidate hotel companies.

(May 2022)