

# JERUSALEM CROSS

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“DEAR POPE FRANCIS,  
WE NOW ASK YOU TO  
PRAY FOR US.”

*(from Cardinal Re's homily at the Funeral Mass, April 26, 2025)*

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## The Grand Master's Message

### "BEYOND THE DOOR THERE IS THE PARTY"

**W**ith these words, this is how Pope Francis spoke of death in 2022. And this is what we like to imagine: a party among friends of the same faith, at which Jesus introduces the one who has just arrived, to meet all those who came before him, all the way back to Peter.

We feel the absence of a beloved Shepherd who devoted himself to the Church, to humanity, and to creation, even as we rejoice in his entrance into eternal life. We pray that the Lord may grant us the grace to take up his legacy. At this moment, we also feel the duty to join all those who turn to the Risen Lord, praying especially for the Church, that the Holy Spirit promised at the dawn of the first community of believers may guide those who

are called to choose the Successor of Peter, to whom is entrusted the mission of guiding the Church in her next steps.

Pope Francis' humanity, his closeness to the poor and the marginalized, and particularly – for us Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre – his constant attention, even in the final moments of his earthly life, to the peoples of the Holy Land, remain Pope Francis' precious legacy.

His last *Urbi et Orbi* message on Easter morning now appears to us as his final prophetic cry to the Church and to the whole world for peace and harmony among peoples.

We give thanks for the life and the gift of this Shepherd of the Church.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**



## The Order in union with the Universal Church

“I BLESS ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE ORDER,  
AND DO NOT FORGET TO PRAY FOR ME”

*Pope Francis' message to the Order*

During his Pontificate, Pope Francis granted the Order of the Holy Sepulchre a special audience on three occasions. These occasions coincided with the Order's Consulta, which is the general assembly we hold every five years.

During the Eastertide, as we rejoice in the experience of the Resurrection, yet at this moment when the Church is mourning for the late holy Father, his words from our most recent audience with him – which occurred

November 9, 2023 – still ring clearly in our ears. “The empty Sepulchre, whose special custodian you have by vocation committed yourselves to be for centuries, is in this sense above all a sign of the boundless love of the Crucified One, who keeps nothing for himself and who therefore cannot be held back by the snares of death.”

As an Order connected to a Sepulchre, which is profoundly precious precisely because it is empty, we cannot but be grateful to Pope Francis for having consistently reminded us of this call to life



*Pope Francis' first audience with the representatives of the Order who had gathered in Rome took place during the Year of Faith, September 13, 2013. This date represents the anniversary of the dedication of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, which was solemnly celebrated in 335.*

that lies at the heart of our mission.

On September 13, 2013, just a few months after his election, Pope Francis welcomed the members of the Consulta and also the participants in the Order's International Pilgrimage during the Year of Faith. There were over 3,500 Knights and Dames gathered in the Paul VI Audience Hall, to whom he wished “to express my appreciation and my encouragement for the initiatives of solidarity that the Order fosters in the Holy Places and that in recent years have been further developed and





broadened." He urged them to ensure that "Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen truly be the centre of your life and of each of your personal and group 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!"

On November 16, 2018, the Members of the Consulta were warmly received with the words, "Here in the Vatican, you are, in a certain way, at home" in recognition of the Order as an ancient Pontifical Institution under the protection of the Holy See. Speaking of our work in the Holy Land, the Pope did not hesitate to emphasize a theme very close to his heart, namely interreligious openness and dialogue in daily life. "It is a

good sign that your initiatives in the field of training and health care are open to all, regardless of the communities they belong to and the religion they profess. In this way you help pave the way to make Christian values known, to the promotion of interreligious dialogue, mutual respect and mutual understanding." Regarding the motivations that drive us in our mission, the Holy Father was keen to underline, "Do not forget that you are not a philanthropic entity committed to promoting the material and social improvement of recipients. You are called to place the evangelical love of neighbour as the central and final aim of your works, to bear witness everywhere to the goodness and care with which God loves everyone."

## The Pope's Heart for the Holy Land

Pope Francis's closeness to the Land of Jesus was undeniable, and which was made especially evident during his historic pilgrimage there in May 2014. During his visit, the pilgrim Pope experienced the reality of a land so dear, and yet so complex firsthand. On May 25, 2014, from the Manger Square in Bethlehem, the Holy Father's words rang out clearly and directly, "In this, the birthplace of the Prince of Peace, I wish to invite you, President Mahmoud Abbas, together with President Shimon Peres, to join me in heartfelt prayer to God for the gift of peace. I offer my home in the Vatican as a place for this encounter of prayer." This encounter indeed took place June 8, 2014. "All of us want peace," the Argentine Pope continued, "and many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers. All of us – and especially those placed at the service of their respective peoples – have the duty to become instruments and artisans of peace, especially by our prayers."

"Building peace is difficult, but living without peace is a constant torment," Pope Francis prophetically concluded that day. Over the years, this torment has sadly become increasingly evident. The Pope's constant concern for the situation in the Holy Land made his closeness to the suffering peoples deeply felt throughout every moment of those last 18 months. Father Gabriel Romanelli, of the Latin parish in Gaza, has borne witness to this. For example, whenever he could, Pope Francis used to call him in the evening to receive news and even just to have a chat, while outside the church compound, devastation and death reigned.

Right up to the last heartfelt message prepared for the *Urbi et Orbi* of his final Easter, just hours before his death, Pope Francis remained deeply engaged. "The growing climate of anti-Semitism throughout the world is worrisome. Yet at the same time, I think of the people of Gaza, and its Christian community in particular, where the terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation. I appeal to the warring parties: call a ceasefire, release the hostages and come to the aid of a starving people that aspires to a future of peace!"



Missionaries and heralds of God's love through our special attention to the Holy Land: this is how Pope Francis has invited us to live out our calling.

With this in mind, in 2023 he gave us a beautiful image, which we treasure dearly, as he reflected on the importance of formation linked to the Jerusalem Cross, our emblem. "Initial and ongoing, practical and spiritual formation: they are four guidelines that we can see represented in the sign of the Cross, which stands out clearly on your mantles and inspires your spirituality. With its horizontal arm, it reminds you of your commitment to ensure that your dedication to the crucified and risen Christ embraces your entire life, and in charity makes you close to every brother and sister; while its vertical arm, firmly planted on the ground and pointing to heaven, reminds you of the inalienable complementarity, in your journey, between a life of prayer and service to your brothers and sisters, attentive, qualified, and well rooted in the realities in which you operate, aimed at the total good of the person," he said.

In that final audience, Pope Francis could not help but share what has always been a

constant concern in his heart and in his message, particularly during the past year and a half of war, which is prayer for peace in the Holy Land. "I would like to join you," urged the Successor of Peter, "in thinking of the Holy Land. We are sadly witnessing a tragedy unfolding in the very places where the Lord lived, where he taught us through his humanity to love, to forgive and to do good to all. And instead, we see them torn apart by terrible suffering that affects above all so many innocents, so many innocent dead."

Finally, our memory turns to that last moment and his final words in which he entrusted us once again to the protection of our Patroness and, as always, at the conclusion of his audiences, he asked for an act of mercy for himself, so that he could continue to carry out the heavy Petrine ministry: "Dear brothers and sisters, may the Virgin Mary, invoked by you with the title of *Queen of Palestine*, assist you always in your mission. I bless you all from my heart, I bless all the members of the Order and their families. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you."

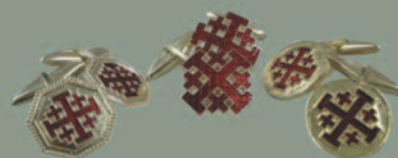
Pope Francis, Thank you.



**GUGGIONE**

SINCE 1975

DECORATIONS OF KNIGHTLY ORDERS



Order of the Holy Sepulchre

Papal Equestrian Orders

Order of Malta

Italian Dynastic Orders and Orders of the Italian Republic

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## Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

# THE ORDER IS STRENGTHENING ITS ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THE TRAGIC SITUATION OF THE CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

The spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium was held on April 29, 2025, and chaired by the Assessor of the Order, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, Archbishop-Prelate of Pompeii, in a spirit of gratitude for the pontificate of Pope Francis – who cared so much for the Holy Land – and in the absence of Cardinals Filoni and Pizzaballa, Grand Master and Grand Prior of the Order, who are participating in the General Congregations prior to the start of the Conclave.

In his introduction, Msgr. Caputo emphasised the ecclesiological dimension of the Order, highlighting the importance of this aspect in the formation of its Members. The Governor General, Ambassador

Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, guided the proceedings which focused on the Order's activities over the past six months. In his very comprehensive speech, he reiterated the importance of the Order's ongoing support to the Catholics in the Holy Land. He stressed the urgent need to maintain the high level of this regular institutional aid (almost one million euros each month, not counting the additional specific projects), while the war in Gaza has already caused more than 50,000 deaths and unemployment affects a large proportion of the population in the West Bank.

A special message from the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem was then read out, in which he expressed his deep gratitude for



*In the absence of the Grand Master Cardinal Filoni and Grand Prior of the Order Cardinal Pizzaballa, who were at that time engaged with the general congregations ahead of the Conclave, the meeting of the Grand Magisterium of the Order was held under the presidency of the Assessor of the Order, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo.*





the "extraordinary" generosity of the Order at this very difficult time for people in the Holy Land, and hoped for a gradual return of pilgrimages by Knights and Dames to the Holy Places.

The Treasurer, Saverio Petrillo, pointed out that we reached more than 18 million euros of ordinary contributions in 2024, 2.3 million more than in the previous year, demonstrating an extraordinary mobilisation of the Members given the tragic situation in the Holy Land.

During his moving address, the CEO of the Latin Patriarchate, Sami El-Yousef, bore painful witness to this tragedy which has been going on for a year and a half, speaking of the "broken trust" between Israelis and Palestinians, and referring to the beginning of instability in Jordan too, where 2.4 million Palestinian refugees live, as a result of the decision to put an end to financial aid from the United States to them through UNRWA. In a spirit of hope, noting that the Patriarchate is the leading employer of Christians in the Holy Land, he stressed the importance of the North American campaign in support to the Patriarchate's 44 schools, in particular to help families pay school fees.

During a long debate, it became clear that

the Grand Master's plan to create an association of friends of the Order would enable us to broaden the scope of this aid, through additional contributions to those of the 30,000 Knights and Dames.

The meeting continued with a report by the President of the Holy Land Commission, Bart McGettrick (see pages XI-XII of this Newsletter), who alerted the Grand Magisterium about the risk of 'scholasticide' caused by a possible future non-recognition of Palestinian university degrees in Israel.

In keeping with the agenda, each of the four Vice-Governors spoke during the day, demonstrating the efforts being made on every continent to develop the Order, particularly in Latin America and in the vast Asia-Pacific region where the Governor General will be travelling at the end of May. Finally, the Chancellor spoke about the Order's Jubilee pilgrimage planned for next October and the communications activities for which he is responsible, before a prayer to Our Lady of Palestine and then the concluding Mass, presided over by Msgr. Caputo, with a particular intention for the Cardinals responsible for electing a new Pope.

François Vayne

## MEDIATORS OF UNITY IN A WOUNDED WORLD

**C**ardinal Fernando Filoni presided over the Mass for members of the *Fédération des Médias Catholiques* (Catholic Media Association) who had come to Rome to take part in the Jubilee of the World of Communications. The Eucharistic celebration took place on the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, the patron saint of journalists, in the chapel of the Jesuit General Curia on January 24, 2025. Here following is an excerpt from the Grand Master of the Order of

the Holy Sepulchre's homily delivered at the Mass. In the photograph we see Cardinal Filoni greeting Roseline Hamel, the sister of Father Jacques Hamel, martyred in France July 26, 2016. Father Jacques Hamel's name has been given to the International Prize awarded annually by the *Fédération des Médias Catholiques* to media and communications professionals who have highlighted the culture of peace and interreligious dialogue with an article,





mediators of a new Covenant in Christ, especially in these times marked by so many wars, when dialogue, conversation, and even listening often seem impossible. You have to invent a new language to speak of peace; and that is a real challenge!

[...] In these days, let us ask the Lord to grant us the strength to continue being mediators of unity in this wounded world. Let us not be afraid, let us invoke the Spirit of Christ, and ask Him to help us fight with the pen or the microphone, like Knights and Dames of truth, clothed in the mantle of charity! The Good News you are called to proclaim is that there is always a morning – the morning of the Resurrection – and we wish to be witnesses of that morning every day, in the lives of others, until the end of time."

### report, feature, program or documentary.

"Jesus also calls each of us by name, to send us out to proclaim the Good News. The apostles' mission is embodied in the work of serving the truth, information, sharing, and knowledge.

Never underestimate this aspect! The sacred author speaks to us of Christ as the mediator of a New Covenant. It is in Him that you have come to renew yourselves here in Rome, passing through the Holy Door, so that your service to the truth may be strengthened by His grace; so that your work may be ever increasingly imbued with His Spirit. This in the care with which you choose your words, in the respect shown towards those you mention, in the passionate desire to help others better understand the context of events and to bring together those whom ignorance and prejudice have driven apart. You are therefore called to be, in a certain sense,



*On January 24, the Grand Master of the Order was invited to preside over the Jubilee Mass of the Catholic Media Federation. The Mass was attended by Roseline Hamel, sister to the martyred French priest, Jacques Hamel.*





## THE MEETING OF NORTH AMERICAN LIEUTENANTS

**O**n February 28, the Governor General of the Order, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, met the North American Lieutenants in Miami. At the encounter, he expressed his profound belief in the value of such meetings, which are a source of inspiration for new ideas, and encouraged everyone present to strengthen dialogue and visit exchanges. He also welcomed the generous contributions of all North American Members, but emphasized, "the charity of a Member of the Order is characterized by a continuous commitment to the Holy Land, which must be like a father's love for his children - constant and daily." When

speaking about the universality of the Order, the Governor General mentioned efforts to expand its presence in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. He also touched on the ongoing renovations of Palazzo della Rovere, which, through the rental of the building, will cover the costs of the Grand Magisterium, thus enabling the Order to send all the contributions received to the Holy Land. Finally, in light of the current situation in Gaza and the broader region, Ambassador Visconti di Modrone emphasized that the apolitical nature of the Order and its commitment to education make it a suitable interlocutor in this phase, where reconciliation is being pursued.



*The North American Lieutenants gathered in Miami around the Governor General of the Order.*

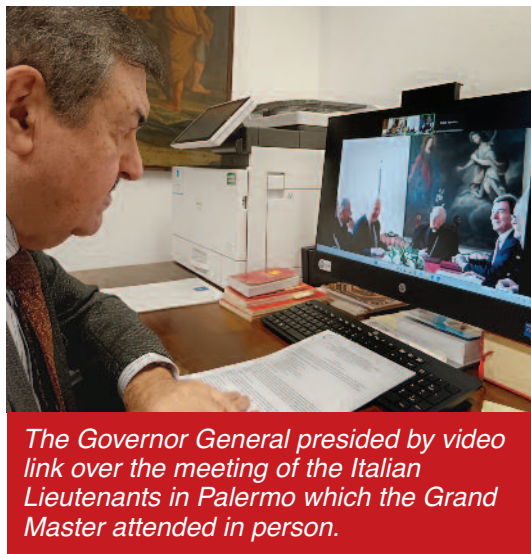


## THE MEETING OF THE ITALIAN-SPEAKING LIEUTENANTS

In a video conference connection with Palermo, the Governor General presided over the periodic meeting of the Italian-speaking Lieutenants. On this occasion, the participants were honored by the presence of the Cardinal Grand Master. In his speech, the Governor General addressed issues pertaining to the situation in the Holy Land, dialogue between Lieutenancies, administrative aspects, the expansion of the Order, programs, and an update on the restoration work at Palazzo della Rovere. The ensuing debate focused primarily on issues of formation and spiritual commitment in

light of the clear guidance represented by the fundamental documents now available to the Order as well as on how dialogue between the central office and local presences of the Order and cross-dialogue between Lieutenancies could be intensified.

The Cardinal Grand Master who was in Palermo to celebrate the Vigil and Investiture ceremonies of the Sicilian Lieutenancy, delivered at the end of the meeting a wide-ranging intervention in which he emphasized the characteristics of the service that a Knight or a Dame must provide and the continuity of their charitable commitment.



*The Governor General presided by video link over the meeting of the Italian Lieutenants in Palermo which the Grand Master attended in person.*

## AN UPCOMING PILGRIMAGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ORGANIZED BY THE ORDER IN ROME

Many Lieutenancies offer activities for youths who, due to their age, are not yet eligible to join the Order. It is for both these young people, and for the sons and daughters of Knights and Dames who are drawn to the mission and spirit of the Order, that a pilgrimage to Rome is being organized for this Holy Year. The pilgrimage is to take place from November 27 to 30, 2025. Around fifteen young people, aged between 18 and 22, from various Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations, are expected in Rome for a spiritual experience during which the Grand Master will be personally involved in both liturgical celebrations and moments of teaching. The pilgrimage will be conducted exclusively in English.



**Jubilee of Order's Youth in Rome**

*Join us for four days in Rome  
with other young people  
from various countries  
for a unique experience.*





## The Order and the Holy Land

### FORMING COMMUNITIES OF HOPE

*The Holy Land Commission recently had a site visit to the Holy Land. This certainly offers a living perspective of the reality of life in the Holy Land at the present time. The visit focused on Jerusalem and the West Bank, and largely on the activities of the Order through the Latin Patriarchate.*

The tragic situation in the Holy Land is difficult to describe adequately. There is clearly hatred of Palestinians by the Israelis, and of the Israelis by the Palestinians. Each has no space in their hearts to recognise the trauma of the other. Yet there is a sense of hope among many of the Christian communities, and especially among the young and the next generation.

In the West Bank on the day after the ceasefire some 90 additional checkpoints were established. Nightly there are incursions into the West Bank, and there is constant military activity in the refugee camps in Jenin, Bethlehem and elsewhere. Mobility is unpredictable, and sometimes

hazardous and stifled. On March 18 hostilities resumed in Gaza, killing over 400 people in overnight raids on that one night.

The Christian population survives in ever-decreasing numbers and with ever-increasing political and military pressures, especially in the West Bank. It is difficult to see and to comprehend this tragic combination of extreme poverty and extreme violence. This could be a recipe for hopelessness: no employment; greater numbers of settlements and increased violence and aggression by settlers; place names eradicated and changed; land seized and people thrown off; houses bulldozed; emigration growing; etc. These conditions

are having a profound and lasting effect on the Christian population in the Holy Land.

People now live in ghetto-like communities where it



*The Holy Land Commission of the Grand Magisterium made a point of visiting some schools managed by the Latin Patriarchate. Education is considered a priority by families who want to offer a better future to their children.*







is difficult to move from one to another since this is part of a planned social control process. There are checkpoints and restrictions everywhere for the Palestinian people. The statistics of social collapse in the West Bank are staggering: 350 hotels and tourist venues have been closed; 80,000 Palestinian people having lost jobs in Israel. Jobs in Israel have been taken over by immigrants attracted from south and south-east Asia.

The situation in the Holy Land, it is thought, is at the lowest point possible. After October 7, 2023 the liquidation of UNRWA and of USAID, etc. are having a profound effect across the Holy Land. In the West Bank 85% of tourism in the area is run by Christians and this has collapsed. There are wealthy Christians now leaving the Holy Land.

Yet there is hope! That hope will come from the new generation of young people in Palestine and Israel. We should be grateful to the teachers in schools for the leadership

there in forming people of hope. There is laughter and smiles in the classrooms and playgrounds of Patriarchate schools. These young people are resilient although they feel the despair of the current political environment. So the general oppression and concerns of the population are set alongside

the genuine spirit of hope and joy that exists among the young. Education is the future.

The current uncertainties of world politics cannot be ignored. In particular the uncertainties with Israel and the USA; the concern about Iran's position in the Middle East; and the view of the Arab world towards Palestine; all play a part in creating an atmosphere of tension and instability.

The perennial question is "What can we do?" The answer is: "Pray!" .. and do not lose hope, because that resides with the young people of The Holy Land.

**Prof. Bartholomew McGettrick**  
President of the Holy Land Commission

**“ Hope lies in the new generation of young people in Palestine and Israel. We must be grateful to the teachers in the schools for their ability to form people of hope. In the classrooms and playgrounds of the Patriarchate schools there is laughter and smiles ”**



# THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH OF THE BAPTISM MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF A JORDANIAN KNIGHT OF THE ORDER

*Nadim Yusuf Muasher is a successful Jordanian entrepreneur with experience in various sectors, ranging from architecture to hospitality, and textiles to banking. As a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Jordan, he was the principle donor who helped raise the necessary funds for the construction of the Church of the Baptism of Jesus in Bethany Beyond the Jordan (al-Maghtas).*

The Muasher family has a long tradition of supporting the Church in the Holy Land. Nadim's father had previously contributed to the construction of the Church of Saint Joseph in Jabal Amman, and Nadim has long assisted and helped the Rosary Sisters with their various needs. However, the decision to financially support the construction of the Church of the Baptism is unfortunately to be traced to a tragic personal event

"Twenty years ago, we lost our son in a car accident. He was 17," Nadim recounts. "We were travelling to a wedding; he was with friends in one car and we were not too far behind in another. When we saw the accident and I realized that the person they were pulling out of the car was my son, it was tragic. Words cannot express such a traumatic event," Nadim continues,

deeply moved. "As a family, we learned to grow in our faith to accept what had happened and to entrust ourselves to God's will. I began to ask myself if there was a reason related to the place where my son had died."



*Nadim Yusuf Muasher is the generous Jordanian Knight who enabled the construction of the Church of the Baptism of Jesus.*

The place where the accident happened is at the intersection leading to the site where the Baptism Church stands elegantly today. On January 10, 2025, the Church was consecrated during an inaugural Mass presided over by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, and concelebrated by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order.

"In 1995, Pope John Paul II announced that this was a holy place and a site of pilgrimage, and in 2002, when he







*The Church of the Baptism of Jesus was consecrated last January, at the beginning of the Jubilee Year, by Cardinal Pietro Parolin.*



introduced the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, the Baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan was the first. After the death of my son, in prayer, I felt that the land there wanted me to build something on this site. There was a special message in that place that just needed to be brought to light, and being an architect, I began to work on the project," Nadim recounts.

Following the accident, Nadim immersed himself in readings and prayer, and developed a proposal designed in the shape of a cross. The church is at the center with two monasteries – one for women and one for men – flanking it on either side "so that it would not just be a place to visit," he explains, "but one where people could pray and feel accompanied by a praying community." The main altar is dedicated to the Baptism, the first Luminous Mystery, while the other Luminous Mysteries are evoked in the adjacent chapels. The theme of light, both spiritually and physically, guides the steps of the faithful.

On the occasion of the consecration of the church and the inaugural Mass, the Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, recalled how it is here, one of the lowest

points on earth, where "all the suffering of conflict, inhumanity, and sin" is felt, that "heaven was opened," and the "gift of peace, true peace, which is born in hearts and spreads throughout the entire social fabric," is invoked.

It is this peace, this open heaven that speaks to Nadim and his family's heart. Nadim has had the joy of being a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for several years now, and his commitment to supporting the living stones of the Holy Land is evident. The work he did for the Church of the Baptism of Jesus is part of a personal and family tradition. "Being a Knight of the Order for me is linked to a commitment to do good, and goodness does not mean perfection but beginning to make and do with love. Here, in Jordan, there is a small group of Members of the Order and I have been asked to lead the meetings. I will do it for a year before leaving this responsibility to someone else. It is our church and our community and we are called to take care of it. In the Order it is good to be able to do this not as individuals but as a group."

**Elena Dini**





## The life of the Lieutenancies

### THE “ENSURING THE FUTURE” CAMPAIGN FOR THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE SCHOOLS

*In addition to the annual contributions that all Members send to the Grand Magisterium for the Holy Land, the North American Lieutenancies, with the approval of the Grand Master and the Governor General, have decided to launch an additional initiative to support the network of the 44 schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. This campaign aimed to raise funds for the necessary renovation work of classrooms and the school environment, as well as a fund for the salaries of teachers who do excellent and courageous work, but whose salaries are, to date, uncompetitive.*



Many Palestinian children, both Christian and Muslim, attend one of the schools in the network of the Latin Patriarchate, supported by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

**I**n April 2023, following a Holy Land Commission visit and review of its findings, Tom Pogge, Vice Governor for North America, made a request to the Grand Magisterium to launch an extraordinary capital campaign to address substantial repairs, renovations and upgrading needed

in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem schools. With the support of Cardinal Fernando Filoni, the campaign concept was approved. An \$8 million goal was set based on a thorough review of the needs of all 44 schools in the Latin Patriarchate. In October 2023, the war between Israel and Hamas



caused a pause in the launch of the campaign while the focus of the Latin Patriarchate turned to immediate humanitarian aid for those effected by the hostilities.

In January 2024, His Beatitude, the Grand Prior of the Order, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, asked that the North America leadership consider raising the campaign goal by an additional \$4 million to help support teachers' salaries and enhance financial aid for parents in the face of record unemployment. Saying "The path to peace runs through our schools," His Beatitude encouraged the North America leadership to begin the campaign as quickly as possible.

Under the leadership of campaign chair Tom Standish, the *Ensuring the Future of the Latin Patriarchate*

*Schools* campaign was launched in September 2024. Brochures, presentations at Investiture weekends, social media announcements, videos

and other communications, were created to share the needs with all members of the Order in North America and ask for a generous response.

During the campaign it was emphasized that any pledge or gift to the campaign had to be in addition to the annual donations our members make to the Order. Our North American Members responded generously, as reported by Angeles Borrego, Treasurer for North America, at the North America Lieutenants meeting. Not only did the campaign raise additional donations, but there was also an increase in 2024 annual contributions from the North American Members.

In less than 6 months, the campaign has raised \$6.3 million dollars in pledges and donations from just under 1,400 Members (couples and individuals). Donations were also received from non-Members who were moved by our social media campaign. The

money is already being used for improvements.

As an example, one project already funded was for the Zarqa South School in Jordan. It had an urgent safety need for reinforcing the structural integrity of the building. The foundation was sinking causing stress cracks in the foundation columns and cross beam supports. The local officials were threatening to close the school until repairs were made.

The project required excavation of soil and replacement of columns and support beams to stabilize the building. Once structurally fixed, the classrooms in need of updates were renovated at the same time. The \$175,000 cost was prohibitive and could never have been funded through normal

Latin Patriarchate budget resources. Only through the success of the campaign was this project completed. The

200 students and the 22 dedicated teachers and staff are now benefiting from a safe learning environment.

The campaign has remaining work to do to achieve its \$12 million goal. As a member of the Holy Land Commission, along with my wife Donna, I have been asked to lead the final phase of the campaign. The goals for this second phase include doubling the number of donating members, continuing efforts to secure major gifts from individuals and foundations and spreading the word of the campaign to touch the hearts of non-members of the Order. With the intercession of Our Lady of Palestine, we hope to reach the \$12 million dollar goal and conclude the campaign by the end of 2025.

**Tim Milner**

*Communications for North American  
Lieutenancies and*

*Member of the Holy Land Commission of the  
Grand Magisterium*

“ *The path to peace  
runs through our schools* ”  
(Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa)





## SLOVAKIA OFFICIALLY BECOMES A MAGISTRAL DELEGATION OF THE ORDER

**O**n Friday April 4, 2025, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre – accompanied by the Vice Governor for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz, Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli, the Master of Ceremonies, Msgr. Adriano Paccanelli, and the Communications Director, François Vayne – presided over the Prayer Vigil in Trnava Cathedral, welcoming twelve Knights and Dames of the new Magistral Delegation for Slovakia, including the archbishop of this diocese, Msgr. Ján Orosch, who officially became their Grand Prior on that evening.

“Dear friends, the risen Christ called out to Mary of Magdala who, distraught, was looking for him where his body rested, and she recognised Jesus’ living voice; today, he challenges you too and chooses you for a mission of grace, to spread the fragrance of Christ’s charity. This is the noble task entrusted to you by the Church, which welcomes your

willingness with deep gratitude,” declared the Grand Master during this intense Prayer Vigil in Trnava.

Nicknamed ‘Little Rome’ because of the large number of churches built there, the town of Trnava – located in the South-West



*Celebration of the Investitures at the cathedral of Trnava, in Slovakia.*





of Slovakia – has a rich history, having been for several centuries an important centre of cultural and spiritual refuge for Catholics from Hungary fleeing the Turkish invasion.

The following day, Saturday April 5, the new Slovakian Knights and Dames, among which the Magistral Delegate Miroslav Gieci, were invested by the Grand Master of the Order, on the occasion of the foundation of the Magistral Delegation for Slovakia, which had been prepared for a long time thanks to the fraternal support of the Lieutenancy for the Czech Republic. The Investiture ceremony took place in Trnava cathedral, in the presence of the Vice-Governor for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz, Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli, the Lieutenant for the Czech Republic, Tomáš Parma, and several European Lieutenants (Poland, Hungary, Croatia...).

During his homily, the Grand Master said: "To become a Knight or a Dame means to give your life by professing faith in Christ through witness, generosity and

love of the Gospel; it means putting Christ at the centre of your existence and of every personal, family and social project. There would be no point in being a Knight or a Dame of the Holy Sepulchre if you did not place at the centre this 'Lord' for whom we have been clothed in a mantle of which the colour of the insignia is red (the colour of blood and spiritual nobility)."

The Archbishop of Prague, Msgr. Ján Graubner, Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for the Czech Republic, concelebrated the Mass, as did the Apostolic Nuncio, Msgr. Nicola Girasoli, alongside Cardinal Filoni and the new Grand Prior for Slovakia, Msgr. Ján Orosch.

During the convivial meal that followed, the Grand Master thanked his hosts, especially the Grand Prior, whose enthusiasm in accompanying and supporting the Order in Central Europe he praised, while highlighting the courageous example set by Slovak Catholics, who have given many martyrs and confessors of the faith to the Church throughout history.

## FROM ASIA TO SERVE THE HOLY LAND: THE FILIPINO LIEUTENANCY OF THE ORDER

"**I** serve the Order of the Holy Sepulchre to honor the legacy of my parents. My mother, Consuelo Banzuela Castro, who joins me here today; and my father, David Malabanan Castro who passed away 15 years ago. He taught me how to pray and to have deep faith. He also showed me what resilience means and what courageousness entails, while encouraging me to stand up for my beliefs. He also gave me the confidence to understand that I needed to use the talents that God had given me to care for others," stated the new Lieutenant for the Philippines of the Order,

Helen Castro Limcaoco, during her speech of assumption of office delivered on February 22, 2025 in front of the Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy, His Eminence Cardinal Jose Advincula, archbishop of Manila, as well as her predecessors in this office: Jose L. Cuisia and Jesus P. Tambunting.

Helen Castro Limcaoco is a successful entrepreneur who has founded and co-founded two companies in the gym sector. She was invested in 2015 and very soon afterwards she was asked to support the Lieutenancy through the Special Projects Committee whose goal was to open a



Catholic Chaplaincy in Amman, Jordan. In July 2017, this goal came to fruition and the Chaplaincy was inaugurated by Cardinal Tagle to serve 22,000 Filipino migrants in and around Amman. She was then asked to join the Executive Council in 2020 and to head the Membership Committee that led the recruitment effort for new members as well as to review the Formation Program of the Lieutenancy.

"I'm not certain why I was the person selected to be the Lieutenant," confesses the Filipino Lieutenant, "but given that I am so today, then I am determined to carry on from where Ambassador Cuisia has left off. We are going to try to expand our membership further, continue to be more diverse by reaching out to more dioceses, and to build strong ties among all members so that more of them participate in our activities that aim to help their spiritual formation. We hope to transition to the practices mentioned in the General Regulations that we are still doing

slightly differently, while trying to maintain our own local culture and traditions."

The Lieutenancy in the Philippines counts more than 100 Members. The most recent five joined the family of the Order at the same Investitures during which Helen Castro Limcaoco assumed the Lieutenant's office. Among them, there is Dame Marose Soberano who shares how it was a deep attraction and love for the Holy Land, although she is living so far away from it, that motivated her to join the Order. "In November 2019, I was invited to join a group of ladies for a seminar organized by Opus Dei at its Saxum Conference Center in Israel. The various seminar sessions and visits to the holy places of Jesus permitted us to have a deep appreciation of the Holy Land. Thus – she continues – when I received the invitation to join the Order in November 2022, which was exactly three years after my visit, we immediately accepted it with so much



*The Order is expanding in Asia, which is often considered the "continent of the future" for the Church (in the photo, the Lieutenant for the Philippines alongside the Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy, Cardinal Jose Fuerte Advincula, Archbishop of Manila).*





excitement." Dame Soberano concludes, "Living a meaningful and prayerful life; doing our own apostolate undertakings to share our knowledge and love for God to others; and now, this privilege to be a

significant part of the activities of the Equestrian Order to help protect and support the Holy Land – this is how we want to live our lives."

**Elena Dini**

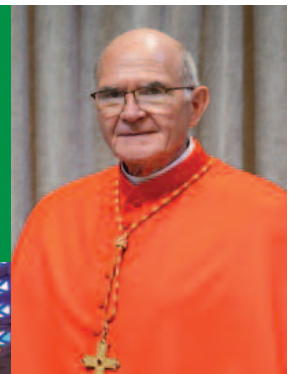
## A MOMENT OF JOY FOR THE MAGISTRAL DELEGATION FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

**O**n January 25, 2025, Cardinal Stephen Brislin, the Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Southern Africa, took possession of the Archdiocese of Johannesburg. The Holy Father entrusted this to him after having served for approximately 15 years as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Cape Town.

At his inauguration, 15 Knights and Dames of the Order from Cape Town, which had been his previous diocese, chose to stand by his side. This was a celebratory moment and a testimony to the fraternal spirit of the Order. Among these gathered for the inauguration was the Magistral Delegate, Juan Luis Cabral, who recounted the following, "At the installation, which

took place in a sports field, thousands of people attended. In addition, various authorities were present, including ministers, former ministers, and diplomats. A private lunch was served for a select group of guests, including the members of the Order who were present. It was a wonderful opportunity to introduce our Order in Johannesburg, and we were warmly received."

*Cardinal Stephen Brislin, the Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Southern Africa, has become Archbishop of Johannesburg.*





## L'AQUILA: "SPIRITUAL GATEWAY"

**T**he spiritual example of Saint Celestine V – a hermit who became Pope and then abdicated in 1294 – inspired his successor, Boniface VIII, to proclaim the first Jubilee of Forgiveness in 1300.

In 2022, Pope Francis made a pilgrimage to the tomb of the hermit saint and recalled while there, "For centuries, L'Aquila has kept alive the gift that Pope Celestine V himself left it. That gift is the privilege of reminding everyone that with mercy, and with mercy alone, can the life of every man and every woman be lived with joy."

In this article, a young Knight shares his thoughts on this "capital of forgiveness," where Saint Celestine V is buried.

"I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved" (Jn 10:9). Thus, the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself in the Gospel of John, in that evocative passage of Scripture, better known as the *Parable of the Good Shepherd*. That Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep, for His people, to save them from death.

Over the centuries, the Church, and Popes in particular, have often referred to the image of Christ as a "door".

Inevitably, our minds turn to the Holy Door of the Jubilee, which has become a visible symbol of Christ, through which we can obtain eternal life thanks to the remission of sins.

This is what the liturgical and canonical norms foresee for those who experience the Jubilee.

The first major *Ordinary* Jubilee was



*Pope Celestine V, who inspired the proclamation of the first Jubilee in 1300, rests in the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio in L'Aquila, in the Abruzzo region of Italy.*

proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII on February 22, 1300, with the bull of indiction *Antiquorum Habet Fida Relatio*.

In fact, there were other jubilee events, which are perhaps lesser known, which preceded it. Among them, one that truly anticipated, in some ways, the Ordinary Jubilee, was the Celestinian Forgiveness of L'Aquila. Pope Celestine V instituted this celebration in 1294 with the issuance of the papal bull *Inter Sanctorum Solemnia* (better known as the Bull of Forgiveness). In the Bull, he granted plenary indulgence to those who were truly repentant and had confessed, and who so entered the Collemaggio Basilica in L'Aquila between the vespers of August 28 until the vespers of the 29. The Celestinian Forgiveness, which is still celebrated today, shares the indulgence according to the usual provisions of the Church with the Ordinary Jubilee.

In May 2023, the Dames, Knights, and aspirants of the Abruzzo and Molise Section



of our beloved Order also participated in this pious exercise during the extraordinary Jubilee year granted by Pope Francis in 2022.

Indeed, during the Forgiveness of that year, the Holy Father presided over the Holy Mass and the ritual of opening the Holy Door. This was an historic event, as, in the history of the Celestinian Jubilee, it had never happened before then that a Pope had opened the Holy Door; instead, it had always been a cardinal invited by the Archbishop of L'Aquila.

Pope Francis, therefore, granted an extraordinary Jubilee year from 2022 to 2023, up until the following Forgiveness, a gift that was later renewed for one more year.

On May 9, last year, the Pope announced the Ordinary Jubilee with the Bull *Spes Non Confundit*. In the Bull, he references several important jubilees throughout history, including the Celestinian. "This interplay of hope and patience makes us see clearly that the Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus. I like to think that the proclamation of the first Jubilee, in the year 1300, was preceded by a journey of grace inspired by popular spirituality. How can we fail to recall the various ways by which the grace of forgiveness had been poured out upon God's holy and faithful People? We are reminded, for example, of the great "Pardon" that Saint Celestine V granted to all those who visited the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio in Aquila on the 28th and 29th days of August 1294, six years before Pope Boniface VIII



instituted the Holy Year. The Church was already experiencing the grace of the Jubilee as an outpouring of divine mercy. Even earlier, in 1216, Pope Honorius III granted the plea of Saint Francis for an indulgence for all those visiting the Porziuncola on the first two days of August. The same can be said of the pilgrimage to Santiago

de Compostela: in 1222, Pope Callistus II allowed the Jubilee to be celebrated there whenever the Feast of the Apostle James fell on a Sunday. It is good that such "dispersed" celebrations of the Jubilee continue, so that the power of God's forgiveness can support and accompany communities and individuals on their pilgrim way" (*Spes non confundit*, 5).

For all these reasons, we can think of L'Aquila as a "spiritual door" to Rome, that is, as a way of entering the holy city to which we are bound by spiritual, historical, geographical, and logistical sentiments. For this reason, I hope that the city of L'Aquila, which the Pope described as the "capital of forgiveness", with all its civil and religious institutions, as well as the Dames and Knights of the Order present throughout our territory, will be capable messengers of this precious gift of peace and forgiveness. It is precisely this that the Holy Land and other Countries that are in a state of armed conflict need.

May the Lord, through the intercession of St. Peter Celestine V, support us in this mission for the Universal Church and, particularly, for the Holy Land.

**Giancarlo Della Pelle**

*L'Aquila Delegation  
Lieutenancy for Central Italy*





## History and Culture

# RESEARCH INTO THE POPES' EFFORTS FOR PEACE

*Father Maxim Baz, a collaborator of the Governor General of the Order, published in March 2025 his book with De Gruyter-Brill: The Papal Arts of Peace and Civilization: War Avoidance, War Mitigation, and Preventive Pacification from Leo XIII to John Paul II.*

**W**hat inspired you to undertake such a comprehensive study of papal peace efforts from Leo XIII to John Paul II?

In 2006, while I was watching Ridley Scott's "Kingdom of Heaven," I was struck by the affirmation: "[Jerusalem] is a Kingdom of Conscience or nothing." From then on, my research focused on religion, war, and charity. If a well-formed individual conscience is the "voice of God" in us, as Belloc says, then the papacy is that communal conscience, the voice of God at the heart of our world. Studying 20<sup>th</sup> century popes was like listening to God's voice, feeble and whispering as it was, when cannons and bombers shattered through WWI and WWII Europe.

Could you

summarize the central thesis of your book for our readers?

Certainly. The 20<sup>th</sup> century papacy developed a tripartite foreign policy or three moral doctrines that I tentatively propose as War Avoidance, War Mitigation, and Preventive Pacification, or AMP. Based on documentary evidence, it strived to avoid

war when it was imminent (A), to mitigate war's savagery when it was inevitable (M), and to pacify preventively hearts and minds in intervals of relative international peace (P). I conceive this paradigm as operating in the field of theopolitics.

**How does the role of the Holy See and the papacy differ from secular governments in the pursuit of peace?**

As an international State actor, the 20<sup>th</sup> century papacy has no interest other than the universal common good of all nations. It is



*Father Maxim Baz, who is a member of the Order, has studied in depth the teaching and action of the Popes of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in service of peace.*



neutral, non-partisan, and *super partes*. Its point of view embraces diversity. To this day, it is endowed with moral credibility as a mediator and promoter of international law, of a theistic vision of human rights, and of just peace, even in the eyes of non-Christians and non-believers. This papacy is not afraid to fail, to be refused, or to be rejected: In the image of Christ, it is self-giving and self-sacrificing. Francis exemplified this when he went out of his way to bring belligerents to better sentiments and understanding; he did a great deal to further refine the AMP and give it more granular instantiations. These are all qualities one would wish to find in an international arbiter during disputes. Furthermore, the papacy indiscriminately brings together nations of all tongues and ethnicities in concord and harmony, not around itself – God forbid – but around Jesus Christ, the “unarmed-Omnipotence,” God-Man, Savior, and Suffering Servant of humanity. Earthly governments, institutions, organizations, or entities offer very scarce elements of comparison.

**What do you hope readers, especially**

**Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher, will take away from your book?**

The Cardinal Grand Master, His Eminence Fernando Filoni, through all the publications and commissions he has set in motion, has done a lot already to bolster the self-understanding of the Knights and Dames. His book on Spirituality, as well as the Constitution, General Regulations, and the new Ritual all converge together and point to a distinct identity in renewal and continuity with the rich past of the Order. With these, our Knights and Dames are already well equipped for the challenges of the present century. While my book does mention, in one fleeting instance, the role of the Order as the "right hand" of the papacy in the Holy Land, Knights and Dames might be interested in furthering their understanding of the papacy's "arts of peace and civilization" and perhaps perceive the book as an opportunity to further align their thoughts and actions with the specific approaches of the papacy in its quest for peace; but this could be a take away for all Christians of good will, not just Members of the Order.



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