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The Grand Master's Message

THE ORDER'S GREETING TO THE NEW POPE

Leo, a surprise name even for the Conclave Cardinals who had just elected Robert Francis Prevost the 267th Successor of the Apostle Peter, the 14th in the series of Popes with the same name, beginning – under the gaze of Michelangelo's Christ in the Sistine Chapel – his Petrine Ministry.

Indeed, since Pope Leo is the new Bishop of Rome and Head of the Catholic Church. His face, when the two-thirds of the votes were counted as I was acting as a scrutineer proclaiming the votes, expressed intense emotion in his awareness of the gravity of the mission to which God was calling him. That was also the moment when all the Cardinals stood up and gave him a long and warm applause as a sign of common approval, fraternal affection and encouragement. Without apparently losing his serene calm, Leo XIV showed us his face: that of a man of God fully adhering to His will, a sign of a faith on which he has always leaned and which led him from his native Illinois (USA) to

religious life among the Augustinians and then to the missions of the Apostolic Vicariates of Chulucanas, Iquitos and Apurímac; finally, to the guidance of the Diocese of Chiclayo (Peru), where Francis had destined him in 2014 before appointing him as Prefect of the Dicastery of Bishops in January 2023, and raising him to the dignity of Cardinal in the consistory on September 30 of the same year.

He is a spiritual son of St. Augustine, the great Bishop of Hippo who in his youth had wandered through the pagan-philosophical thought of his time (4th-5th century AD), to finally come to faith in Christ; Augustine was the greatest theologian of his era, who wanted

to give a rule of life to those who followed him in prayer and religious life; a rule which is still vital today.

Leo XIV said that he chose this name thinking in particular of two great Popes: Leo the Great (4th-5th cent.), a theologian, exegete and extraordinary pastor of souls, who gave prestige and authority



On June 24, 2025, Pope Leo XIV received the Grand Master and the Assessor of the Order in a private audience.

VATICAN MEDIA

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to the Church of Rome, clearly affirming the primacy of the Pope in the Church as a whole, since – he said – “the character of the papal dignity is unique,” and taught that “all those who are reborn in Christ achieve royal dignity by the sign of the cross”; moreover, he had not failed to defend faith against heresies and barbarian invasions; for Leo the Great, the Church was like a body in which Christ lived. Then Leo XIII (1810-1903), the great Pope of the “social question” of his century who wrote the first great encyclical (*Rerum Novarum*) on the social doctrine of the Church.

As I was in the Sistine Chapel next to the newly elected Pontiff, in a moment of pause, I pointed out to him that Leo XIII had introduced the presence of women in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem – it was in 1888 – and he expressed his surprise, not being aware of that impulse for reform given by that Pontiff to our Institution.

Leo XIV will be the Pope who, as he told

me, will take up the social issue of work because, he added, we are in a critical time for work, since work enables the growth of the dignity of the individual and the family, threatened by the invasion of the so-called Artificial Intelligence, the exploitation of child labour and workers without protection for the benefit of those who place profit above all other considerations.

He will be a Pontiff who will have Christ at the centre, Christ without whom every action is destined to an ideal and spiritual poverty. Almost a new humanism, not only integral, but Christian.

His pontifical motto that we can read below his coat of arms - *In Illo Uno Unum* (“In Christ we are one”) - is already a programme; it is inspired by St. Augustine and the Gospel of John in which Jesus asks his disciples to maintain unity in Him.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, faithful to the Pope, expresses its best wishes for his pontificate.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni



The Order in union with the Universal Church

THE IMMENSE JOY FOR THE ELECTION OF POPE LEO XIV

Following the conclave in May, Cardinal Fernando Filoni was interviewed by Le Figaro, France's most widely circulated newspaper, regarding the election of Pope Leo XIV. Here, we present the core questions of the interview between the Grand Master of the Order and the journalist Jean-Marie Guénois.

The new Pope has made some significant gestures and pronounced some key words, such as "peace", which seem to be fundamental for him. What do these signals indicate about the future direction of this pontificate?

The Pope lives the reality of the Church with her evangelizing commitment in today's world. As we can all clearly see, the world continues to be torn apart by wars and deeply troubling tensions that involve all of humanity. It is therefore essential that peaceful coexistence among peoples has to be restored everywhere, and this remains a primary concern for him. Indeed, peace was at the heart of his very first *urbi et orbi* greeting. Yet other pressing issues have already emerged, which he will undoubtedly face fearlessly. I am thinking of the crisis of the family, which is deprived of values in the Western world and trivialized through ideologies that run contrary to it; I am thinking of the crisis of employment, which deprives individuals and families of their dignity; I am thinking of migration, a global phenomenon that must be addressed primarily at its roots through respect for human rights, peaceful coexistence, and work itself. Others will emerge.

Leo XIV immediately sought to give voice to the cardinals by seeking their opinion, and then, in his address to the diplomatic corps, he emphasized the central role of the Roman Curia in his governance. Is this a sign of a rebalancing in the way the Catholic Church is governed?

From his very first exchanges with the Cardinals, immediately after his election, Leo XIV said that he would not forget all that had emerged during the pre-conclave General Congregations. Much had been discussed in those meetings. He is aware that the Church cannot be entrusted to a single person; he feels the need to be supported by his brother Cardinals, who, from the very moment following the election, in their personal gestures of greeting and homage, pledged their loyalty and collaboration. He will convene with them regularly. The Cardinals themselves are well aware that the choice of Leo XIV is the result of a shared vision of the Church; above all, fidelity to tradition and sensitivity to everyday realities. On several occasions before the conclave, the *media* asked me how things were going in the daily meetings, to which I replied that each one was making their own contribution, and the figure of the future Pope was gradually taking shape. And today, here we are.





taught by the Second Vatican Council, though not as a form of elitist defense, because it is through the Church's sacramentality that grace is communicated to the faithful. True *collegiality* should be renewed with close attention to the Bishops' Conferences and the Synods of Bishops, which have been the sure path along which the post-conciliar Church has walked for over sixty years. This does not exclude the synodal listening of the faithful, religious, and even non-believers.

What do you think of Pope Leo XIV's rather classical liturgical style?

Leo XIV has a liturgical sensibility that is not minimalist but rather more holistic, one that seems to unite simplicity with solemnity. These aspects do not run counter to each other, because they indicate that through the liturgy faith is manifested, worship is rendered to God (matters that are far from trivial), and the dignity of communal prayer is made visible. Simplicity removes trappings that belong to cultures or practices that are no longer fully understood. In addition, I believe we should avoid falling into the trap of liturgical oppositions, bearing in mind that for centuries the faith we all profess has been expressed in forms that, according to the liturgical reform, still seek to do the same today in equally comprehensible ways. We need to move beyond ideological frameworks and focus on the genuine desire to express our faith and our praise to God. France could be an interesting testing ground for this.

In his address to the diplomatic corps, the new Pope expressed his view on international issues using three key words, these being peace, justice, and truth. He placed Christ at the center of each as a fundamental reference point for the Church's position. How does this "Christocentric" approach to geopolitical issues differ from that of

Pope Francis?

The themes raised by the Pope are not based on a merely socio-political vision; instead, they stem from the Church's view of the world. The Church is rich in peoples, languages, cultures, and social expressions of great interest. At times she is in a majority position, at times in a minority one, but nonetheless always held in high moral regard and beyond. The leaven is always the Gospel, with its enzymes fermenting the realities in which it is placed. The center of the Gospel is Christ. The Cardinal Fathers called for a renewed Christocentrism in their pre-conclave meetings, and I believe this aligns with the personal vision of a Pope who comes from the missions, where the proclamation of Christ is at the heart of all pastoral and social activity.

You are obviously bound by secrecy regarding the conclave, but can you tell us how the supposed impossibility of electing a Pope born in the United States was overcome?

What I can say, and to the best of my knowledge, is that in the Conclave, the nationality of the candidates was not a criterion in the evaluation, but rather each one's suitability to respond to the Church's present needs. Moreover, I am certain that, in the specific case of Leo XIV, this was the Cardinals' guiding principle, given the wide consensus he received. Leo XIV presents a compelling profile. He is a churchman with a missionary heart, with Augustinian religious roots, that is, following the tradition of a man (Augustine) who came to know the faith and experienced it in a profoundly existential and highly theological way. In addition, he is a farsighted, and a patient pastor, who is deeply human and well acquainted with the inner workings of the service the Curia is called to render.

One of the most important and controversial issues for the Catholic



Church is its relationship with China. In your opinion, how should the new Pope approach this delicate and crucial matter?

China is a Country I know fairly well, having worked from 1993 to 2001 as Head of the Holy See's Study Mission in Hong Kong and later as Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. One question in particular arises, which is, is the People's Republic of China interested in guaranteeing all its citizens freedom of conscience and doing so for their own good? That is the real issue. In China, Christians are not persecuted because of Christ; the question is whether they are truly free or not to join the Patriotic Association, which is an institution created precisely to prevent fidelity and freedom toward the universal Church and the Pope. The Pope is well aware of this.

Priestly vocations in the Church are not doing well, except in some Countries in Africa and Asia. How should the Catholic Church address the question of the call to priesthood?

Vocations are at the heart of the pastoral vision of the Pope and the Church. In the West, we have the issue of low birth rates, and without children, there can be no vocations! In Africa, Asia, and a few other places, the situation is different. Still, it is encouraging to see that there are young people, men and women, who, as adults, feel drawn to a life of prayer and self-giving, and who listen to God's call. Nonetheless, more must be done. Today, ecclesial Movements often provide the environment in which generous vocational choices are made. Parents should not obstruct this call, even if they have only one or two children.

"ONLY A PEACEFUL HEART CAN SPREAD PEACE"

Pope Leo XIV is a tireless apostle of peace

"**P**eace be with you all! Dear brothers and sisters, these are the first words spoken by the risen Christ, the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for God's flock. I would like this greeting of peace to resound in your hearts, in your families, among all people, wherever they may be, in every nation and throughout the world. Peace be with you! It is the peace of the risen Christ. A peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering. A peace that comes from God, the God who loves us all, unconditionally."

This is how on May 8, 2025, on the day of his election, the man we had just come to know as Pope Leo XIV, Robert Francis Prevost, began his visibly emotional greeting from the Loggia of Blessings at St. Peter's.

From these first words, it is evident that

peace has clearly emerged as a central theme for the new Pontiff. Peace is what the Risen Christ offers us. He, who passed through violence, aggression, and death, and – from his victory over them – brings with him peace as a gift. The peace that he wishes for is first and foremost able to enter the heart, because it is from there that it can change each person's vision of reality. The heart hosts the hope that animates us and changes how we look at the present, the future, and even the past, because peace is a small shoot that we can choose to let either bear fruit or, sadly, let wither. Today, as members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, devoted as we are to the Land of Jesus, it is fitting that we turn our gaze there. There, where the yearning for peace is profound yet often appears as a distant



mirage; toward the world, to all peoples and nations, with the vision of peace that the Holy Father calls us, which emanates from the Empty Sepulchre.

"Un-armed" and "dis-arming". This is how the peace of the Risen One presents itself. Without weapons to defend it because it comes from God, who needs no weapons, and with no will of producing them.

At an audience granted May 30 in the Clementine Hall to the Movements and Associations that gave rise to the "Arena of Peace" in Verona in May 2024, Pope Leo stated, "The path to peace demands hearts

terms, "How can we forget the courageous embrace between Maoz Inon, an Israeli whose parents were killed by Hamas, and Aziz Sarah, a Palestinian whose brother was killed by the Israeli army. They are now friends and work with one another. That gesture remains as a testimony and sign of hope. We thank them for being here today."

Peace and hope is a difficult pairing, which at times seems quite impossible. In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus reminds us, "How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life"

(Mt 7:14), and his words resonate strongly when we look to the Holy Land. In the early weeks of his Pontificate, Pope Leo XIV has continually shown his closeness to the populations affected by the conflict and does not cease to call for peace.

At the conclusion of his first Wednesday General Audience in St Peter's Square on May 21, 2025, he stated, "The situation in the Gaza Strip is increasingly worrying and painful. I renew my heartfelt appeal to allow the entry of dignified humanitarian aid and to put an end to the hostilities, the heart-rending price of which is being paid by children, the elderly and the sick." He repeated this message the following Wednesday, stating "I renew my appeal to the leaders: cease fire, release all hostages, fully respect humanitarian law."

humanitarian law."

On the Solemnity of Pentecost, June 8, the Pontiff once again asked the Holy Spirit for the gift of peace. "Now, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us ask from the Holy Spirit the gift of peace. First, peace in our hearts, for only a peaceful heart can spread peace in the family, society and international relations. May the Spirit of the risen Christ open paths of reconciliation wherever there is war; may he enlighten those who govern and give them the courage to make gestures of de-escalation and dialogue."



VATICAN MEDIA

Two peacemakers, Maoz and Aziz, an Israeli and a Palestinian, received by Pope Leo XIV this past May.

and minds trained in concern for others and capable of perceiving the common good in today's world. For the road to peace involves everyone and leads to the fostering of right relationships between all living beings. As John Paul II pointed out, peace is an indivisible good; it is either everyone's or no one's". A year earlier, in Verona Pope Francis had welcomed Maoz Inon and Aziz Sarah, two peace activists and entrepreneurs, who, despite the war having claimed members of their families, continue to fight for peace. Maoz and Aziz met Pope Leo XIV this time, who spoke of their experience in these



THE CANONIZATION OF BARTOLO LONGO

The decree for the future canonization of Bartolo Longo, Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, was signed by Pope Francis during his final hospitalisation at the Gemelli Hospital last winter. It was his successor, Pope Leo XIV, who set the date for the celebration during the first Consistory of the new pontificate, held on June 13. Bartolo Longo will therefore be canonized on October 19. In the following article, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, Governor General of the Order, retraces the life of this remarkable witness to the faith.

On February 25, devotees of Our Lady of Pompeii around the world rejoiced at receiving a long-awaited announcement: from his hospital bed, Pope Francis had approved the canonization of Bartolo Longo, who had previously been beatified by Pope John Paul II on October 26, 1980.

Bartolo Longo was laid to rest in the Shrine of Pompeii, in a chapel dedicated to him. He was adorned in the cloak and insignia of a Knight Grand Cross of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. But who was this extraordinary man?

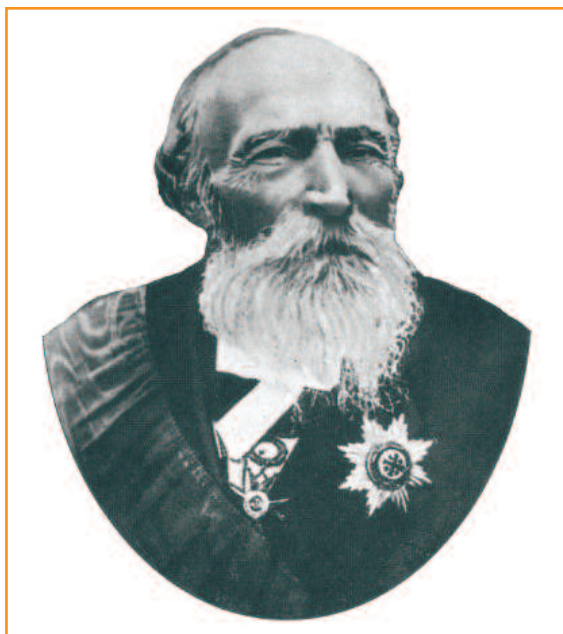
Bartolo Longo played a pivotal role in the founding of "New Pompeii," the city that grew around the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary.

In 1872, Longo went to Pompeii Valley and was deeply struck by the spiritual and material poverty of the population. Convinced of the need for a religious and social

rebirth, he began to promote devotion to the Rosary. In 1875, with the arrival of the painting of Our Lady (November 13), he started the construction of a shrine dedicated to the Virgin, the first stone of which was laid on May 8, 1876 and consecrated a year later on May 7, 1891.

Around the shrine, Bartolo Longo established a network of charitable and educational institutions. These included orphanages for girls, homes for the children of prisoners, a printing press to publish religious materials and promote devotion to the Rosary, housing for workers, and a music school. These religious and social initiatives laid the groundwork for the development of other essential infrastructure such as a railway station, post and telegraph offices, roads, aqueducts, and electrical networks.

Through his tireless efforts, Bartolo Longo helped establish the Shrine of Pompeii as a major Marian pilgrimage site. In



A photo of Bartolo Longo in his old age, wearing the insignia of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, of which he became a Member towards the end of his life.





Bartolo Longo is a model and a powerful intercessor for all Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

Bartolo Longo's faith, born of a profound conversion from secularism and atheism, was both strong and sincere, as reflected in the intensity of his prayers. In his *Supplication to the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary*, composed in 1883, we find deeply moving expressions of devotion, for example, "[...] with the confidence of children we expose our miseries to you [...]"; "we will not part from your knees until you have blessed us"; and, "you will be our comfort in our hour of agony: to you the last kiss of life as it fades away."

Moreover, his faith was expressed above all through a profound commitment to charity and love for the marginalized. This was most evident in the creation of innovative initiatives for the

addition, he became the driving force behind the birth and growth of the modern city of Pompeii, transforming a once-desolate valley into a vibrant center of faith, charity, and social progress.

Pope Francis' decision to canonize Bartolo Longo is a tribute to a modern saint and a visionary ahead of his time. With a prophetic outlook that united faith and charity, Bartolo Longo anticipated the themes of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* and embodied the Church's concern for the most vulnerable. He stands as a shining example of lay holiness in action.

care and education of orphans, the destitute, disadvantaged minors, and the children of prisoners.

The canonization of Bartolo Longo, who was an illustrious member of our Order, honored with the distinction of Knight Grand Cross by Apostolic Brief of Pope Pius XI on March 5, 1925, is an event of extraordinary significance for all of us, Knights and Dames.

If we look at Article 4 of our Constitution, which outlines the commitments of a member (personal renunciation, generosity, courage, solidarity, concern, involvement, and cooperation) we can clearly see how





The Assessor of the Order and Prelate Archbishop of Pompeii, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, in prayer before the relic of Blessed Bartolo Longo, in the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary. The Shrine was founded by the future Saint near the ancient city destroyed by Mount Vesuvius.

Bartolo Longo exemplifies each of these virtues.

He undoubtedly renounced personal interests for the common good, dedicating his energy and resources to the marginalized and the needy.

He was generous, offering help to the most vulnerable and less fortunate. He took in orphans, founded kindergartens, supported the rehabilitation of prisoners and cared for their children, while promoting both evangelization and social progress in a land still marked by poverty and neglect.

He showed remarkable courage, commencing as he did with nothing and resolutely bringing the "New Pompeii" project to life. This work became his true miracle, and one that was well ahead of its time.

He stood in solidarity with the Church's charitable initiatives, in harmony with saints such as Ludovico da Casoria (the poor friar through whose hands Providence made treasures flow), whom he regarded as a

teacher, and Caterina Volpicelli, the architect of his conversion and the inspiration behind the foundation of the Sanctuary.

He was deeply committed to defending the rights of the Church during a turbulent era marked by conflict with the Kingdom of Italy. This period saw rising anticlerical sentiment and growing divisions within society, even among Catholics themselves. As he wrote in the *Supplication*, "We implore mercy for our Italy, which God has enriched above all the nations of the earth, by allowing it to host within its bosom the Head of the entire Catholic World".

He committed himself to the cause of universal peace, dedicating the inauguration of the new basilica's façade to this ideal, and anticipated the appeals of Benedict XV against the senseless slaughter of the Great War.

He fostered collaboration with individuals who shared his ideals, some of whom, like him, were later raised to the glory of the altars. Among them were Father Giovanni Bosco, whose teachings inspired him to vigorously promote the principles of faith and charity, and Giuseppe Moscati, his personal physician. Moscati cared for him until his death on October 5, 1926, at the age of eighty-five, and generously treated orphans and the sick welcomed in Pompeii free of charge.

We joyfully welcome Pope Francis's decision, which was a significant gesture made before his departure, and a touching sign of affection for our Order. We see it as aligned with the social commitment first expressed at the beginning of Pope Leo XIV's pontificate. To conclude, we embrace Bartolo Longo's words when he said, "Charity without faith would be the greatest of lies. Faith without charity would be the greatest of contradictions."

Leonardo Visconti di Modrone
Governor General



Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

GEOGRAPHICALLY DISTANT BUT VERY CLOSE IN MISSION AND SPIRIT

The Governor General's visit to the Asia-Pacific region

At the end of May, the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, accompanied by Father Maxim Baz, visited the Asia-Pacific area. This is a region that, while geographically very distant from the offices of the Grand Magisterium in Rome and from the Holy Land, is very close to the mission and spirit of the Order. Moreover, it has proven to be highly active and in a phase of expansion.

Upon his return, the Governor General commented, "I found great devotion and a clear understanding of what the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is and of its development,

especially in recent years. All the Members have read and delved into the main documents that have been recently circulated and are up to date and eager to learn more."

In an evocative ceremony that was held at the Bishop's residence in Penang, Malaysia, an Asian country with a Muslim majority, Cardinal Sebastian Francis was invested a Member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre by the Archbishop of Taipei and Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Taiwan, Monsignor Thomas Chung An-Zu. Cardinal Francis was subsequently appointed Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Malaysia-Penang.



The Governor General of the Order surrounded by the Lieutenants of the Asia-Pacific region, together with Father Maxim Baz.



A Prayer Vigil on Saturday, May 24, which was attended by the Apostolic Nuncio, Monsignor Wojciech Zaluski, preceded the Investiture. The next day, the Investiture ceremony for Knights, Dames, and ecclesiastics of the Lieutenancy for Malaysia-Penang took place with the participation of numerous Members of the Order from Australia and Taiwan.

The event marked the conclusion of a long process of preparation towards the autonomy of what until then had been a Section of the Lieutenancy for West Australia. Governor General Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone was present

and conveyed a message of congratulations for the new Lieutenancy on behalf of the Cardinal Grand Master.

After the ceremonies in Penang, the Governor General travelled to Australia, where the Order has five Lieutenancies and is celebrating 40 years of presence there this year.

The National Conference of Australian Lieutenants took place in Perth on Saturday, May 31. The Conference was preceded by a series of meetings between the Governor General and Monsignor Timothy Costelloe, Metropolitan Archbishop of Perth and Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for West

The history of the newly established Lieutenancy for Malaysia–Penang

The history that has brought us to the present day is rooted in a past marked by dedication and vision. It was the late Knight Alan Voisey, who was a member of the Lieutenancy for West Australia, who introduced the Order to the Diocese of Penang. During his time there, he became an active member of the Immaculate Conception Parish, and forged a valuable friendship with the then parish priest, the Reverend Father Michael Cheah.

In 2013, Knight Voisey, together with the Lieutenant of Honour for West Australia, Robert Peters, approached the then Bishop, Sebastian Francis, to seek his approval for the introduction of the Order. Although he did not yet feel ready to assume the role of Grand Prior, Bishop Francis very generously gave his consent for the first candidates to be invested as Members of the Lieutenancy for West Australia.

The first Investiture of thirteen members from the Diocese of Penang, including the Reverend Father Michael Cheah, was conducted by the Grand Prior, Bishop Timothy Costelloe, in St Mary's Cathedral in Perth in 2014.

Five years on, and as a consequence of the growth in membership and the valuable support of Vice Governor General Paul Bartley, Lieutenant Jack Gardner received approval from the then Grand Master, Cardinal Edwin F. O'Brien, for the creation of the Penang Section. This took place on January 23, 2019. Dame Anna Wong was appointed the first Section President, and the Reverend Father Michael Cheah became Prior. At that point, the idea of establishing an autonomous Magistral Delegation, which would be separate from the West Australia Lieutenancy, began to take shape.



In the presence of the local Lieutenant, Luis Chen, Cardinal Francis, Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Malaysia-Penang, signs his commitment to spiritually accompany the Members of the Order.



Australia, as well as with all the attending Lieutenants. This regular gathering of the Order's leaders from the region was expanded to include representatives from across Asia and the Pacific, with the participation of the Lieutenants from New Zealand, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Malaysia-Penang.

In conveying greetings from the Grand Master and the Grand Magisterium, the Governor General, in his address, highlighted the Order's increased initiatives in support of the Holy Land during this particularly tragic time. He also reaffirmed the commitment to ensuring a steady flow of

funds for the humanitarian and pastoral work of the Latin Patriarchate.

"Saturday was entirely devoted to reflection and prayer," shared Ambassador Visconti di Modrone. "Alongside the Lieutenants, more than a hundred Knights and Dames took part in the day's events.

The following day, Archbishop Costelloe celebrated the Sunday Mass for the Solemnity of the Ascension at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Perth. Speaking before a full congregation, he took the opportunity to introduce the Order and expressed his hope that many more of the faithful would be inspired to join."



In May 2019, Kevin Susai, who was the new Lieutenant for West Australia, gave renewed momentum to the path towards autonomy by encouraging an increasing number of Catholic faithful from various parishes across the Diocese of Penang to join those already part of the Order.

Four years later, in March 2023, Knight Dr. Luis Chen succeeded Anna Wong as Section President, and today we celebrate him as the first Lieutenant of the Lieutenancy of Malaysia. A pivotal moment in this journey was a meeting in Rome between His Eminence Cardinal Sebastian Francis and the Grand Master of the Order, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, on May 13, 2024. From that meeting came Cardinal Sebastian Francis' agreement to assume the high office of Grand Prior.

Leonardo Visconti di Modrone
Governor General



AWARDS PRESENTED TO THE GRAND MASTER

The Catalejo Award

In a solemn ceremony held at the Palace of the Senate in Madrid, the Catalejo Award for the defense of human rights was presented to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The prestigious award was received on behalf of the Cardinal Grand Master by Ambassador Alfredo Bastianelli, Chancellor of the Order. The two Spanish Lieutenants, José Carlos Sanjuán y Monforte and Juan Carlos de Balle y Comas joined him at the award ceremony.



The gold medal of the *Sociedad de Estudios Internacionales*

On June 12, 2025, following a Eucharistic celebration in the Church of Saint Onofrio, the spiritual home of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in Rome, Cardinal Fernando Filoni received the gold medal of the *Sociedad de Estudios Internacionales* from the Rector, Juan Solaeche-Jaureguizar y Bielsa, in the presence of a large representation of Dames and Knights of the Order.

The *Sociedad de Estudios Internacionales* (Society of International Studies) wished to award its prestigious gold medal to Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, in honour of his extraordinary work aimed at promoting intercultural understanding and interreligious dialogue on a global scale.

The Society of International Studies (SEI) is a Spanish non-profit institution that for over 88 years has been dedicated to the analysis, study, and dissemination of topics related to international relations.

Throughout its history, SEI has organized a wide variety of academic and training activities,



including courses, conferences, seminars, round tables, and debates. Its mission is to promote a more humane society through scientific, educational, cultural, and technical cooperation in the field of international relations.

SEI particularly values the principles that inspire the actions of Cardinal Filoni and the Order he leads; for example, self-discipline, the witness of faith, generosity toward the most vulnerable, the pursuit of justice and peace, solidarity, attention to the Christian presence in the Holy Land, and collaboration with other entities that share similar goals.

This recognition reflects SEI's commitment to promoting universal values and its interest in highlighting figures who, like Cardinal Filoni, have contributed significantly to peace, understanding, and international cooperation.

The International Mozia Award

On June 21, the International Mozia Award was presented to Cardinal Fernando Filoni for his meritorious work in fulfilling his magisterium in service to the Church and, in particular, for the Holy Land. The award recognizes Italian excellence in various spheres of life. These can range from culture to innovation, from medicine to scientific research, from sports to current affairs. Its aim is to enhance the archaeological area of Mozia, in Sicily, in view of its upcoming candidacy as an UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage site.

Mozia is a Sicilian site located on the island of San Pantaleo, which can be reached by boat from Marsala. The easily accessible ruins of the Phoenician city of Motya are unique in their kind, covering the entire island.



In Preparation for the Jubilee of the Order

The Jubilee Year continues to unfold with abundant graces. To fully embrace this sacred time, within the Church, various communities are organizing initiatives. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre is about to experience a special time of pilgrimage and communal prayer for which we are currently preparing.

From October 21 to 23, more than 3,000 Members of the Order will gather in Rome. Under the spiritual guidance of the Grand Master, they will pass through the four Holy Doors of the major Roman

basilicas. This Jubilee pilgrimage promises to be a deeply moving experience, offering participants the grace of a plenary indulgence and the profound joy of encountering the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV.

A Jubilee is a time of transition and inner growth. When experienced together as Knights and Dames of the Order, it will surely bear fruits not only in the life of each individual but also bring new energy and impetus to our Pontifical Institution.

Follow the Jubilee special on our website for more information.



The Order and the Holy Land

CALLING FOR PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND



Let Us Pray Together for a Just Peace

O God of Peace, "You are the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). You have said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27).

We lift our weary hearts to You, Lord, Longing for Your light amid the shadows of fear and unrest. Teach us to be peacemakers, For "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Mt 5:9). Sow in us the seeds of reconciliation, and make us instruments of Your peace in a wounded world.

Grant us the grace to live as You have commanded: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Rom 12:18). Let there be in our cities and lands: "Peace within your walls, and security within your towers" (Ps 122:7). In the midst of trouble, we proclaim: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Ps 27:1). "I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Ps 4:8).

We trust in Your everlasting promise: "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). Amen.

In this time of violence and war, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre stands in close solidarity with the Mother Church in the Holy Land. In the early days of the clashes between Israel and Iran, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem issued the prayer above. This is a heartfelt appeal for a just peace, which is a gift we invoke through God's grace.

During the days of the war between Israel and Iran we reached out to Msgr. Rafic Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar for Israel. "The whole country is blocked these days because of this new conflict. We are back on Zoom for schools and few shops are opening. About Gaza, there is little talk in the Israeli press now, and what there is its mainly

about the hostages. But the problem in Gaza is much bigger: there is a civilian population to whom food and medicine cannot get to," he said. Widening his gaze to the West Bank, Msgr. Nahra recounts how difficult it is to leave and enter Israel, and if one can, it only happens for reasons of extreme necessity. "Praying for peace, and encouraging our faithful not to leave: this is what we can do at this time. And we ask you not to delay in returning to us once the war is over because the local Christians need you," concluded Msgr. Nahra addressing the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

During the early days of hostilities between Israel and Iran, among the pilgrims in the Holy Land was Giuseppe Marrani,



Lieutenant for Central Apennine Italy. He recalls how the night of 12-13 June took them by surprise. "We were woken by air-raid sirens, and the following morning we were advised to leave Jerusalem as soon as possible and head for Jordan." Reflecting on

the experience, Marrani remarked that, "as Members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, such moments call for deep reflection on how to provide concrete help to our brothers and sisters living in this conflict-torn land."

"TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE"

An interview with Bishop Iyad Twal

Bishop Iyad Twal was ordained a bishop on February 28, 2025, at Al-Maghtas, the Baptism Site of Christ. The new bishop was born on July 15, 1973, in Amman, the capital of Jordan. He studied Philosophy and Theology at the Seminary of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and was

ordained a priest in Madaba on July 9, 1998. From 2016 to 2019, he served as Director of the schools of the Latin Patriarchate in Palestine and Israel, during which time the Order worked closely with him on peace education initiatives. In Jordan, Christians – Catholics (Melkite, Latin, and



The Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan, Msgr. Iyad Twal, with Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, next to the church near the site of Jesus' baptism, on the day of his episcopal ordination.

LATIN PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM



Armenian), Orthodox, and Protestants – make up about 4% of the approximately 11 million total population. Under the authority of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan coordinates the pastoral care and activities of 32 parishes and oversees the management of the University of Madaba. In addition, he coordinates the operations of a wide network of Catholic schools at various levels, where both Christian and Muslim students study together.

Bishop Iyad Twal, how have you been experiencing the new mission entrusted to you by the late Pope? Do you have a plan?

I welcome this episcopal mission as a grace, with boundless trust in Divine Providence. My experience as a priest of the Latin Patriarchate is mostly tied to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Beit Sahour, although I was born in Jordan. Following my appointment as Bishop and Patriarchal Vicar in Jordan, I have spent my time visiting parishes, which are far more numerous than in the rest of the Latin Patriarchate's territory in either Palestine, Israel, or Cyprus. We have more than thirty parishes, and religious life is a very important reality. The relations with the Muslim community and with the State are excellent. My episcopal ordination, which took place in the Church of the Baptism of Christ, consecrated this year by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, was a message of joy, and a testimony to a vibrant Catholic community.

What coat of arms and Episcopal motto have you chosen?

On my coat of arms, I wanted to depict the places that are central to my Christian life, which are located not far from the city of Madaba where I was born, and linked to two biblical figures who inspire my ministry in the service of truth: Mount Nebo, which recalls Moses and the Promised Land to

which he led God's people; and the Jordan River, where John the Baptist and his disciples performed baptisms; and finally, the fortress where the prophet was beheaded. My motto is a phrase taken from the Acts of the Apostles (20:24): "to bear witness to the gospel of God's grace."

How does the Church's pastoral work in the Holy Land remain coherent, given the vastly different contexts from one country to another, with the tragedy in Palestine on one hand, the discrimination in Israel on the other, and the serenity of ecclesial life in Jordan? What unites the mission of the Latin Patriarchate operating across this vast biblical territory?

The Holy Places constitute the biblical, theological, and spiritual unity of the pastoral work of the Latin Patriarchate, as do the Arabic language and culture. Jordan is part of the Holy Land. Jordanian priests have served in Palestine and Israel for a long time, even before the Six-Day War in 1967. Jordan is a welcoming country, and the many descendants of Palestinian refugees, who are well integrated, maintain fraternal and friendly ties on both sides of the Jordan River.

What message would you like to address to the Members of the Order?

I would like to thank the Knights and Dames for their regular spiritual and material support, for their faithful friendship, which they express in the name of the universal Church. I invite them all to come on a pilgrimage to Jordan, to rekindle their mission at the roots of our Christian faith. In agreement with the Grand Master of the Order, I wish to encourage and support the establishment of a new Lieutenancy in Jordan, which we must create to gather the few Knights and Dames already present in the Country and to recruit many more.

**Interview conducted in the Holy Land,
by François Vayne**



"WE WANT TO REMAIN LIVING STONES IN THE HOLY LAND!"

During their spring visit to Israel and Palestine, the members of the Grand Magisterium's Holy Land Commission were moved by the testimonies of the Latin Patriarchate's administrative staff members. George Akroush, Director of the Latin Patriarchate's Development Office, answered our questions.

What can you tell us about the situation in the Holy Land?

The situation is most critical. We have never faced such big challenges concerning the presence of Christians in the Holy Land before. Unfortunately, most of our people are unemployed following the outbreak of this war in Gaza. The Christian community largely depends on the tourism sector and this is what makes the ongoing conflict so challenging to us in particular. We can even say that 70% of the Christian community is either directly or indirectly dependent on the tourism sector. These people already suffered a lot during the Covid crisis. Then, they could work for only one year before the war started in Gaza. And again, they are suffering now from a lack of income. Indeed, the Israeli authorities have closed the checkpoints, and all the Christians who used to work in Jerusalem have lost their jobs, except for the very few who work for Christian organizations and some schools.

How many checkpoints are there in the West Bank?

Around 900, including what we call "iron

gates", which means that even in the city itself you are not allowed to move from one place to another. Travelling from Ramallah to Jerusalem has become impossible, and travelling from Bethlehem to Ramallah is difficult, because we can get stuck at a checkpoint for between three to six hours.



Georges Akroush, a Palestinian administrative staff member of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, outlines the challenges currently facing the Holy Land.

What is the proportion of Christians affected?

At least half of the Christians of the West Bank have been left without any employment. And what is very important to realize is that this does not only affect the people who used to work in hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, and those working with

handcrafts, like olivewood, or mother of pearl; it also affects other businesses that also depend on tourism. We have many "patisserie" shops in Bethlehem for example, and these shopkeepers have lost at least 70% of their previous income as well. So, the Church has to deal with a high percentage of unemployment. We anticipate that 74% of the Christian youth are not working at the moment, which is a major humanitarian burden on the Church. We are the only



place they can turn to in these harsh times.

The US aid has come to an end. What is the impact of this measure?

After the election of Trump, the American Administration decided to close down the USAID programs to the Palestinian people. Here, we are talking about major sectors that used to be supported by that source of American aid, for example health, education, or infrastructure projects. So, thousands of people lost their jobs, including many Christians. There were about 300 who used to work in the US aid offices, whether that be in Jerusalem or the West Bank. The Patriarchate is the driving force in the Holy Land for job creation, humanitarian assistance, medical supplies, operations and medical procedures. This with all thanks to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

What other organizations support the Patriarchate?

There are many organizations, churches and parishes from all over the world who support us, but not as much as the Order, of course. I think that the second largest support to the Patriarchate is from ACN - Aid to the Church in Need.

What can you say to our Members around the world to motivate them to help the Church right now? What are the concrete priorities?

First, I think that, without the commitment of the Knights and Dames, the local Church cannot sustain its activities that are considered the only lifeline for local Christians. Without the

Order, we would not be able to continue our educational mission, pastoral work or the humanitarian intervention programs including job creation. Many families have been left without any source of income for sixteen months. We depend on the Order to pay for the medications for people who suffer from chronic diseases, and to cover the costs of medical operations. We have over 50 Christians studying medicine, for instance; we are helping them, and this is a very expensive operation, however this is a life-changing experience as well where they become independent and can help others in the near future. Therefore, through the Order, we have been able to secure some funds for this vital initiative.

Could you share a few words about your life? What is your hope?

I was born in Jerusalem, and I am Palestinian. As a person and a father of three children, two daughters and a son aged 21, 18 and 11, I have never experienced anything as challenging as this. I will turn 50 next year, and I have survived several wars that have taken place in our region starting from the first Intifada to the Gulf Wars to the second Intifada and over six wars in Gaza. I have been working for the Church institutions for the past 27 years, but I have

never experienced a situation like this one. So, now, we really are calling upon all the people who wish to witness a continued Christian presence in the Holy Land to expand their support to us, because it would be really too painful to see the Holy Land, the land of incarnation and salvation, with no Christians. We do not want to turn this land into a museum; we

Statistical data

It is difficult to have precise numbers, but it is estimated that Catholics represent about half of the local Churches in the Holy Land, except in Israel, where they account for slightly less than 80% of the Christian population. In Jerusalem, the Christian community currently numbers around 9,900 people, including approximately 5,400 Roman Catholics, making it the largest Christian denomination. Within the Old City, there are about 4,000 Christians, while around 5,000 live outside its walls.



want to remain the living stones of the land of our Lord Jesus.

Pope John Paul II helped bring down the Berlin wall. Do you think that a pope could put an end to the war here?

Both Pope Francis and Pope Leo have said that hope in action consists of rebuilding bridges, and bringing down walls. It is a big dream for us to be able, one day, to live in the Holy Land without walls and without all these complications for Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. We share the same History, and we will have the same future as well. So, peace

and justice are the only solutions, for our children to remain in their homeland, for the Holy Land and also to bring back all the Christians who have emigrated to Latin America, Europe and to all over the world. In Chile, for instance, in Santiago, more than 500,000 Palestinian Christians have left the Holy Land because of the political and socioeconomic hardships. Any peace agreement between Israel and Palestine would benefit the Christians first who are caught up in this terrible conflict. Therefore, I pray that one day, a Pope may knock down all the walls here too.

Interview by François Vayne

THE CREATIVITY OF CHARITY IN TAYBEH, A PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN VILLAGE

Among the projects supported by the Order and completed in the first six months of 2025, there are three that aimed to support the population of a small Palestinian village whose population is entirely Christian, which is a rare occurrence in the Holy Land.

Taybeh, as Latin parish priest Father Bashar Fawadleh emphatically recounts, is "the biblical Ephraim where Jesus chose to withdraw. 'Jesus no longer walked about in public among the Jews, but he left for the region near the desert, to a town called Ephraim, and there he remained with his disciples.' (Jn 11:54). Taybeh is also the place where Saint Charles de Foucauld stayed on several



It is said that Jesus stayed in Taybeh with his apostles after the resurrection of Lazarus.

occasions, and where he wrote his *Lenten Retreat*."

Taybeh is a small oasis, a place of prayer and everyday life for its 1,350 inhabitants, and for those who pass through or decide to live there too, as did the Latin Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Michel Sabbah. Father Bashar continues, "Taybeh is a city with a big heart and a long tradition of hospitality. Even today, when the situation allows, many groups of pilgrims stop here. They are welcomed in the Latin parish complex at the 'Charles de Foucauld' guesthouse, and on Sundays, they attend the parish Mass and meet the living stones of Jesus' land. For our

village, it's a breath of fresh air, and reminds us too of the importance of our Christian



presence in the Holy Land."

The situation in Palestinian villages is extremely difficult to bear, and the parish priest does not mince his words in describing the severity of the situation. The war is having a clearly devastating impact in Gaza, but also in Jerusalem and the West Bank, where Palestinians are suffering, especially the young, who long for more freedom. For them, it is hard to keep hope alive.

"When settlers prevent them from going to their land to harvest olives," explains Father Bashar, "they commit an act of violence against them! Likewise, when the army sets up checkpoints that, without reason, block their movement between cities in the Palestinian territories within their own country, consequently preventing them from going to work. This yearning for freedom is sometimes too strong, and parents want to offer their children a better future. As a result", he concludes, "eleven families have left Taybeh since October 7, 2023."

It is in this context that the Order's commitment comes into play. In coordination with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, it has supported three projects benefiting the local community: one for a school, one for a retirement home, and one for a convent.

In one of the two Patriarchate schools, renovation work was completed on the playgrounds, which had been in poor condition and posed an accident risk for children. Today, the entire area has been modernized and made safe with the addition of new resources to the playgrounds, for example, safety barriers, and a lighting system suitable for use in the afternoon and evening. In fact, the area is available not only to students but also to all young people and parishioners, as the school also functions as a community center offering cultural, sporting, spiritual, and social activities.

The second project concerns the Beit



Some children from Taybeh dressed in traditional Palestinian clothing during a school play.

Afram retirement home in Taybeh, which is managed by the Sisters of the Incarnate Word. Founded in 2005, it offers an environment where the elderly are cared for, and are happy, independent, and socially integrated. As of now, the facility hosts 24 residents and employs 25 staff members. Its mission is to allow the elderly to experience this phase of their lives with dignity, in a setting where they feel they can still contribute and make a positive impact on the community. In 2019, Beit Afram received a notice from the municipality requiring it to comply with safety standards set by local authorities. This entailed, conforming to fire safety regulations, specific evacuation procedures, a full nursing call system, and adequate insurance coverage. Adaptation work financed by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre began in 2022 and was completed in February 2025.

Finally, the village of Taybeh is also home to one of the convents of the Sisters of the Rosary, a precious women's congregation founded in Jerusalem in 1880, which has since accompanied the life of local Christian communities with dedication. The convent in Taybeh, unfortunately, had fallen into a poor state of upkeep. The work completed in April 2025 allowed the sisters to have a home with new sanitary facilities and,





Father Bashar Fawadleh, parish priest of Taybeh, visiting parishioners at the Beit Afram retirement home, supported by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

among other improvements, an upgraded electrical system that meets safety standards and is much more energy efficient.

Clearly, there are many needs, and we continue to hold Taybeh's reality close to our hearts, as we do with the other communities in the Holy Land, alongside the Latin Patriarchate. Father Bashar concludes with a special thought for the youth, stating, "Thirteen jobs have been created, mainly for young people, encouraging them to stay in their homeland so they can earn a living and support their families. In addition, we have launched the 'Saint Charles de Foucauld Housing Project' to allow young couples to purchase a home in Taybeh and build their lives. All of this comes at a cost and requires investment, and that is why we need help."

“IN THE NIGHT OF CONFLICTS, YOU ARE WITNESSES TO THE LIGHT OF THE EAST” (POPE LEO XIV)

*The Governor General has represented the Order
at the Plenary Assembly of ROACO*

Pope Leo XIV welcomed the participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches (ROACO) in audience, stating "You provide a breath of oxygen to the Eastern Churches, so worn down by the conflicts in course." The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre is part of ROACO, and was represented for the occasion by the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo

Visconti di Modrone. "Dear friends of ROACO," the Pope added during the audience, "in your work, you see the immense sufferings caused by war and terrorism – and here I think of the recent terrible attack on the Church of Saint Elias in Damascus – but you also see the seeds of the Gospel taking root in the desert. [...] In the dark night of conflict, you are witnesses to the light of the East."

Pope Leo XIV has confirmed the appointment of Father Francesco Ielpo as the new Custos of the Holy Land. He previously served as Delegate of the Custody in Italy and President of the Holy Land Foundation. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre extends its heartfelt congratulations to the new Custos and expresses deep gratitude to his predecessor, Father Francesco Patton, for his service to the universal Church over the past nine years.



The plenary assembly lasted for two days during which an entire session was dedicated to the concerning situation in the Holy Land. The Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem and Palestine and Apostolic Nuncio to Israel, Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, and the Custos of the Holy Land, Father Francesco Patton, who has just concluded his term, participated via videoconference. The Vice-Rector of Bethlehem University, Hernán Santos, was able to be present in person.

"No one holds the copyright on suffering," said the Patriarch of Jerusalem, summarizing the perspective shared by the other speakers from the Holy Land. He concluded with the realism of faith: "in short, we are not optimistic, but we remain hopeful."

During the meeting, numerous solidarity projects were discussed. Last January, the



During the Pope's audience with the ROACO participants, the Order's Governor General assured Pope Leo XIV of the prayers of the Order's 30,000 members.

Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, had already announced the Order's commitment to fund five projects in the Holy Land for a total amount of €253,000.

During the annual Plenary Assembly, the Governor General approved the Order's support of additional

€285,000 for the projects proposed respectively by the Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem and Apostolic Nuncio to Israel, Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, and by the Apostolic Nuncio to Jordan, Archbishop Giovanni Pietro Dal Toso.

The June meeting also featured a constructive discussion on the international political situation with Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations of the Secretariat of State. He described the Holy See's action in conflict zones as "an unarmed and disarming prophecy."

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The life of the Lieutenancies

PERSONALLY EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN THE HOLY LAND

The Christian communities of the Holy Land are living through a tragic moment in the context of the ongoing war. The conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives in Gaza and also making life very difficult in Jerusalem, Palestine, and in Israel due to tensions and major economic challenges affecting the population.

In this context, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, has for some time now been issuing a special invitation to the Knights and Dames of the Order to return on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. That solidarity to the Christian communities of the Land of Jesus lays at the heart of the call to be Members of the Order



The pilgrim's shell being presented to a Dame of the Lieutenancy for Central Italy by Msgr. William Shomali, Patriarchal Vicar for Jerusalem and Palestine.

Msgr. Marcuzzo welcomed some Members of the French Lieutenancy in the Patriarchate's church in Jerusalem.

LATIN PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

LATIN PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM





A delegation from the USA Southwestern Lieutenancy was received at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

of the Holy Sepulchre and can be expressed in so many ways. It is important that in this delicate phase it can also be experienced physically, by going to visit, to shake hands, and show the suffering Christians they are not alone.

Thus, in recent months, various Lieutenancies have organized pilgrimages. Knights and Dames of the Lieutenancy for Central Italy, accompanied by the Lieutenant and the Grand Prior, Msgr. Lino Fumagalli, paid a visit on April 24 to the Latin Patriarchate where they met with

Monsignor William Shomali, Vicar General and Patriarchal Vicar for Jerusalem and Palestine. During the encounter, several Members on their first pilgrimage to the Holy Land received the Pilgrim Shell.

On May 12, Msgr. Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo welcomed a delegation from the Lieutenancy for France and celebrated Mass with them, while on May 26 Msgr. Shomali at the Patriarchate offices received a group of pilgrims from the USA Southwestern Lieutenancy.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER, DAMES OF THE ORDER

Maria and Gloria Montebello, who are mother and daughter, and both Dames of the Lieutenancy for Malta, shared the journey that led them to join the Order. Gloria received her Investiture when she was just 25 years old, which is the minimum age required for entry into the Order. Today, Gloria works in Mental Health Services and is a doctor specializing in Psychiatry. Maria is currently the head of St Ignatius College, Handaq Middle School, which is one of the newest educational institutions in Malta and, as of September 1, she will

be the first lay woman to lead the Jesuits' St. Aloysius College. Maria and Gloria were invited to participate in the pilgrimage to the Holy Land organized by the Lieutenancy for Malta in July 2023. Upon their return, both mother and daughter decided to begin the formation process to become Dames. They were invested on the same day in November 2024.

It is often said that particular doors in life open at the right moment, guiding us toward paths we never anticipated but ultimately feel destined for. Our journey – mother and



daughter – into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was one such experience, marked by a profound sense of calling and a deep personal commitment to faith and service.

We both sincerely wished to visit the Holy Land from an early age. For Gloria, this was not a common aspiration for someone so young. It is rare for a youth to express such a strong desire to embark on a pilgrimage, yet, for her, this was a heartfelt wish that transcended age. That wish became a reality when we were blessed with the opportunity to travel to Jerusalem, an experience that proved to be transformative.

Interestingly, we were among the last groups to make this pilgrimage before war broke out just weeks after our visit. This timing was not lost on us—it reinforced the preciousness of the experience and deepened our appreciation for the path we were about to embark upon.

The first seeds of our journey into the Order were sown in Jerusalem, a city of immense spiritual significance where history and faith intertwine in ways that touch the soul. During a memorable lunch meeting, our Lieutenant Ambassador Roberto Buontempo, first invited us to consider joining the Order. This was not a casual suggestion but a heartfelt call to serve that immediately struck a chord with us. At the time, we did not realise that our Grand Prior, Archbishop Charles Scicluna, had already encouraged us to embark on the pilgrimage, setting in motion a journey that felt divinely orchestrated. The symbolism of this moment was profound—it was as though a door was opening before us, inviting us to step forward into a path of more extraordinary

spiritual dedication and commitment.

This invitation was both an honour and a responsibility for us. It signified a deep connection to a legacy of faith, an Order that has stood the test of time in its unwavering dedication to the Holy Land and the Church. But this journey was even more meaningful because we were embarking on it together as mother and daughter. What made this moment even more remarkable was that arguably, Gloria became the youngest member of the Order worldwide. Recognising the significance of her



During a recent Investiture in Malta, the Governor General met Maria and Gloria, mother and daughter, who are both Dames of the Order.

dedication, she was granted a special dispensation to join, an exceptional acknowledgment of her faith and commitment. Entering the Order side by side reinforced the values that we hold dear – faith, service, and solidarity – and deepened our shared commitment to upholding the mission of the Order.

The concept of a door opening carries immense spiritual significance. Throughout history, passing through a door has symbolised new beginnings, commitments, and transformations. In the Church, the Holy Door symbolises renewal, marking a passage into deeper faith and devotion. Similarly, our entrance into the Order



represented a pivotal moment in our spiritual lives, an opportunity to dedicate ourselves to a cause much more significant than ourselves. It was not merely about joining a historical institution; it was about embracing a call to serve, to stand in solidarity with the suffering, and to contribute meaningfully to the Order's humanitarian and charitable mission.

Our commitment to the Order goes beyond our Investiture; it extends into active participation in the Lieutenancy's commissions that shape its mission and outreach. Dr. Maria Montebello serves on the Secretariat Commission, ensuring the smooth coordination of official event documents, particularly for the Vigil and Investiture ceremonies. Additionally, she plays a key role in the Formation Lectures Commission, helping to organise and facilitate the essential educational programs that prepare new members for their responsibilities within the Order. Furthermore, she is also a dedicated member of the Spirituality Commission, contributing to the organisation of retreats, faith discussions, and liturgical functions that nurture the spiritual well-being of all

members.

On the other hand, Dr. Gloria Montebello is actively involved in the Esquires Commission, a vital initiative that cultivates a deep love for the Holy Land among young individuals who are not yet eligible for full membership. Her participation in this commission reflects her dedication to inspiring the next generation to embrace the Order's values and mission.

Through these roles, we continue to live out our commitment, ensuring that our service within the Order is symbolic and an active and meaningful contribution to its legacy. Our journey is one of faith and action, embracing opportunities to give back, supporting the Christian presence in the Holy Land, and upholding the principles of charity, unity, and unwavering devotion.

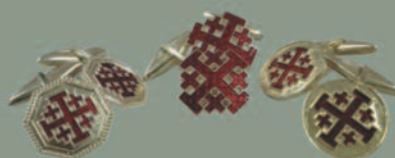
Being part of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is an immense privilege, and we embrace this commitment with deep reverence and joy. As we walk through this door, we do so with a renewed sense of purpose, knowing that this is not the end of a journey but the beginning of a lifelong dedication to faith, service, and hope.



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