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The Grand Master's Message

THE HOLY YEAR HAS BEGUN

On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica, thus inaugurating the Ordinary Jubilee, 2025. This year is a gift the Church is offering to each of us to experience on the journey of our lives, in which to pause, strengthen "the feeble knees" (Is 35:3), and commence once again from where we are.

To start again with hope. In the Holy Year, this is precisely the virtue that should accompany us Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre the most, along with all Christians.

During his Christmas Eve Homily, Pope Francis said, "There is hope for each of us. And do not forget, sisters and brothers, that God forgives everything, God always forgives. Do not forget this, which is a way of understanding hope in the Lord." Let us therefore accept the invitation to open our hearts to God's forgiveness, which gives hope to our eyes with which we look at our pettiness, sometimes even our falls, as well as the poverty and suffering of the world.

We await you in Rome during this year, especially for the jubilee pilgrimage that we will experience together as Members of the



Every Holy Year begins with the opening of the special Holy Door. On December 24, 2024, Pope Francis crossed the threshold of the Basilica of St. Peter, inviting all of us to do the same, with our fragilities and weaknesses, but supported by the sure hope in the Mercy of the Father.

Order of the Holy Sepulchre in October. I heartily wish you a time of grace with the words left to us by Pope Benedict XVI in the 2007 Encyclical *Spe Salvi*: "The Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known—it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life."

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

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The Order in union with the Universal Church

THE POPE ENTRUSTS THE HOLY YEAR OF HOPE TO THE PROTECTION OF MARY

The Jubilee Year, officially inaugurated by the Pope on Christmas Eve 2024, has been specifically entrusted to Mary. The Pontiff announced this during the first vespers of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for the past year. This celebration was presided over by the Pontiff in St. Peter's Basilica on December 31. The Holy Father concluded his homily with the

prayer that "Mary, our holy Mother, might help us to walk together, as pilgrims of hope, on the path of fraternity."

On the first day of the New Year, the Holy Father once again placed humanity under the protection of Our Lady of Hope, at the presence of her statue brought from the sanctuary in Battipaglia, in the province of Salerno. The statue of Mary was positioned in the Basilica near the Papal Altar until



On the occasion of the solemn opening of the Holy Door at the Vatican, which officially marked the beginning of the new Jubilee on Christmas Eve, the statue of Our Lady of Hope, kept in the Sanctuary of Battipaglia dedicated to her, was displayed next to the Baldachin of the Basilica of St. Peter. The statue remained in the papal Basilica throughout the Octave of Christmas.



January 1.

As Peter's successor suggests, "Let us entrust this new year to Mary, Mother of God. May we learn, like her, to discover God's greatness in the little things of life. May we learn to care for every child born of a woman, above all by protecting, like Mary, the precious gift of life: life in the womb, the lives of children, the lives of the suffering, the poor, the elderly, the lonely and the dying". On this occasion of the World Day of Peace, he reminded us that "this invitation, which flows from Mary's maternal heart, is one we are all called to accept: to protect life, to care for wounded life—so much wounded life, so much—and to restore dignity to the life of every person 'born of a woman.' This is the fundamental basis for building a civilization of peace".

During the Angelus prayer from the window of the Apostolic Palace, he expressed further inspiring words: "The heart of Mary, the Virgin Mother, corresponds to the newborn Messiah, who manifests the mercy of the Father. This heart is the ear that listened to the proclamation of the Archangel; this heart is the hand of the bride given to Joseph; this heart is the embrace that enveloped Elizabeth in her old age. Hope beats in the heart of Mary, Our Mother; hope beats for the redemption and salvation of every creature." The Holy Father then continued, "And how can I reciprocate such a great gift with a gratuitous gesture of

peace, forgiveness, reconciliation?" As he asked this question, he opened a horizon of concrete love for everyone, to be practiced with simplicity and without hesitation.

The theme of hope that illuminates daily life, is to be experienced every day during the Jubilee that has just begun. This topic was also addressed by the Pope in his Christmas Eve homily after the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, which he humbly crossed in a wheelchair.

"If God can visit us, even when our hearts seem like a lowly manger, we can truly say: Hope is not dead; hope is alive and it embraces our lives forever. Hope does not disappoint!" He summarized, inviting everyone to "set out with the marvel of the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem. The Gospel tells us that, having heard the message of the angel, they "went with haste" (Lk 2:16). In this same way, "with haste", we too are called to recover lost hope, to renew that hope in our hearts, and to sow seeds of hope amid the bleakness of our time and our world. And there is so much desolation at this time. We think of wars, of children being shot at, bombs on schools and hospitals. Do not delay, do not hesitate, but allow yourselves to be drawn along by the Good News" he advised, with the realism of faith that Mary embodied as an essential witness and whose heavenly intercession is perpetual.

François Vayne



THE ORIGINS OF THE JUBILEE

A spontaneous and grassroots movement gave rise to the first Jubilee. Pope Boniface VIII, who lived in challenging times for the Church, responded to the unprompted requests of the faithful who, at the dawn of the new century, sought the remission of sins and punishments. In 1300, he proclaimed a Jubilee Year for the Church. Previously, there had been grants of remission for those who went to fight the Moors in Spain, for example, Alexander II, in 1063 or for the liberation of Jerusalem (Urban II, 1095). During a night in July 1216, Francis of Assisi obtained an extraordinary promise from Christ and the Virgin, who appeared to him that all who, through the centuries, prayed

LIVING THE JUBILEE

The Jubilee begins with the opening of the **Holy Door** (recalling Jesus' words, "I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved" - John 10:9). **Pilgrims** cross this threshold, which enables them to gain the **indulgence** for the remission of penalties due to sin. The Jubilee expresses a desire for conversion, symbolized by crossing the Holy Door, and is supported by certain conditions, which are: sacramental confession, participation in the Eucharistic Celebration, profession of faith, prayer for the Pope's intentions, and acts of charity. These highlight the awareness that, beyond guilt, trust in God's mercy prevails.

Sin is forgiven only by God in the sacrament of penance. Christ entrusts to His Church, through the merits He obtained on the Cross, the forgiveness and remission of sins. The indulgence that can be gained during the Jubilee additionally permits the remission of the punishments that remain to be expiated (on earth or in purgatory) after the sin has been forgiven. The indulgence can be obtained multiple times, and it can also be applied to the deceased.



The bull Antiquorum habet fida relatio, with which the first Roman Jubilee was proclaimed in 1300, was reproduced on the façade of the ancient Basilica of St. Peter, and this engraved document can now be found at the upper left of the Holy Door.

at the Porziuncola would receive full remission of sins (the Pardon of Assisi). Honorius III granted the desired indulgence and later extended it to pilgrims visiting the tomb of Thomas Becket (1220), who was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral. Finally, Pope Celestine V established the so-called *Celestinian Pardon* for pilgrims to the Basilica of Collemaggio (L'Aquila, September 29, 1294).

With the Bull *Antiquorum habet fida relatio* ("There is credible testimony from the ancients that great remissions and indulgences of sins are granted to those who visit the venerable Basilica of the Prince of the Apostles in Rome"), the first Roman Jubilee was proclaimed. Pilgrims flocked to Rome throughout the year 1300, as recounted by Cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi in his *De centesimo sive Iubileo anno liber*. The Bull, widely reproduced and disseminated, was engraved on the façade of the old Basilica of Saint Peter and can now be found above and to the left of the Holy Door.

The importance attributed to indulgences dates back to the High Middle Ages when Popes granted them to those who made pilgrimages to the Tomb of Saint Peter in



THE BIBLICAL TRADITION

The Christian Jubilee (from *Yobel*, the ram's horn, which is used to announce the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*) has roots in the biblical Jubilee, celebrated as a sabbatical year according to the *Book of Leviticus* (25:1–17). The Jubilee Year symbolized the restoration of God's place as the sole Lord of the earth and all living things. This involved the cancellation of debts, the liberation of slaves, the annulment of land mortgages, and even the resting of the land itself, emphasizing that divine grace surpasses human justice.

Rome, the Holy Land, or Santiago de Compostela. Boniface VIII, a learned and visionary man, understood the spiritual needs of his time, leading to the perpetual establishment of the Jubilee with innovative characteristics.

Boniface VIII decreed that the Jubilee would occur every 100 years, doubling the biblical interval of 50 years according to Levitical tradition. The Bull was issued at

Saint Peter's February 22, the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter. In doing so, the Pope tied the plenary Jubilee indulgence to his apostolic authority as Peter's successor, acting by virtue of Christ's commission to Peter to remit sins.

Historical accounts suggest that hundreds of thousands of pilgrims participated in the First Jubilee, braving the challenges and dangers of travel (disease, bandits, swindlers, unreliable transportation, poor roads, etc.). Among them were notable figures such as Dante, Cimabue, and Giotto.

The unexpected spiritual success of the first Jubilee placed Rome at the heart of the Christian world, as pilgrimage to the Holy Land had become extremely difficult and dangerous. The success prompted Boniface VIII to establish that the Jubilee would be celebrated every 100 years. However, Clement VI (1350) reduced the interval to 50 years, allowing many to experience it at least once in their lifetime; Urban VI (1389) then changed it to every 33 years and finally, Paul II (1475) set it to every 25 years.

“The Year of the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025 represents for all an extraordinary opportunity for a vigorous renewal of spiritual life and to beg, always and again, from the provident hand of God that inner renewal which is the foundation of every authentic ecclesial and social renewal” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Community Penitential Liturgy*, Preface, Vatican Publishing House, p. 4 [our translation]).

THE JUBILEES OF OUR TIME

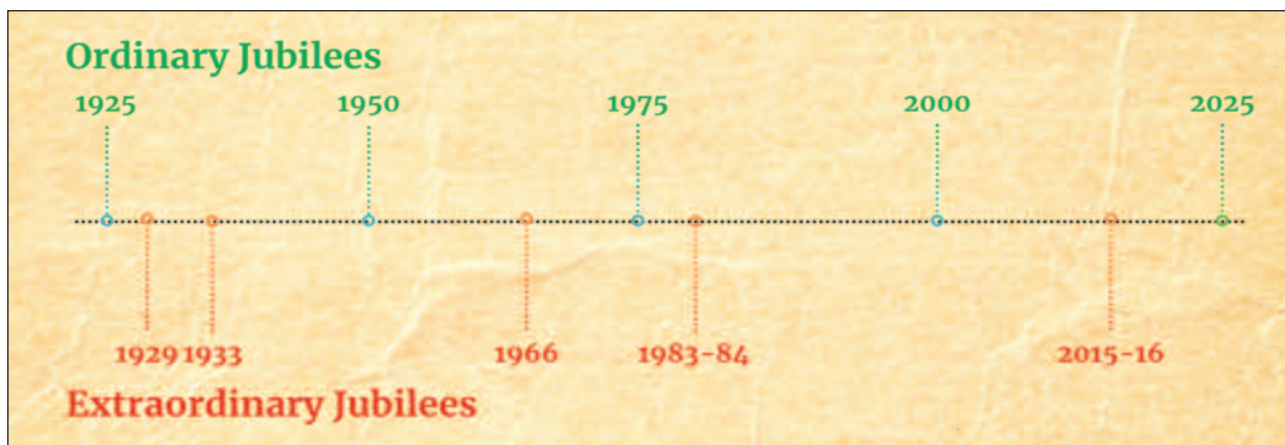
In the last 100 years, the highest number of Jubilees has been celebrated. In addition to the Ordinary Jubilees – held every 25 years – several Extraordinary Jubilees have also been added.

Ordinary Jubilees

Pius XI, who was a learned and “conciliatory” pope, proclaimed the Jubilee of

1925 during the Feast of the Ascension through the Bull *Infinita Dei misericordia* (1924). The scourge of the Great War had left deep social, political, and religious wounds, and the so-called “Roman Question”—the unresolved dispute between Italy and the Holy See—remained open. For that Jubilee, the Pope called for a return to lasting peace and the reconciliation of those estranged from the Church. He also sought a resolution to the situation in the Holy Land, where tensions between Arabs and Jews were





already underway. Then, he turned his attention to the missions and the space to be given to emerging young local Churches. In addition, he established the Christ the King Feast (*Quas primas*, 1925).

Pius XII, through the Bull *Jubilaenum maximum*, proclaimed the Jubilee of 1950, which focused on peace and reconciliation in a world shaken by World War II. During that year, with the Bull *Munificentissimus Deus*, the Pope declared the Assumption of Mary dogma. Scholars note that on the eve of the dogma's proclamation, while in the Vatican Gardens, the Pontiff witnessed an extraordinary phenomenon similar to the "miracle of the sun," as described in the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima in 1917. At the end of the Holy Year, in his Christmas radio message on December 23, 1950, Pius XII announced the identification of Saint Peter's tomb in the Vatican crypt.

Paul VI dedicated the 25th Jubilee in history (1975) to Renewal and Reconciliation. In recalling the ten-year anniversary of the lifting of mutual excommunications between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, he kissed the feet of Orthodox Metropolitan Meliton, the head of the delegation from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This powerful gesture of humility marked the close of the Holy Year, which aligned with the significance of Church Jubilees and the vision of the Second Vatican Council, desired by John XXIII, of which he had been the continuator.

John Paul II proclaimed the Great Jubilee of 2000. During the year, he called for the World Youth Day—held August 15–20—,

which was attended by over two million young participants. The Pope envisioned, in an ecumenical celebration, a near future where Christians could walk together as one people, and, serving the truth. He prayed that never again would acts against the Church's communion, offenses toward any people, violence, discrimination, exclusion, oppression, or disdain for the poor and marginalized be committed.

Pope Francis is presiding over the 27th ordinary Jubilee, and has emphasized the theme of Hope that does not disappoint.

Extraordinary Jubilees

The Church has also celebrated various Extraordinary Jubilees. Among the most notable are those of Pius XI in 1929, marking his 50th anniversary of priesthood, and in 1933, commemorating 1,900 years since Christ's death. For the first time, at this Extraordinary Jubilee, the opening of the Holy Door was broadcast via radio. **Paul VI** declared a five-month extraordinary Jubilee in 1966 to mark the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, while **John Paul II** held one in 1983–84 to commemorate the 1,950th anniversary of Christ's death and resurrection.

Finally, in 2015–2016, **Pope Francis** called for a new Jubilee to mark 50 years since the end of the Second Vatican Council. He dedicated this one to Mercy, with the extraordinary opening of a Jubilee Door in Bangui (in the Central African Republic), a nation torn apart by years of internal conflict.



THE GRAND PRIOR OF THE CANADA-TORONTO LIEUTENANCY AMONG THE NEW CARDINALS

Cardinal Francis Leo, Archbishop of Toronto and Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy of the Order for Canada-Toronto shared a few thoughts with us before his creation as a Cardinal by Pope Francis during the Consistory in Rome on December 7

"It will be a call within a call to continue to serve but in a different way, taking upon a more international perspective, supporting the Holy Father more closely. But I also see it as a call to a greater unity and universality of the Church, its apostolicity, and I embrace it as a call to serve," Cardinal Leo said the day before his creation as a Cardinal, thinking about this important moment coming up.

With regards to his engagement with the Order, Cardinal Leo commented: "A major highlight was the Consulta one year ago, it was a wonderful moment of Church, togetherness, of the Order consolidating and getting to know one another so that we can

better serve together." He also added, "I am very proud of the program of spiritual formation that has been carried out by our local Lieutenant, it is a path of spiritual development. It is important that we put first things first, the primacy of the spiritual, and that we help the members to grow in their faith and devotion."

With regards to the Holy Land, Cardinal Leo sees a mission that Knights and Dames of the Order accomplish in their own diocese. "They can be—he shares—that live presence of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother Church in each parish and community in the diocese. When people see Knights and Dames it is an automatic

reference to the Land of Jesus and maybe we could make it a bit more explicit encouraging pilgrimages, helping people understanding the difficult situation in the Holy Land, supporting prayers and donations."

"There are many priorities and praiseworthy goals but I think—he concluded—that as members of the Order we can be a clear reminder: don't forget the Land of Jesus, don't forget where first we began as children of God and disciples of Christ and support the Church there and its work there."

Let's keep His Eminence Cardinal Leo in our prayers for his mission and service.



The Pope bestows the cardinal's biretta to the young Archbishop of Toronto.



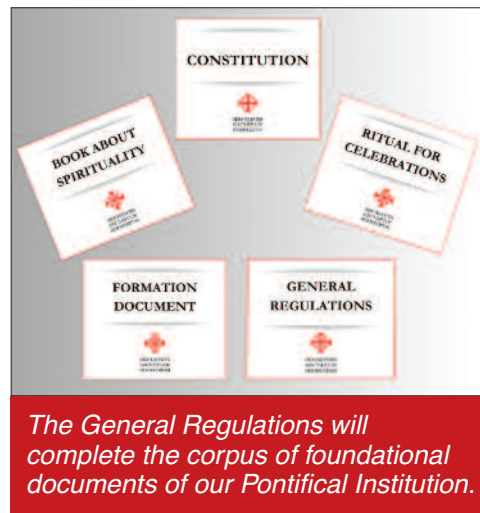
Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

THE GENERAL REGULATIONS OF THE ORDER HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED

As of January 1, 2025, the new General Regulations of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem come into force. This central document is a foundational tool for the daily life and management of both the Grand Magisterium and especially the local entities of the Order. In recent years, many Lieutenants and Members of the Order have expressed the need to update the previous Regulations. Consequently, an *ad hoc* Commission was established at the Grand Magisterium, which worked for several months to produce this document.

A letter was signed by the Cardinal Grand Master and the Governor General on the occasion of the Feast of Our Lady of Palestine (October 25, 2024). The letter states, "The General Regulations are intended to support the life of the Order in its organic dimension and participation in order to sustain that 'project of life, of convictions, of values, of choices proper to a Knight and a Dame.'"

This essential tool for the orderly life of the



Order is included among its foundational Documents. The others include the Constitution; the Book on Spirituality; the Ritual for Celebrations; and, the Document on Formation. With the publication of the General Regulations, the beautiful analogy proposed by the Governor General in our previous newsletter (No. 74) of the five fingers of a hand is completed. The Regulations include various

sections, such as Organization and Central Governance, Territorial Organization and Management, Members of the Order, and Disciplinary Provisions and Procedures. In addition, the document includes appendices concerning admissions, promotions, and the spiritual benefits granted to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre by the Supreme Pontiffs.

Due to its significance, "The Regulations, alongside the Constitution, must be known by both the Leaders and every Knight and Dame, together with the documents on Spirituality and Formation." It is approved *ad biennium*. In this way, the effort of recent years to update the life of the Order has been brought to a conclusion.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HISTORICAL COMMITTEE OF THE ORDER

In fulfilling its mission to "animating zeal in the ecclesial community towards the Land of Jesus and sustaining the Catholic Church and the Christian presence there" (Constitution, Art. 1), the Order is not unfamiliar with the cultural dimension and historical research that consolidate its roots. Due to the historical complexity of our Pontifical Institution, a request to establish an *ad hoc* Committee had been raised years ago. This request was received once again by the Order's Consulta in November 2023 and subsequently confirmed by the Grand Magisterium at its meeting in April 2024.

Thus, on January 12, 2025, the Historical Committee of the Order was formally established. Among its various tasks, the Committee will promote historical studies regarding the Order, provide consultancy on relevant matters as needed, and, when requested, oversee the organization of specific cultural activities or publications.

REGIONAL
MEETINGS

A NEW WIND BLOWS IN LATIN AMERICA

On October 27, the Cardinal Grand Master held a meeting with the Lieutenants of the Latin American area at Rocas do Vouga, the country residence of the Lieutenant of Brazil-São Paulo, Manuel Tavares. The encounter brought about renewed enthusiasm among those present, who had until this meeting and for various reasons, remained somewhat on the margins of contact with the Grand Magisterium since 2018.

Six years had indeed passed since the last in-person meeting, which was held in Buenos Aires. COVID and other unfavorable circumstances had delayed this face-to-face meeting, which could only take place twice previously through video conferencing.

What are the new elements that have emerged? First among them, since 2018, there has been the creation of a role for a Vice Governor General who is responsible for Latin America. This position has been entrusted to the skill and dedication of Enric Mas, who, in close collaboration with the Grand Magisterium and through ongoing communication and frequent visits, has enabled coordination between all the activities in Rome and those of the region.



The delegation of the Grand Magisterium and those accompanying it at the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro.



This work has yielded numerous results. In Argentina, there has been a reassuring revival of dialogue between members of the Order and the local episcopate, which had previously faced some difficulties. In Brazil, prominent figures from various regions have stepped into the scene, allowing for a confident outlook on the prospects for expanding the Order in a country with immense potential and deep devotion. Mexico has been playing a leading role in training efforts, which has benefitted neighboring countries too. A new Magistral Delegation was established this past May in Santo Domingo, which marks the beginning of the Order's Central America expansion.

In this context, Honduras, Panama, and Guatemala have been visited, and direct contacts have been initiated with local ecclesiastical authorities. The leadership transition within the Lieutenancy in Bogotá has brought new energy and fresh perspectives to Colombia. Chile, Paraguay, and Ecuador are other countries where potential openings are being explored. The upcoming leadership transition in the Rio de Janeiro Lieutenancy, while ensuring continuity, will bring in new and younger members to the Lieutenancy Council. These people are genuinely inspired by a love for

the Holy Land, and whom the Cardinal Grand Master has had the opportunity to meet personally.

The atmosphere of warm cordiality and constructive intentions that characterized the meeting of the Latin American Lieutenants at the picturesque "coudelaria" near São Paulo is certain to yield positive results. The initiative received encouragement from Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy and Archbishop of São Paulo, who attended as a welcome guest and observer during the first phase of the meeting. His presence embodied the spirit of "accompaniment" by the ecclesiastical component, initiated during the last Consulta.

The presentations that followed were moderated by the Governor General and under the spiritual guidance of the Cardinal Grand Master. What followed were lively and constructive reflections, both on the topic of spiritual deepening and on that of contributive participation. These discussions were inspired by the teachings of the Order's five core texts: the Constitution; the book on Spirituality; the Formation Document; the new Ritual; and, the new Regulations. The Cardinal Grand Master encouraged thorough dissemination and study of these texts among



The meeting of the Latin American Lieutenants was held in Brazil in the presence of the highest authorities of the Order.



the members. The presence of Monsignor Adriano Paccanelli, the Order's Master of Ceremonies, highlighted the importance of a more attentive application of the current rituals, while François Vayne, head of communications, emphasized the need to share news of the Order's activities in the Holy Land, as well as directives from the Grand Magisterium; in addition, to foster communication between Lieutenancies more widely.

The Holy Masses, which were celebrated in a chapel set within a grotto, surrounded by lush tropical vegetation, provided moments of shared prayer, and offered the Cardinal Grand Master the opportunity for his meaningful homilies.

The warm hospitality extended by the host undoubtedly contributed to fostering dialogue and understanding. A message of

solidarity was sent to the Lieutenant of Venezuela, who was unable to travel to São Paulo due to the political situation in his country.

A complete overview would be incomplete without mentioning the two Investiture ceremonies held in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In attendance at these events were the two Archbishop Grand Priors, Their Eminences Cardinal Orani João Tempesta and Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer. The two Cardinals strongly support and have fully cooperated with the Order's initiatives, both in their interactions with the Grand Master and in meetings with the new Knights and Dames. Their insights will also be of great assistance in raising awareness of the Order within the Brazilian Bishops' Conference (CNBB).

REGIONAL
MEETINGS

"STRENGTHENING DIALOGUE AMONG MEMBERS"

The Governor General of the Order, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, shares his reflections following the annual meeting of Italian Lieutenants in Bari last November

The dialogue between Lieutenancies is becoming increasingly robust. This was evident in Bari as well, during the Investiture on November 23, where the Italian-speaking Lieutenants gathered for their annual meeting to address topics of shared interest. The meeting was enriched by the unexpected but greatly appreciated participation of the Cardinal Grand Master, who, through this gesture of attention, emphasized the importance of dialogue and coordination among Lieutenants with similar challenges.

In his remarks, the Governor General reminded those present that the Holy Land needs us and, in this tragic moment, seeks to feel our closeness through prayer and our tangible charitable solidarity.

He further noted that Rome will soon become a destination for millions of pilgrims during the Jubilee. He expressed hope that pilgrims might also return to the Holy Places, where our faith was born, and bring renewed hope to our brothers and sisters devastated by the violence of war in their daily lives, their work, the education of their children, and the care of their sick.

The discussion then focused on the role of the Christian community in the Holy Land. Though a minority, it is vibrant, anchored in hope, and supported by our solidarity. In turn, this community has much to offer in rebuilding relationships where hatred and violence currently prevail. This will be one of the great missions of the future, once the war ends: rebuilding dialogue inspired by the





The Italian Lieutenants met in Bari with the Grand Master and the Governor General of the Order.

spirit of the Gospel. In the reconstruction of human relationships—more so than in rebuilding destroyed infrastructure—we Christians will play a vital role, as we stand outside the constraints of politics and ideology.

Therefore, it was agreed that we must support those who choose not to abandon their homeland, whether in Gaza or Palestine, encourage the resumption of work, the reopening of schools, and the reactivation of an economy that relies on pilgrimages.

This is our commitment, which

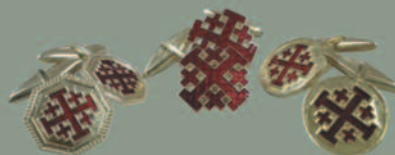
materializes in an ever-increasing contribution to the Latin Patriarchate and other institutions in the Holy Land. It also drives us to expand the Order's presence in new countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa; to strengthen dialogue among Members and improve communication; to rationalize and modernize our administration; and to rejuvenate our ranks, which will provide fresh energy to our mission. Being proud of our roots, we remain focused on today's challenges while keeping our eyes fixed on the future.



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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FROM EUROPE TO ASIA: THE NEW PRESENCES OF THE ORDER IN THE WORLD

In recent months, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has been pleased to add to its Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations the Lieutenancy for Malaysia-Penang and the Magistral Delegation for Slovakia. In addition, the Magistral Delegation in Norway and in Croatia have been elevated to a Lieutenancy.

According to our Constitution, "The placing of the Order in a geographical area in which it was not present or the autonomy granted to a Section in relation to the original Lieutenancy to which it belonged takes place initially with the creation of a Magistral Delegation. The Magistral Delegation can be raised to the level of a Lieutenancy when it reaches a minimal duration of existence and a specific number of members" (Art. 25). This is illustrated by what happened with Norway and Croatia. Meanwhile, the newly established Lieutenancy for Malaysia-Penang was immediately elevated to the status of a Lieutenancy due to the unique circumstance of having long been a Section of the Lieutenancy for Western Australia and because of the large number of

Members already invested in this local group.

As for Slovakia, its inclusion marks a completely new presence for the Order in this Country, with the appointment of Miroslav Gieci as the new Magistral Delegate and Monsignor Ján Orosch, Archbishop of Trnava, as the new Grand Prior of the Magistral Delegation. The new Magistral Delegate shared how his desire to join the Order grew over time. "Thanks to Saint Charbel—for whom I have great respect—I became more familiar with the history of the Eastern Churches, their activities, and their current conditions. I wanted to support our Christians living in the Near East. I sought a way to help them and discovered the presence of the Order in the Czech Republic, which I approached."

From there, various steps were taken to enable the Order to establish a presence in Slovakia. During the upcoming visit of Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master, to the nation, scheduled for the Spring of 2025, important celebratory moments will take place to mark the formal establishment of this new local reality of the Order.

The Magistral Delegation for Norway, which hosted the Grand Master a few months ago, has now become a full-fledged Lieutenancy.



The Order and the Holy Land

THE DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM THANKS THE ORDER DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

In a Christmas letter accompanied by a report on activities, Sami El-Yousef, Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, expressed gratitude to donors, including, of course, the Knights and Dames of the Order, for their generous response to the emergency aid appeal launched following the outbreak of war. Since October 2023, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has contributed approximately 2.5 million dollars in humanitarian aid for the crisis in Gaza and the West Bank and over 1 million dollars for general humanitarian aid in the 2024 budget. In a report published December 5, the Latin Patriarchate provided details about the allocation of these funds, totaling nearly 10 million dollars, which have benefited 140,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank. "We have managed to help 100% of the Christians in Gaza and 30% of the Christian community in the West Bank," explained Sami El-Yousef.

Nearly 6 million dollars were allocated to support the daily lives of the 700 Christian refugees housed within the Church of the Holy Family complex in Gaza. "As the war continues, supplies are scarce, and prices are incredibly high; it is a miracle to be able to continue helping

our brothers and sisters in Gaza," emphasized the CEO of the Latin Patriarchate.

"The Latin Patriarchate has delivered 840,000 meals (three meals a day for 700 people over 400 days), distributed over 200 tons of food aid, equivalent to 400,000 meals (calculated at 500 grams per meal). In total, this humanitarian effort has provided more than 1.2 million meals to those in desperate need," the report detailed. "Today, thanks to international support, the Latin Patriarchate is assisting 10% of the northern Gaza population, which has decreased from 1.2 million to 400,000 people," the report reiterated. The Latin parish in Gaza also benefited from funds allocated to education, allowing 180 young people to resume their studies.

Christians in Jerusalem and the West



The Order is engaged in humanitarian support during the war in Gaza, particularly with food aid.



Bank, who are indirect victims of the war, have received nearly four million dollars in aid. With the tourism sector at a standstill and the cancellation of permits for Palestinian workers in Israel canceled, many families are in a state of destitution. "The funds received in November and December 2023 were directed to urgent assistance, including the distribution of 7,000 food vouchers, cash, and medicine, as well as social aid to cover school fees, rent (for 5,000 families), and various taxes for those who lost their jobs or sources of income," the report explained. It also noted that 20,000 people received medical assistance.

In the West Bank, the lack of social security has left many people vulnerable, particularly those suffering from chronic illnesses.

Looking to the future, the Patriarchate is intensifying its support for employment through the creation of new jobs, training initiatives, and entrepreneurship programs, which have created over 4,000 employment opportunities in recent months. The Diocese of Jerusalem also plans to "diversify its interventions to include mental health services and psychosocial support for families," given the tragic consequences of a war that has already caused 45,000 casualties.

CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF JESUS IN BETHLEHEM DURING WARTIME

*A calling to be "Pilgrims of Hope":
the account of a young French volunteer in the Holy Land*

On December 11, 2024, in the quiet anticipation of Advent experienced in closeness to the victims of the ongoing conflict in the Holy Land, two Christians in Bethlehem—a father and son—are preparing humble decorations in the cloister of the Church of Saint Catherine, in the city of the Nativity. That day, only a handful of passersby came to gather there in prayer. Silence reigned in the place where Christ was born.

This year, the authorities requested that Christmas be celebrated calmly. As Brother Daoud Kassabry, Director of the Christian Brothers' College in Jerusalem, explains, "We limited ourselves to religious acts—praying, meditating, and pleading with the Lord to send His peace." This discretion reflected a desire to share in the suffering of all. "We could not experience joy while others were weeping."

Humanly speaking, given the horrifying circumstances so many people are facing, it

was difficult to rejoice and fully embrace the joy of Christmas in such a context as this. Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had just returned from an intense pastoral visit to Gaza, acknowledged in his December 24 homily his personal struggle: "I find it hard to announce to you here, and to those around the world looking to Bethlehem, the joy of Christ's Christmas." For Christians, therefore, it was not possible to stifle their pain and replace it with a false and hypocritical light. No one in the Holy Land could be deceived in such a way.

As the Patriarch reminded us, it was precisely in the darkness of the night—the night of the Savior's birth—that the shepherds "listened to the angels and believed." The celebration of Christmas arrived quietly, much like the moment when Mary and Joseph welcomed the child in their circumstances of the most extreme poverty, yet guided by an extraordinary





Bethlehem, the city of the first Christmas, celebrates this holy feast in a special way. These photographs show: the Procession of the Patriarch, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, through the streets; midnight Mass in the Church of St Catherine; and, Mass in the Grotto of the Nativity.

we will reveal our faith and hope in favor of life in Bethlehem and northern Palestine."

The Basilica of the Nativity did not see a large influx of pilgrims for Midnight Mass, which allowed many local Christians from Bethlehem and nearby areas—who had previously been unable to attend due to space

constraints—to fill its pews. However, some foreign worshipers made their way to Christ's cradle, including five French pilgrims, who are witnesses to unwavering faith in a troubled world. In this atmosphere of quiet joy, the Nativity Grotto became a true tabernacle of prayer throughout the night, with Masses celebrated in various languages as Christians gathered in simplicity to celebrate Christmas.

The message conveyed by this Christmas in the Holy Land, with its gentle strength, is what Georges Bernanos described as the "heroic determination of the soul, whose highest form is despair overcome." It is an invincible hope that becomes reality in our lives through the birth of Christ.

Damaris Vayne

supernatural strength, in faith, and hope. While faith is a gift that resides in the hearts of these Christians, hope is a fruit that must be cultivated. The Cardinal emphasized the importance of "choosing" and "deciding" with "courage" to follow Christ and live in this land. The Christian scouts of the Holy Land demonstrated this by marching without drums toward the Basilica of the Nativity as part of the Patriarch's entrance procession, bearing witness to the vibrant presence of young people who represent a promise for the Mother Church, cherished by baptized believers worldwide. Cardinal Pizzaballa's fraternal message then invited all to look toward the future with confidence: "Our commitment [...] is that from this Christmas onward, coming here,



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS IN THE HOLY LAND FOR MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

"**T**he migrants in Israel are not a monolithic group," so states Father Matthew Coutinho, SDB, Patriarchal Vicar for Migrants and Asylum Seekers of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Father Matthew has held this position since May 2023. During his service, he has been navigating the challenges posed by the tense relations between the Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian communities in Israel, where the migrants are living that he and his large team oversee. "It's difficult to quantify the exact number of migrants and asylum seekers there are in Israel, though we estimate about 70,000 people, spread across approximately 60 locations throughout the country. The largest communities are Filipino

(14 groups) and Indian (24 communities speaking different languages), followed by migrants from Sri Lanka and Eritrea, along with smaller groups," he explains.

Father Matthew has lived in Jerusalem for about 10 years and is well acquainted with the context there. Most migrant workers, he continues, "work for companies or in the homes of Israeli Jews. In this conflict-ridden environment, their perspectives are profoundly shaped by these experiences. Upon the outbreak of the war, many migrants left Israel, especially those who were undocumented; in fact, they were offered flights to return to their countries of origin. Amid current tensions between the Arab and Jewish communities in Israel,



The number of migrants and asylum seekers in Israel belonging to the Catholic communities is about 70,000 people. These very active communities are of diverse ethnic origins, as shown in the photo. On the next page, a moment from the Advent pilgrimage to Bethlehem by the Sri Lankan community.





migrants from Africa and Asia are now arriving to fill positions that have been left vacant."

A report shared by the Vicariate highlights that these Christians are often "invisible to many other baptized believers, as they do not live in traditional Christian neighborhoods or areas and usually do not speak Arabic. Many migrants and asylum seekers make themselves invisible, as some are in the country without valid visas, or they fear jeopardizing their jobs by openly identifying themselves as Christians; so, they practice their faith in secret instead."

Sister Gabriele Penka, OSB, is a German Benedictine nun who has lived in the Holy Land since 2007. She entered the monastery directly in Jerusalem, and today Sister Penka is the Vicariate's administrator. She recounts, to those who are able to live out their faith publicly, Advent is a particularly rich time, especially with initiatives linked to Bethlehem. "Most years, migrant communities organize a peace march from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Unfortunately, this year, it has been impossible to cross the checkpoint on foot, so participants travelled by bus. An agreement was made with the Israeli authorities to allow our group to return to Israel without too much difficulty for the occasion."

This year, the migrants' Advent visit to Bethlehem took place December 14, with approximately 1,800 participants (1,000 from the Konkani community, 350 Malayalam speakers, and 170 Gujarati speakers—all Indian-origin groups speaking different languages—along with 230 faithful from Sri Lanka). On their end, the Filipino communities celebrated special masses in preparation for Christmas, called *Simbang Gabi* in their local groups.

Another important activity the Vicariate undertakes is to support migrant workers' children. These children are excluded from publicly funded support until they turn three; in addition, their birth often renders their parents' presence in Israel illegal, as they are not permitted to have children in the country. Through the Our Lady Woman of Valor Center in Tel Aviv and the Saint Rachel Center in Jerusalem, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem assists these marginalized Catholics. Despite the complexity of their situation, Christmas remains a time of great joy, celebrated by the children and their families. In collaboration with the Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew-speaking Catholics, young people have organized a musical performance that took place on January 2.

Elena Dini



The life of the Lieutenancies

THE RETURN OF THE CROWN OF THORNS TO NOTRE-DAME OF PARIS

Following the fire in 2019, the reopening ceremonies of Notre-Dame de Paris were undoubtedly a momentous event. The Cathedral holds profound symbolic value for Catholics in France and beyond, which the reopening united in universal communion. Due to the presence of heads of state and official delegations, the participation of the Order had to be limited on December 7 and

8 to the opening of the doors and the first Mass. Nonetheless, a dozen members of the Lieutenancy for France were able to attend.

The Order enjoyed a greater presence on Friday, December 13, for the transfer, exposition, and veneration of the Crown of Thorns. For the event, there were around 250 Knights and Dames present, including delegations from Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland, Scotland, Spain, and Croatia. The Knights and Dames of the Lieutenancy for France, who traditionally guard the Sacred



The Crown of Thorns of Christ, kept for centuries in Notre-Dame de Paris, was entrusted to the custody of the Knights of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, who accompanied its return in procession to the Cathedral, five years after the devastating fire of April 15, 2019.

Crown, accompanied its return to Notre-Dame during this deeply moving celebration.


At the conclusion of these beautiful ceremonies, I wish to speak on behalf of my fellow Knights and Dames of the Lieutenancy for France to thank all those who joined us in prayer, whether in person or via the televised broadcast, particularly from the Holy Land. I also invite you to extend your gratitude to everyone—especially the

artisans—who contributed to the reopening of Notre-Dame de Paris for worship. This cathedral is a witness to centuries of Christianity in “old Europe,” which today finds itself gravely wounded in its faith, a faith that remains integral to its history and heritage. The renewal of Notre-Dame is a magnificent testament to Hope, the Hope that guides us in every step we take toward the heavenly Jerusalem.

Christian Piotre
Lieutenant for France



AN INTERNATIONAL LOOK

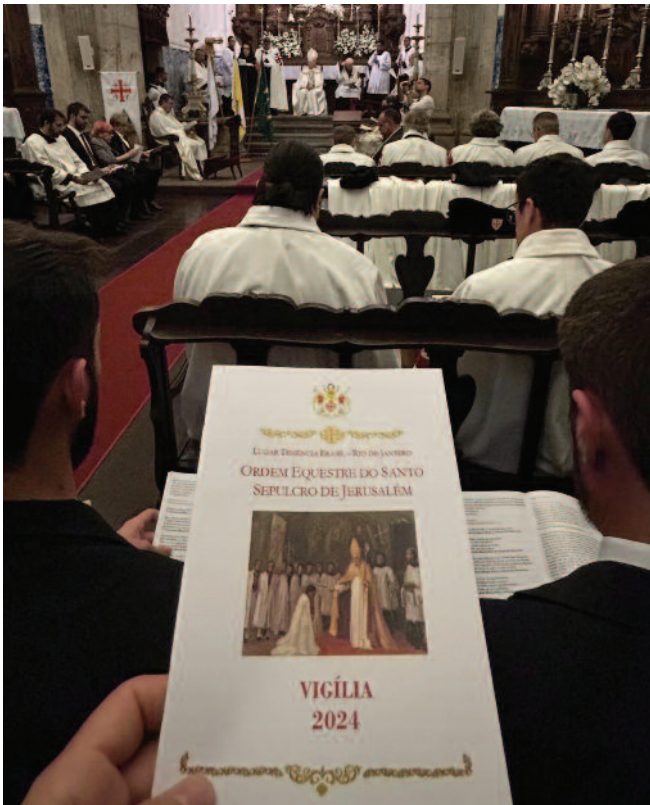


In this edition of the Newsletter, we review the Investitures that were held during the autumn. Typically, Investitures attended by the Grand Master and the Governor General are given special coverage in publications from the Grand Magisterium. This time, however, we are taking a broader approach, and have provided a world map displaying the Investitures that have taken place globally since last September. This offers a clearer perspective on the universal scope of the Order. As illustrated by the photo gallery on the following pages, over the past three months, the Order's two principal dignitaries have traveled extensively to meet new Members and participate in Investiture ceremonies.



AT RECENT INVESTITURES





October 23-26

The two Investitures in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were presided over by the Grand Master during his pastoral visit to Brazil.



November 15-16

Investitures in Portugal, presided over by the Grand Master in the evocative church of the Real Mosteiro de Santa Maria de Alcobaça, where 15 new Members were welcomed into the Order.





November 15-16

**Investitures in
Malta, attended
by the Governor
General.**

November 21-24

**During the
meeting of
Italian-speaking
Lieutenants, the
Grand Master
presided over the
Investitures in
Bari.**



November 29-30

**Investitures in
Assisi, presided
over by the
Grand Master in
the majestic
Basilica of St.
Francis.**

**November 29
 December 1**

Investitures in London, presided over by the Grand Prior of the Order, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, with the Governor General in attendance.



December 13-14

Investitures in Rome, held in two of the four Papal Basilicas—St. Mary Major for the Vigil and St. John Lateran for the Investiture—presided over by the Grand Master.

«I PLEDGED TO UPHOLD THE VALUES OF JUSTICE, MERCY, AND PEACE»

*The testimony of a new Dutch Knight : Michiel Dijkman, 40,
received the Investiture on October 12, 2024 in the Netherlands*

It is Monday, November 11, 1996. We sing: "Saint Martin, oh Saint Martin, he shares what he can spare. He does not forget the poor beggar, sitting out in the cold." I'm wearing a hat, my collar is turned up, and it's freezing cold. But fortunately, it's dry.

As a young boy, I joined the Saint Martin's procession every year, carrying a lantern. Hand in hand with classmates, teachers, and parents. It was pitch dark, but beautifully lit by all the lanterns. Leading the way was a man dressed as a sort of knight in a red cloak on a white horse.

This beautiful tradition reminded us of the valuable stories of Saint Martin of Tours.

Again and again, my teachers and parents told us the story of how he shared his cloak with a beggar. It left a deep impression on me and my classmates. It wasn't just a story but a life lesson about "caring for one another" (compassion) and "supporting each other" (mercy).

As a child, I not only learned the virtue of sharing, but also how important it is to commit yourself to others. Now, as a father, expecting our second child in March, I teach my son that it's much more fun to share food and toys with other children than to keep them all to yourself. This is the essence of Saint Martin's story: sharing with others, even at a personal cost.

Michiel, a young Dutchman, has taken on the commitment of Knight in service of the Church in the Holy Land. He is eager to embark on a spiritual journey within the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.



Today, as over 1 billion people globally suffer from obesity and someone like Elon Musk makes headlines with a fortune exceeding 300 billion euros, the contrasts are unmistakable. At the same time, over 275 million people face acute hunger in regions such as Gaza, South Sudan, Somalia, and Mali.

The world seems a place of enormous contradictions, where even the threat of war in Europe grows increasingly realistic, and polarization between different groups continues to deepen.

I live in the Netherlands, where my family is thriving. We have a warm home, an electric car, and enjoy life. However, how difficult it may be, it is important to remember that this prosperity is not universal.

During a business trip to Silicon Valley, I met a noblewoman, who introduced me to the world of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Despite my Catholic upbringing, I delved deeply into what it would mean to be a Knight. It's not just about wearing a cloak but about embracing the underlying values: compassion, servant leadership, loyalty, and

self-discipline.

The moment of my Investiture on Saturday, October 12, 2024, was a special one for me. As a Knight, I pledged to uphold the values of justice, mercy, and peace. It's not merely a ceremony but a lasting reminder of my responsibility to provide both financial and moral support.

During a visit to Rome in November, I received the book *The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume* by Cardinal Fernando Filoni. He uses the lessons of Mary of Bethany as a metaphor for our Order. She selflessly offers Jesus her precious oil as an act of love. Especially now, communities in the Holy Land face great challenges and need our emotional and, certainly, humanitarian support.

On Tuesday, November 19, I turned 40. This milestone made me realize that it's a wonderful moment to consciously practice the knightly virtues of compassion, spirituality, and mercy. As a Knight, husband, and father, I am determined to leave the world—and my children—a little better off, rooted in the values that Saint Martin and many other Catholic examples continue to teach us.



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FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME: THE “STUDIENJAHR’S” THEOLOGY STUDENTS VISIT THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM

*Among the 16 students, two have received scholarships
from the Lieutenancy for Austria*

On November 27, 2024, Father Nikodemus Schnabel, the Abbot of Dormition Abbey, paid a visit to the Cardinal Grand Master at the offices of the Grand Magisterium in Rome. For the encounter, Father Nikodemus was accompanied by a group of 16 German-speaking theology students who are spending a year of their theological studies (*Theologisches Studienjahr Jerusalem*) at the Dormition Benedictine Abbey in Jerusalem. The Abbey commemorates the death of Mary, Mother of God, and her Assumption into heaven. The Greek Orthodox archpriest and general vicar for Switzerland, Prof. Dr. Stefanos Athanasiou, and Benedictine monk Father Simeon Gloger completed the delegation.

The fact that the group had travelled to Rome was an unexpected development. As explained by Abbot Nikodemus, the group had to go “into exile” this year due to the complex situation in Jerusalem, an occurrence that has only happened three times over the years. “This group of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox German-speaking students, who were supposed to spend an entire year in Jerusalem, went into exile in the ‘90s during the missile attacks from Iraq and then again during the Covid pandemic. This year, we had to leave Jerusalem due to the tense situation there, and we are now guests in Rome at the Pontifical University of St. Anselm.”

The 16 students selected this year for the Studienjahr were particularly excited about their opportunity to spend a couple of hours at the Grand Magisterium. Among the group

were two students who had received scholarships from the Austrian Lieutenancy.

“The ecumenical project of the theological year at the Benedictines on Mount Zion in Jerusalem has existed for more than 50 years. The project is a precious opportunity for the scholarship recipients to deepen their knowledge of the Holy Land as the fifth Gospel, with its geography, its peoples, the three monotheistic religions, and its political challenges. I learned about this project at my theological faculty in Bressanone, South Tyrol, where I have been studying theology for more than three years,” said Alex Lamprecht. He then continued, explaining with great gratitude how he managed to get to Jerusalem: “To access the theological year in Jerusalem, there’s an exam to take, and after that exam, students from Germany receive a scholarship to participate in this extraordinary year. As an Italian citizen, I am not entitled to that scholarship, so I had to arrange everything on my own. The Lieutenancy for Austria has been supporting Austrian students who wish to participate in this project with a scholarship for years. This year, the Order also offered financial assistance to me.”

The second student to whom the Austrian Lieutenancy gave this opportunity is Benedikt Bischof. About the experience, he recounts, “When I started studying theology in Vienna, I was advised to consider the Theological Year in Jerusalem. I thought about this option for quite a while, and after almost four years of studies in Vienna, I decided to go to Jerusalem. I wanted to broaden my horizons and study the Holy





About fifteen German-speaking theology students, who are deepening their knowledge of the Holy Land in collaboration with the Dormition Abbey of Jerusalem, were received in Rome by the Grand Master of the Order. Two of the students have had their studies sponsored by the Lieutenancy for Austria.

Scriptures in the land of the Bible. I wanted to experience the Holy Land's singular spirituality, and also get to know myself better."

Unfortunately, the group spent only seven weeks in Jerusalem before being transferred to Rome, as Alex puts it, "from the Holy City to the Eternal City." Their return to Jerusalem came as a Christmas gift on the days before Christmas. The gift of being in the Holy Land was clear for this group. Benedikt comments, in this regard, "I am learning a lot from the people I am meeting in the Holy Land, from completely different cultures and the political conflicts in Israel and Palestine. From the beginning, I wanted to use this time to grow both as a human and spiritually, which is why I often visit the Holy Places to pray. One particularly special experience was the night I was locked in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre with other students. While there, I entrusted the entire academic year to God and asked Him to strengthen my trust in Him."

The group's time at the Grand Magisterium was a precious moment. During their time there, they discovered what this Pontifical Institution does for the Holy Land. Moreover, and more profoundly

still, they understood who the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre are and why they dedicate themselves to this mission in support of the living stones of the Holy Land.

"I have heard about the Order over the years through various members, and ecclesial events too where the Order is present. Thanks to my contacts with Members of the Order and the time I have spent in the Holy Land, I became very interested in the work and spirituality of the Order," said Benedikt. "It was therefore a great pleasure for me to visit the Grand Magisterium, meet the Cardinal Grand Master, and get to know the Order better. I was particularly impressed by the way the Grand Magisterium combines spirituality and work, for example, praying together the Angelus at lunchtime. Cardinal Filoni made an impression on me with his gentle and humble charisma," he continued.

Alex, speaking on his own behalf, concluded, "Thanks to the Order, I was able to visit the holy places, which are full of history and spiritual life. For this reason, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Order for both its financial and spiritual support."

Elena Dini

