



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Preparing a "pilgrimage to the people" of the Holy Land

The Grand Magisterium Spring meeting (April 9-10, 2019)



Opening the Grand Magisterium Spring Meeting on April 9, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien joyfully announced that - despite his 80th birthday celebrated the day before - he would continue in his mission as Grand Master of the Order. Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin confirmed this personally to him. The Grand Master will also preside over a dozen Investiture ceremonies in the coming months.

Subsequently, the Governor General Visconti di Modrone provided important information to the participants, including the appointment of a fourth Vice Governor General in the person of Enric Mas, current Lieutenant for Western Spain, who will be responsible for coordinating the Order in Latin and Central America. The Governor also illustrated the role of the new support commissions he created: the economic and financial commission, directed by Saverio Petrillo; the commission for the revision of the protocol standards, managed by Alfredo Bastianelli; the spiritual commission, led by Mons. Fortunato Frezza and the legal commission entrusted to Flavio Rondinini. During the meeting of the Grand Magisterium, the heads of these four commissions were able to describe their role and mandate in detail.

Turning to relations with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone welcomed the excellent collaboration with the Apostolic Administrator, Mons. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who is also Pro-Grand Prior of the Order. The latter - present at the two-day meeting – presented an overview of the activities undertaken during the three years since his appointment as head of the Patriarchate. Eager to consolidate the existence of the Catholic Church in the Holy City, he particularly underlined the creation of a new parish in Jerusalem. In a broader sense, he believes that the "small projects" on a human scale - supported by the Order - have a greater impact on the life of the parishes, in a difficult context that does not favor families (in five years the number of sacraments celebrated have been reduced by a third party, especially weddings and baptisms).

Finally, Archbishop Pizzaballa was keen to warmly thank the Grand Magisterium, recalling that - not counting the forty schools run by the Patriarchate - almost 90% of the Patriarchate's budget comes from aid provided by the Order.

The meeting continued with its focus on financial matters, delineated in a report by Saverio Petrillo: donations decreased in 2018, with 13 million euros from the Lieutenancies, compared to 14 million the previous year, the year in which the Order had benefited from substantial bequests. Sami El-Yousef - the Patriarchate's chief executive officer – reported on financial management of the Latin Catholic Church in the Holy Land, pointing out that now transparency is total, thanks to a special council established by Msgr. Pizzaballa, as well as to very rigorous internal audits. The centralized management of schools - which alone represent 70% of the budget - contributes largely to greater clarity in accounts. Notwithstanding, a deficit was registered in Palestine and Jordan, while the considerable state aid revealed a surplus in Israel.

During the evening of the first day, the members of the Grand Magisterium gathered around Cardinal O'Brien, to celebrate his recent birthday with him and wishing him many more fruitful years leading the Order.

The following day, space was given to examining the ongoing projects, with the report from the President of the Holy Land Commission, Bart McGettrick, who insisted on three priorities: education, humanitarian aid and pastoral actions. The new strategy of the Grand Magisterium - in agreement with Archbishop Pizzaballa - consists in privileging small projects, with greater attention to the situations of poverty and fragility that afflict the most vulnerable people. In this sense, the Order intends to save some Christian schools in difficulty that risk closure said Bart McGettrick. In the same spirit, he suggested that Knights and Dames progressively move towards a "pilgrimage towards people", mentioning in particular the very poor Catholic families of Jerusalem.

Vice Governor of Honour and consultant to the Grand Magisterium, Adolfo Rinaldi, then took stock of the three major projects underway (the expansion of the parish of Jaffa of Nazareth, in Israel, as well as the Hashimi kindergarten and the new church in Jubeiha, Jordan), Sami El-Yousef - CEO of the Patriarchate - returned in detail to the list of small projects that the Lieutenants can consult in detail on the restricted access area of their website. He reported receiving several requests for help weekly, insisting on the worrying situation in Gaza. In the future, he hopes for greater solidarity of the various Christian Churches and in an ecumenical partnership, especially with regard to educational activity.

The meeting continued with the intervention of Lieutenant General Agostino Borromeo on the prospects for expansion of the Order in Slovakia and Chile. Vice Governor Paul Bartley – responsible for Asia and Oceania - highlighted that the Order is developing particularly in the Philippines, then Chancellor Bastianelli provided very encouraging statistical elements (30,000 members, of which a third were women), specifying that in local churches Knights and Dames are aware of being symbolically "ambassadors" of the Holy Land.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Grand Master noted a growing "family spirit", undoubtedly supported by the internal and external communication efforts that the November five-yearly Consulta consolidated. He also encouraged the organization of events at the Palazzo della Rovere, headquarters of the Grand Magisterium, following the historic success of the Italian Environment Fund (FAI) days, which allowed 5000 visitors to discover the Order and its mission.

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(May 2, 2019)