



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

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

## Looking down the road to recovery: resuming pilgrimages to the Holy Land



Pilgrims are essential to maintain living links with the Mother Church that is in Jerusalem, as Henrique Abreu, a Portuguese Knight committed to the recovery of the spiritual experiences that pilgrimages to the Holy Land offer, testifies in this article.

**A testimony of faith by Henrique Abreu, Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, former director of the Project Development Office of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and current director of GEMM Travel, a travel agency specializing in pilgrimages based in Jerusalem.**

The Holy Land is the place where we can experience the Fifth Gospel, as Pope Benedict XVI once said. Our salvation history is there, in the land of Jesus, Mary, and the Apostles.

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land is indeed a life-transforming experience, where we discover hidden treasures, such as the life of Jesus and the Christian communities, the living stones.

Historically, people would always travel on pilgrimages in times of difficulties, given that “faith travel” was one of the first forms of tourism, where the journey was as important and the destination itself.

The pilgrimages are of great importance in a time of great division in the world, as we face today. The journey to the Holy Land becomes a unique time, where we can reach out to the communities, sharing common faith and values. The need for a human and spiritual connection is greater than ever.

The four pillars of the pilgrimage are: union in prayer with all the Christian brothers and sisters; renew, as a pilgrim, our faith in the land of Jesus; support the local Christian communities through pilgrimages and projects of the Church; and finally, give testimony of Risen Christ after living the Gospel on His land.

We know Jesus lives in the suffering places.

The streets of the Old Cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, empty of pilgrims for almost a year, show deep signs of the fragility experienced by those communities, which highly depend on pilgrims and visitors. Families and individuals need their dignity and faith restored. Healthy spirituality and employment contribute enormously to restoring dignity. A dire situation, indeed.

As the Holy Land and the holy places prepare for a full recovery, let us prepare our hearts in charity and compassion, and return to Bethlehem and rejoice where the Christmas miracle is every day.

Let us join our souls to Jesus at Golgotha again and again, seeing Him in our suffering brothers and sisters of the Middle East. Let us meet again in the Sea of Galilee and reach out to Jesus, who taught us to trust Him during all life's storms and turbulence we encounter.

There is no virtual replacement for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The return of pilgrims would be a light of hope to sustain the Christian communities and the Church's mission. One of the spiritual gifts we will have, is the profound sense of gratitude for experiencing these holy places again.

When travels resume to the Holy Land, we will need to regain those experiences that we once lived. We can re-write our history, reaching our hand to our communities and being part of the Mission Jesus entrusted to all Christians: to live for one another as brothers in Christ.

Pilgrim Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre can embrace the core of our mission towards the Mother Church and the Holy Land's Christians, enriching our spirituality and emerging more robust in the faith.

*(Spring 2021)*