

JERUSALEM CROSS

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The Grand Master's Message

A LAND ENTRUSTED TO MARY:
PREPARING FOR THE CENTENARY

"**T**he Blessed Virgin Mary, assumed into the glory of heaven, is a sign of hope and consolation for the entire People of God. For this reason, I wish to invoke her maternal intercession today on behalf of those communities that are in particular need of consolation and of renewed hope. My thoughts go out to our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, which is also, *par excellence*, the Land of Mary."

On the Feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven, Pope Leo XIV once again entrusted to her those peoples who are the richness of the Holy Land.

In this same spirit, we, the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, together with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, intend to prepare for the centenary in 2027 of the Shrine of Our Lady of Palestine at Deir Rafat. The shrine was established at the initiative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Luigi Barlassina, who from the very beginning of his ministry in the Holy Land in 1920,



Cardinal Fernando Filoni praying before a painting depicting the patroness of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre at the Shrine of Our Lady of Palestine at Deir Rafat, in the Holy Land.

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recognized the need for a special place for the Christians of the Holy Land: a place of prayer and entrustment to Mary, where Christians, Muslims and Jews might spiritually experience a fraternity that was already difficult to achieve at the time. Situated on the road from Jerusalem toward

Tel Aviv, Deir Rafat lies at the geographical heart of the Holy Land.

In his prayer, the Patriarch said: "We beseech You to turn a compassionate gaze upon Palestine, the land that is more truly Yours than any other, because You have adorned it with Your birth, with Your



virtues, with Your sorrows (...). Envelop it in a very special protection; dispel the darkness of error where the eternal Sun of justice has shone." As a seal of this devotion, a great statue of Mary was erected on the plain of Aijalon, the place where Sacred Scripture situates the great victory of Joshua, who led Israel in the reconquest of the Promised Land after forty years of wandering following the exodus from Egypt (*Josh. 10:12-13*).

The episode calls to mind the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse), where a great sign appears in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet (*Rev. 12:1*). Sun and moon: two symbols associated with Christ, the sun of justice (*Rev. 19:1-11*), and with Mary, who, clothed in the grace of her Son, keeps the testimony of Jesus (*Rev. 12:17*).

Deir Rafat was therefore conceived as a sacred place for fostering fraternity and, in our own time, safeguarding the testimony of the Son of God and of Mary in the Holy Land. It remains, to this day, the destination of a solemn pilgrimage on October 25, the Feast of Our Lady, Queen of Palestine; the devotion was approved by Pope Pius XI in

1933. Today, the spiritual life of the monastery is entrusted to the Sisters of the Monastic Family of Bethlehem.

I would like to recall that every Knight and Dame knows that he or she is under the maternal protection of Mary, Queen of Palestine, whom John Paul II established as the principal Patroness of the Order. For this reason, the Order holds this shrine particularly dear, and each of us makes a point of visiting it when we go on pilgrimage to the Land of Jesus. There, we experience in a special way our encounter with the Mother to whom we entrust ourselves, together with the Land and the communities we are committed to supporting. In this way, we renew a tradition that dates back a hundred years, when the Knights and Dames of the Order contributed financially to the construction of the shrine and helped to spread devotion to it. Today, we continue that tradition so that Mary, as she does in the icon so dear to us, which had been blessed by Pope Francis and presented in a copy to Pope Leo XIV in 2025, may gather into her arms all the peoples of the Holy Land.

Cardinal Fernando Filoni



Barbiconi
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The Order in union with the Universal Church

“DO NOT BE AFRAID OF YOUR SMALLNESS”

*Pope Leo XIV on the situation of the Church in the Holy
Land and in the Arab regions*

I renew my appeal for an end to the repeated violence against the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank, and I urgently call on the international community to ensure progress towards a two-state solution, for a just and lasting peace," Pope Leo XIV said solemnly during the Angelus on August 16, 2026 in Castel Gandolfo. On September 3, addressing the members of the Conference of the Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions (CELRA), which also includes the Latin

Patriarch of Jerusalem and his auxiliary bishops, the Holy Father offered encouragement to these Catholic communities, which often find themselves in difficult circumstances: "Do not be afraid of your smallness. The fruitfulness of the Church is not measured in numbers, structures or resources, but in fidelity to the Gospel. In the heart of societies marked by conflict and division, may your communities show that it is possible to live, serve and hope together. Through parishes, schools,

Cardinal Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, presiding over the Conference of Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions (CELRA).



"Where war has sown mistrust, every gesture of esteem, collaboration and respect can become a step towards reconciliation and peace" (Pope Leo XIV, addressing the members of CELRA). The photo shows children at the school in Taybeh, Palestine, where Christian and Muslim students are educated together to become peacemakers.



hospitals, and works of charity, make the Gospel tangible by welcoming, listening to and supporting those in need," he said, stressing also that, in the Arab regions, "the variety of Christian traditions is a richness to be lived in unity." Pope Leo XIV expressed the hope that "this communion may give rise to sincere dialogue with other Christian communities, with Muslims and with the various religious traditions," emphasizing that "where war has sown mistrust, every gesture of esteem, collaboration and respect can become a step towards reconciliation and peace. Your mission does not consist simply of preserving a Christian presence, but of making Christ present always: proclaiming him in the Word, celebrating him in the Sacraments, encountering him in prayer and

recognizing him in the poor, the suffering, migrants and every person placed under your care," the Successor of Peter continued, reminding the bishops of their primary mission: "You are not required to solve all the problems of your lands, but to be faithful to the Gospel and to the people entrusted to you."

The Holy See and the Equestrian Orders

Following numerous requests for information regarding the Holy See's position on chivalric orders dedicated to saints or bearing sacred titles, the Secretariat of State deems it appropriate to reiterate what has been published in the past.

In addition to its own chivalric orders (the Supreme Order of Christ, the Order of the Golden Spur, the Pian Order/Order of Pope Pius IX, the Order of Saint Gregory the Great, and the Order of Saint Sylvester the Pope), the Holy See recognizes and protects only the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (that is, the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta) and the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. It does not intend to change this policy." This is what was stated in the note published on October 10 by the Secretariat of State.

In order to clearly distinguish the only two Orders recognized by the Holy See, you will find on our website an article by the Governor General of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, which describes their respective missions.



Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

EUROPEAN LIEUTENANTS AND GRAND MAGISTERIUM MEMBERS GATHER IN POMPEII UNDER THE PROTECTION OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

The European Lieutenants' meeting and the autumn meeting of the Grand Magisterium were held in Pompeii from October 19 to 21, near the renowned Italian Marian shrine and one year after the canonization of Knight Bartolo Longo. The gatherings provided an important opportunity for these leaders of the Order to exchange views and share experiences. For the first time, members of the Grand Magisterium took part in the meeting of the European Lieutenants, who had not gathered for seven years. This fraternal initiative, promoted by the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, was a great success, taking

place one year ahead of the next Consulta, the Order's General Assembly, scheduled to be held in Rome from November 9 to 13, 2027.

Participants in both meetings were welcomed by Archbishop Tommaso Caputo, Prelate of Pompeii and Assessor of the Order. Representatives of the Holy Land also took part in the proceedings: Archbishop Iyad Twal, Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan, and Johny Zeidan, the new Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate, accompanied by his predecessor, Sami El-Yousef.

The meetings opened on Monday, October 19, with a Eucharistic celebration at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary, presided over by the Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando

At the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Pompeii, the European Lieutenants of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre prayed to Our Lady of the Rosary for peace in the Holy Land.





Guided by the Governor General and presided over by the Grand Master, the European Lieutenants gathered in Pompeii to coordinate their efforts in support of the faithful of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, who have been severely affected by the ongoing conflicts.



attended by the four Vice Governors General, including the newly appointed Vice Governor General for North America. Archbishop Iyad Twal, the special envoy of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, emphasized the unity between the Order and the Patriarchate, which share a common history and mission. He also encouraged members of the Order to return to

Filoni. "Like John at the foot of the Cross," he recalled in his homily, "Bartolo Longo gives Mary a 'home': the Shrine of Pompeii, in a desolate, poor, and disreputable land. This was the path he followed day after day, until the moment when, even after facing misunderstandings and unjust rumors, he became a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem."

The following day, Tuesday, October 20, the meeting of the European Lieutenants opened with another Eucharistic celebration, presided over by Archbishop Tommaso Caputo in the shrine's chapel dedicated to Bartolo Longo. The chapel is located near the urn containing the saint's remains, with his body clad in his Knight's mantle. "Bartolo is a model of Christian life for us," the Prelate of Pompeii declared in his homily.

During the subsequent proceedings, the Lieutenants deepened their understanding of the Order's life and activities worldwide and received updates on the severe crisis affecting the Holy Land. After listening to several presentations on these subjects, they took part in an extensive discussion moderated by the Governor General and

the Holy Land in large numbers on pilgrimage and to meet with parish communities, whose faithful need their moral support. A report on the recent visit of the Holy Land Commission, presented by its *interim* president, Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger, generated considerable interest. It highlighted the tangible results of the regular and extraordinary support that the Order provides to the Mother Church of Jerusalem during this particularly difficult and uncertain period.

Amid this atmosphere of intensive exchange and shared reflection, the Grand Magisterium held its meeting on Wednesday, October 21. It was preceded by a Eucharistic celebration in the chapel dedicated to Bartolo Longo, presided over by the Patriarch's envoy, Archbishop Twal. All members attended the meeting, including, for the first time, the new Vice Governor General for North America, Shawn Cleary.

Cardinal Fernando Filoni opened the proceedings by outlining several areas on which the Grand Magisterium must focus, in particular the preparations for the upcoming Consulta. Held every four years, this meeting





Archbishop Iyad Twal, Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan, represented Cardinal Pizzaballa at the Grand Magisterium's fall meeting in Pompeii, as well as at the European Lieutenants' meeting held beforehand on October 20–21, 2026.

brings together all the leaders of the Order from the more than 60 Magistral Delegations and Lieutenancies, along with the central governing bodies. The Governor General updated participants on other important matters, including the continuation of renovation work at Palazzo della Rovere, ongoing discussions concerning the *Friends of the Order*, and developments involving certain entities associated with the Order, such as the new Foundation in Italy, a Third Sector Entity. These entities are distinct from other initiatives that do not fall under the direct management of our Pontifical Institution and could give rise to conflicts of interest, which must be avoided in the interest of consistency and transparency.

As part of the scheduled agenda, the members of the Grand Magisterium approved the proposed budget for 2027. Considerable time was then devoted to an exchange of views on the situation in the Holy Land, with a presentation by Archbishop Iyad Twal, who highlighted three areas in which the Order's support can continue to make a tangible difference: parishes, education, and humanitarian aid. His testimony was followed by remarks from Johny Zeidan, the new Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate, who shared his initial reflections and outlined his vision and strategic priorities for the coming years. His analysis was complemented by recommendations from the *interim* president of the Holy Land Commission, following her return from the Commission's semiannual field visit.



The meeting continued with presentations by the four Vice Governors General, who raised additional issues concerning the Order's local presence and the establishment of new Magistral Delegations, particularly in Latin America, but also in other regions of the world, including India and Africa.

Following closing remarks by Archbishop Tommaso Caputo, the Grand Master concluded by recalling that being "in the home of Bartolo Longo, the Order's first lay saint, allows us to see how the Order itself bears witness to a process through which its members grow in holiness." He cited figures such as Enrique Ernesto Shaw in Argentina and James Joseph Norris in the United States, whose causes for beatification are currently under consideration.

As Shawn Cleary remarked in his first address as the new Vice Governor General for North America, "Our responsibility is also to lead our Knights and Dames to Heaven."

François Vayne and Elena Dini



THE ORDER'S FOUNDATION FOR THE HOLY LAND (ETS) SUCCESSFULLY CONTINUES ITS ACTIVITIES

As we reported in our *Newsletter* 81, last year saw the establishment of the Foundation of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem – Third Sector Entity (*Ente del Terzo Settore, ETS*), a legal entity under Italian law that remains fully aligned with the values and mission of the Order. At the same time, it provides a more effective means of collecting donations from Friends of the Order, thanks to the tax deductions available for such contributions.

In recent months, a number of successful initiatives have been carried out within this framework. On August 2, a concert in support of the Holy Land was held at the Mario Cerioli Theatre in Porto Rotondo,

organized under the patronage of the Order's Lieutenantcy for Sardinia and the Grand Magisterium. The magnificent voices of Amii Stewart and Francesco Demuro gave the audience moments of great emotion. On this occasion, the Foundation for the Holy Land of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre (ETS) presented its activities and received donations that offer encouraging prospects for the future of this new instrument of solidarity established by the Order on the initiative of the Grand Magisterium.

The first project supported by the Foundation has already been launched. It is a free training initiative for 150 young Palestinians, offering courses in Bethlehem,



Incoronata Boccia, RAI's Director of Communications, hosted the event held in Sardinia in support of the Order's Foundation, waiving her fee, under the leadership of the Governor General.



Ramallah and Zabadeh on Artificial Intelligence and its applications in the world of work. Each course will consist of eight two-and-a-half-hour sessions, for a total of 20 hours of instruction. The Foundation is overseeing the implementation of the project through ongoing monitoring. Cardinal Pizzaballa sent the Foundation's Secretary General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, a letter of warm thanks for the initiative, which brings renewed confidence and hope to the young Palestinians who will take part in the courses, "providing them with concrete opportunities to build a future for themselves in the Holy Land." The Patriarch added that the Foundation's commitment "is highly appreciated and is a source of encouragement for all of us."

A second, more substantial project was approved by the Foundation's Board of Directors on September 24. It provides humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip and Palestine, including a donation of €210,000 to the Parish of the Holy Family in Gaza to support the Patriarchate's school and kindergarten in Gaza City, which reopened this past September and are facing numerous needs, as well as a donation of



Amii Stewart, an American-born singer who became an Italian citizen, is one of the renowned artists who lent her voice to the summer event held in Sardinia in support of the Holy Land.

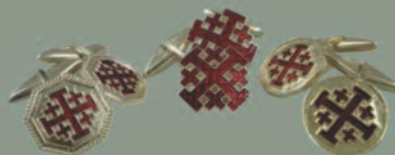
€90,000 to the Hogar Niño Dios in Bethlehem, which provides care for children in need and those who have been abandoned.



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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The Order and the Holy Land

THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM'S HOLY LAND COMMISSION VISIT

(OCTOBER 5-9, 2026)

In contact with a community striving to remain

The regular half-yearly visit of the Grand Magisterium's Holy Land Commission began earlier this October against a painful backdrop. On 3 October, in fact, two Christian women were killed in a bombing in Gaza, where the community of Christ's faithful has been cut in half over the past three years, now numbering 539 baptized Catholic and Orthodox Christians.

In the absence of the Commission's president, Bart McGettrick, who was unable

to attend for health reasons, Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger, appointed *ad interim* president by the Grand Master, leads the work of the Commission, of which she is a member along with Tim Milner. Together with Tim Milner's wife, Donna Milner, François Vayne, head of communications for the Grand Magisterium, and Connie Kimberger, Dame Grand Cross delegated by the Lieutenancy for Germany as an observer, the Commission members met on Monday, October 5, with His Beatitude

A meeting of the Grand Magisterium's Holy Land Commission, chaired by Cardinal Pizzaballa in Jerusalem on October 5, 2026.



One of the visits by the Holy Land Commission to Christian families in need living in Jerusalem's Old City.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who strongly emphasized the priority of humanitarian aid, especially in Gaza, but also in the West Bank and the Old City of Jerusalem.

The members of the Commission then discussed this issue with the administrative and management staff of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, before visiting needy Christian families living in the Old City of Jerusalem — families supported, in particular, by aid sent by the Order to the local Church. These families expressed their gratitude for the assistance provided, including food coupons and the payment of school tuition for their children's education, as well as the creation of jobs linked in particular to the activities of the Catholic parish of St. Savior in Jerusalem.

That same afternoon, the Patriarchate's general administration provided a detailed update on the projects supported by the Order prior to a video conference with the parish priest of Gaza, Father Gabriel Romanelli.

The following day, the visit by the Grand Magisterium's Holy Land Commission continued in Nazareth, Israel, where the Commission members met with Father Ibrahim Shomali, parish priest of Reneh and director of the Catholic schools in Israel. Father Shomali described the situation at the country's five schools, which have more than 5,000 students, 90% of whom are Christian. The Israeli government is providing less support to these institutions than before, perhaps due to the war effort.



Support from the Order is therefore needed, especially for the maintenance and restoration of these schools, which serve as vital centers for catechesis and the transmission of the faith — sometimes leading to conversions and requests for baptism.

Later, Bishop Rafic Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar for Israel, welcomed the members of the Commission and told them about the devastation caused by the local mafia in the Arab-Israeli community, which is driving many Christians to emigrate, frightened by the threats against them, with no help coming from the police. This difficult reality in Israel is accompanied by a growing number of acts of aggressions against Christians by extremist Jews, especially on the streets of Jerusalem, and reports of attacks and violence in places such as Taybeh in Palestine that the Commission visited in the days that followed. In this context, Bishop Rafic asked all members of the Order for their prayers and solidarity through the pilgrimages they will organize, hoping that this will raise awareness of the injustices that are weakening the Christian community in the Holy Land.

In other respects, there is a real vitality within the Hebrew-speaking Catholic community, made up of foreign workers in Israel, even though these people — often in precarious situations — are not expected to remain there long-term.



On October 7, the Commission travelled to Palestine, to the Bethlehem area, where they met with Anton Jaraysah, the principal of the Catholic school in Beit Sahour — the village of the Christmas shepherds — who described the efforts being made to enable the school's 380 students to continue their studies. Indeed, the absence of pilgrims over the past three years — due to the war — and the inability of Palestinians to work in Israel have had a devastating impact on unemployment, making it very difficult for many families to pay tuition fees. These fees are largely covered by financial support from the Order sent to the Latin Patriarchate, notably through a special fundraising campaign conducted in the United States. The school's principal emphasized that 30 percent of the students are Muslim since their parents prefer a Catholic education for their children.

The Commission then visited Bethlehem University, which is home to 760 students facing uncertainty about their professional future. Vice-President Iman Saca thanked the Order for the assistance provided to this educational institution which trains the

future leaders in a country under constant pressure. The AFAQ project, carried out since the pandemic — and then the war — in collaboration with the Latin Patriarchate and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, enables many university graduates to find work in Palestine or Jerusalem in the medical, social, or economic fields. In the afternoon, the Commission also visited the seminary in Beit Jala — the "heart" of the Diocese of Jerusalem — where the Patriarchate's future priests are trained, and whose operating costs are regularly covered by the Order. The priests of the Patriarchate — in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Cyprus — are most often responsible for coordinating pastoral care in schools affiliated with parishes and are therefore very directly involved in the spiritual formation of students and in the education for peace that characterizes these schools, where Christians and Muslims grow up together.

40,000 Christians still live in Palestine; their situation is becoming increasingly difficult, particularly due to the absence of pilgrims and tourists, and the fact that Palestinians are unable to travel and work in

Education is more important than food: this is what emerges from the testimonies of numerous parents of Palestinian children attending Latin Patriarchate schools thanks to the support of the Knights and Dames of the Order.





The school in Taybeh, the last Christian village in Palestine, warmly welcomed the members of the Holy Land Commission, despite tensions in the surrounding areas caused by daily incursions carried out with impunity by extremist Jewish settlers.

Israel. More than 200 Christian families have left the country since 7 October 2023, and the exodus is continuing. In Taybeh, the ancient Ephraim mentioned in the Gospel (*John 11:54*), which is the last entirely Christian village in the Holy Land, Father Bashar Fawadleh, the parish priest, described the efforts being made to create local jobs and build housing for the community, in collaboration with the Latin Patriarchate and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, in order to slow down emigration. Muslim pupils now make up 70% of the 400 students enrolled at the parish school in Taybeh. The proportion has inverted in the last 10 years due to Christians leaving for the United States, Latin America and Spain. Pointing out the psychological impact of repeated attacks by extremist Jewish settlers, who harass villagers and destroy olive groves without fear of reprisal, Father Bashar made a moving appeal to the members of the Order: "Come to Taybeh on pilgrimage; don't wait — come in large numbers to support us and help us prepare for the Jubilee of Redemption, which will take place in 2033." The Commission then visited Beit Afram, the elderly house of the Latin Patriarchate,

where Monsignor Michel Sabbah, Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem, lives among some thirty very elderly residents, many of whom are cared for with the support of the Order.

The day continued in Ramallah, capital of the State of Palestine, where the largest parish has 700 families and 3,000 parishioners. The members of the Commission took part in an important meeting with the parish priest, Father Yacoub Rafidi, who is also director of the Patriarchate's 12 schools in Palestine. He insisted on the need to continue to welcome young Christians, who represent nearly 40% of the students and who all wish to remain in the land of their ancestors in the future. In Ain Arik, finally, the Commission met with Father Firas Abedrabbo, who is deeply committed to serving young Christians in Palestine who are seeking hope in a country that the separation wall is turning into a large concentration camp.

On Friday, October 8, the Commission's visit concluded with a series of meetings in Jerusalem, in particular with officials from the Vicariate for Migrants, before a closing ceremony at the Nunciature.

**Grand Magisterium
Communications Office**



A NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE FOR THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

In Pompeii, the members of the Grand Magisterium and the European Lieutenants had the opportunity to meet Johnny Zeidan, the new Chief Executive of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, who succeeds Sami El-Yousef after his nine years in the role.

During their first online meeting in September, the Governor General assured him of his support and of his commitment to maintaining regular communication between the Grand Magisterium and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

"Communication between our two institutions is what enables the Order to fulfill its mission fruitfully in the service of the Mother Church of the Holy Land," Ambassador Visconti di Modrone said during his conversation with Johnny Zeidan at the beginning of his tenure.

In his new role, Zeidan will oversee administrative, financial and institutional affairs, contributing to the continued development and strengthening of the Patriarchate's work and mission.

The new Chief Executive Officer has extensive experience in leadership, administration, finance and institutional management. He worked for several years at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), developing the knowledge and skills required to manage initiatives involving substantial budgets. "Thanks also to the leadership positions he has held in commercial banking and the private sector — we read on the Patriarchate's website — Zeidan brings extensive expertise in finance, donor compliance, the implementation of large-



Cardinal Pizzaballa with Sami El-Yousef and his successor, Johnny Zeidan, accompanied by their respective wives, following the Mass celebrated in their honor at the Patriarchate's Pro-cathedral on October 2, 2026.

scale educational programmes, high-level strategic coordination and the management of major international development projects focused on education, community development and civil society."

We wish the new Chief Executive Officer a successful start to his mandate, confident in the fruitful cooperation that will be established with the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for the benefit of the local communities of the Holy Land, the living stones whom we hold so deeply in our hearts.



The life of the Lieutenancies

VICE GOVERNORS GENERAL JOHN SECKER AND ERIC MAS IN GUAM

(AUGUST 28-29, 2026)

In the American island territory of Micronesia, situated in the western Pacific Ocean, the Investiture Ceremony was a major event for the Order's Magistral Delegation

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem celebrated an important milestone in Guam with a Vigil on August 28 and an Investiture ceremony on August 29, 2026, at the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica in Hagåtña. Among the new Knights receiving the Investiture was the Metropolitan Archbishop of Agaña, Archbishop Ryan P. Jimenez.

In addition to Archbishop Jimenez, six new members were admitted to the Order: Julie Perez-Bollinger, Cecile Tan Carlos, Ramel Asuncion Carlos, Erwin Troy Taitano Fejeran, Dennis Gabriel Rodriguez Jr. and Lena Calvo-Rodriguez. The Investiture took place in the presence of John Secker, Vice Governor General for Asia, Australia and the Pacific, and Enric Mas, Vice Governor General for Latin America — both members of the Grand Magisterium.

Magistral Delegate Rodney Jacob expressed his profound gratitude for the presence of the Vice Governors General and for the commitment undertaken by the newly admitted members to pray for and support Christians in the Holy Land. In his address, he invited them to reflect on the urgency of their mission, and recalled the words of Cardinal Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem: "In the Holy Land, everyone feels like a victim, and the only victim, and this is a vicious circle. The other becomes an enemy." In this context, the Order renewed its commitment to the truth that "hope and peace cannot be slogans that we set aside; they must be decisions that we make again and again, especially in the face of indifference." The lithograph of Mary, Help of the Persecuted Christians, now kept in Agaña Cathedral, stands as a tangible reminder of this conscious witness.

The Order is also expanding in Micronesia, an island nation in the southwestern part of the North Pacific Ocean.



THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN COPENHAGEN (SEPTEMBER 12–13, 2026)

At the conclusion of the joint Investiture ceremony of the Nordic Lieutenancies, held at St Ansgar's Cathedral in Copenhagen and officiated by Bishop Czeslaw Kozon, a solemn celebration was held to mark the separation of the Knights and Dames of Sweden and Denmark, with the establishment of two separate Lieutenancies. The Grand Magisterium was represented at the event by Governor General Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, Vice Governor General Enric Mas and Professor Helene Lund. Among the distinguished guests were Msgr. Julio Murat, Apostolic Nuncio to Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway, and numerous Lieutenants from friendly countries. At the same time, Martin Ryom was appointed Lieutenant for Denmark and Hugo Cederschiöld Lieutenant for Sweden, while the offices of Grand Prior were conferred respectively on Msgr. Czeslaw Kozon for Denmark and Cardinal Anders Arborelius for Sweden. Commenting on the occasion, the Governor General emphasized that, in the Nordic countries, the minority presence of Catholic faithful in comparison with other Christians, those who practise another faith or those who declare themselves agnostic strengthens the determination and cohesion of the Knights and Dames of the Order. He expressed the hope that the division into two Lieutenancies would lead to a strengthening of the Order's presence in the two countries concerned.

The Governor General attended the Investiture ceremony held at Copenhagen Cathedral. From this point forward, the Order's Lieutenancy for Denmark will operate independently of the Lieutenancy for Sweden.

A moving testimony was given during the fraternal gathering that followed the Investiture ceremony by a young Swedish Knight, Martin Huy Minh Le, who had been asked to speak on behalf of all those who had received the Investiture. "We, who have just received the Investiture, come from different walks of life. Whether we are doctors, teachers or parents, we now set these roles aside. Here, we are united as servants of the Holy Land. This evening, we further strengthen that bond by committing ourselves to the central mission of our Order: 'to support the Catholic Church and the Christian presence in the Holy Land' [...]. Behind the cloaks and symbols lies a quiet and steadfast commitment that often goes unnoticed. Our Governor General has described this mission as 'discreet volunteer work'. He has spoken of how the Holy See fully recognises this constant role that our Order carries out without fanfare, as a Central Body of the Church." He concluded with a profound awareness: "Our Order does not focus on our merits, but on our common efforts to ensure the survival of Christians in the Land of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We are the arm and the body of the Church in this mission."



THE INVESTITURE CEREMONIES IN THE UNITED STATES PRESIDED OVER BY THE GRAND MASTER

(FROM SEPTEMBER 18 TO 27, 2026)

During the month of September, the Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, travelled to the United States to meet the Knights and Dames on the occasion of the Investitures of the USA Northern Lieutenancy (19–20 September in Kansas City) and the USA North Central Lieutenancy (26–27 September in Cleveland).

On Friday, September 18, the Grand Master met with the more than 100 candidates in Kansas City and prepared them for the important celebrations that would follow: the Vigil of Prayer and the Investiture ceremony. "The Risen Christ calls you by name," Cardinal Filoni said during the homily at the Vigil, "as he did with Mary Magdalene, while she was searching for Him before the empty Tomb, fearing that His body had been stolen; the Risen One chooses you for a mission of

grace and asks you to spread the good fragrance of Christ's charity. This is the noble task that you receive from the Church, which welcomes your willingness with profound gratitude."

On Sunday, September 20, in the magnificent setting of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, the new Knights and Dames were welcomed into the Order during a ceremony attended by more than 800 people. Cardinal Fernando Filoni presided over the ceremony, accompanied by around ten bishops. At the conclusion, the handover of the office of Vice Governor General of the Order for North America also took place. After eight years of dedicated service, for which he was warmly thanked by the Grand Master, Thomas Pogge handed over the position to his successor, Shawn Cleary, who, following his two terms as Lieutenant, has assumed the even more

Investiture Mass of the USA Northern Lieutenancy, in Kansas City.





The new members and the Order's dignitaries following the Investiture ceremony of the USA North Central Lieutenancy, in Cleveland.

prestigious role of Vice Governor General for North America and member of the Grand Magisterium. The celebration also provided an opportunity to welcome the new Lieutenant of the USA Northern Lieutenancy, James Broski, and to wish him a fruitful term of office.

The following weekend, Cardinal Filoni presided in Cleveland at the Investiture ceremony of the USA North Central Lieutenancy, in the presence of the Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy, Cardinal Blase Cupich. In preparing the candidates to receive the Investiture, the Cardinal said to them: "If the Jerusalem Cross is our

emblem, becoming a Knight or Dame means placing Christ at the centre of our lives and of every personal, family and social commitment. It means courageously professing our faith in Christ through our witness, generosity and love for the Gospel. At the same time, this means that the Knight and Dame commit themselves to caring for the Mother Church of Jerusalem." During the celebration, the Grand Master thanked Thomas Olejniczak and extended his best wishes to him as he concluded his four-year term as Lieutenant, and welcomed Anna Maria Montes as his successor at the head of the Lieutenancy.

A new Vice Governor General for North America



We warmly welcome the new Vice Governor General for North America, Shawn Timothy Cleary. A member of the Order since 2007, Cleary served two terms as Lieutenant of the USA Northern Lieutenancy. With a distinguished executive career behind him, the new Vice Governor General has an extensive record of service and support for various initiatives in the Holy Land, to his home diocese and to civil society.



LORETO AS A 'PORTION OF THE HOLY LAND': AN URGENT CALL FOR PEACE

Pilgrimage of the Italian-speaking Knights and Dames

Governor General Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone has officially announced the National Pilgrimage – for all Italian-speaking Knights and Dames – to the Holy House of Loreto. The event will take place from May 14 to 16, 2027.

"The pilgrimage to the Holy House of Loreto," commented Marco Meucci, Lieutenant for Central Apennine Italy, "takes on an exceptional spiritual significance today. The Sanctuary of Loreto — located within the territory of the Lieutenancy for Central Apennine Italy — preserves the walls which, according to tradition, witnessed the mystery of the Incarnation. It represents, in every respect, a 'portion' of the Holy Land on Italian soil."

The Lieutenant goes on to explain that his aim, as host of this fraternal spiritual experience in his territory, is to foster continual prayer for the gift of peace and reconciliation among peoples at this time of violence and tension, from a place that allows people to "draw close to the tangible

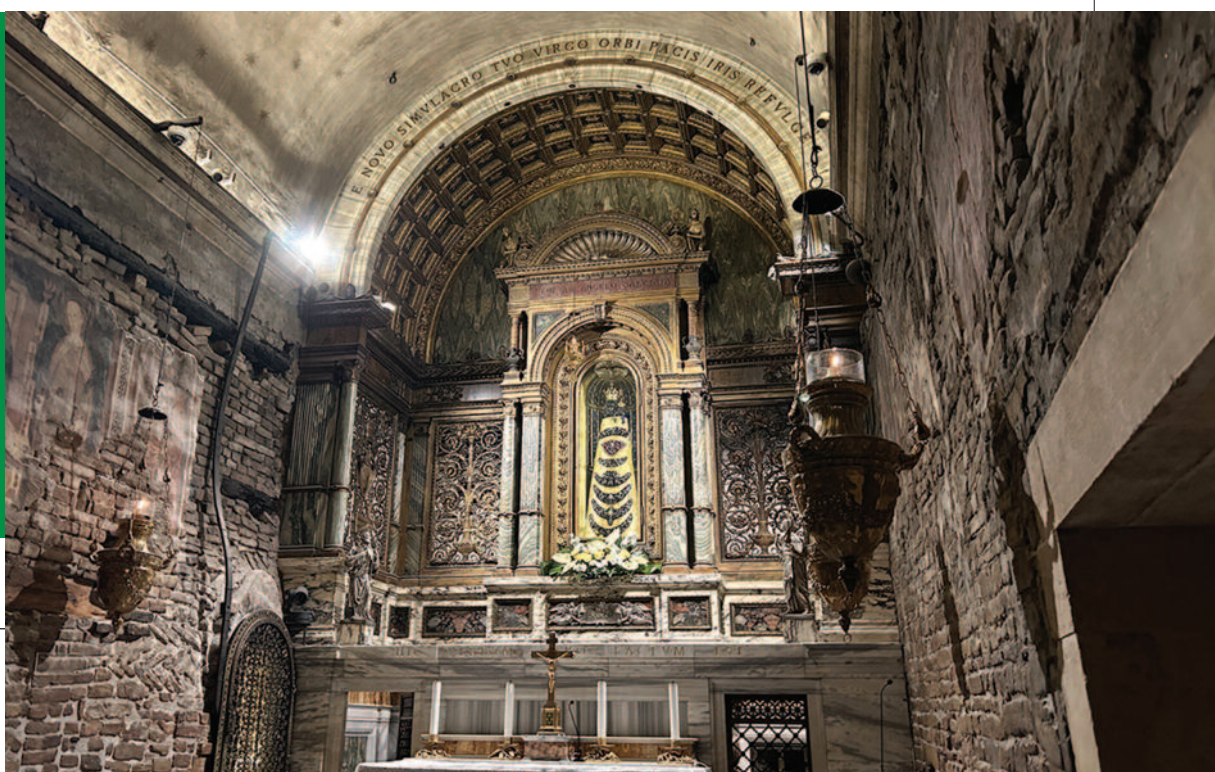
dimension of the mystery of salvation."

Indeed, through its direct connection with the Holy Land, the sanctuary is a beautiful sign of a "relocated" presence that speaks to the reality of the Knights and Dames of the Order. Just as the House of Mary travelled from Nazareth to Loreto, so too, in some way, we "belong" to the Land of Jesus, which we commit ourselves to serve, while at the same time living in our local dioceses.

"Alongside its primary spiritual purpose," Meucci concluded, "the event will pursue another important community objective: strengthening mutual knowledge and fraternity among all Italian-speaking Knights and Dames. It will be a precious opportunity for sharing and communion among the different Lieutenancies involved, translating Christ's Gospel mandate, 'Ut unum sint', into concrete action".

Further logistical information will be made available in the coming months to enable interested Knights and Dames to organise their pilgrimage as effectively as possible.

In May 2027, the seven Italian Lieutenancies will gather at the Marian Shrine of Loreto for a national pilgrimage.



BESIDE THE HOLY LAND: PILGRIMAGE AND SERVICE

In this issue of our Newsletter, we feature the testimonies of two Lieutenants who share their Lieutenancies' summer experiences in the Holy Land. These accounts recount moments of grace, discovery or rediscovery, and a closeness to the Land that is dear to us and to the people who live there.

Stefano Petrillo, Lieutenant for Central Italy, together with the Coadjutor Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy, Msgr. Edoardo Aldo Cerrato, led a group of members of his Lieutenancy on pilgrimage to the Holy Land from August 28 to September 1, at a time when pilgrims are hesitant to undertake this experience because of the unpredictable situation in the region. In doing so, they bore witness to the fact that such a pilgrimage is both feasible and, above all, important for our Christian brothers and sisters, who need to feel the support of the Universal Church.

Daniel Berzosa y López, Lieutenant for Western Spain, recounts the service undertaken this summer by a group of members and friends of the Order, dividing their time between Jerusalem (at the Basilicas of the Holy Sepulchre and Gethsemane) and Bethlehem (at the *Hogar Niño Dios*), and reflects on the meaning of this experience as Knights and Dames. As he explains so well, volunteering and pilgrimage complement one another: "He who has prayed at Calvary and then washed the floor of a Christian school ten kilometres away knows that he has lived the same mystery twice. And that the second time it cost him more, but also taught him more."

A Pilgrimage Story

The pilgrimage to the Holy Land is always an experience that remains in the heart!

From August 28 to September 1, I had the opportunity to return to the Land of Our Lord and retrace the roads He once walked. [...] As soon as we arrived in Israel, we travelled to Nazareth, where we stayed at Casa Nova, a very welcoming establishment located opposite the Basilica of the Annunciation. We immediately "made straight for" the Basilica, almost abandoning our suitcases in the hotel entrance corridor, so that each of us could offer our grateful greeting to the Virgin Mary, with our eyes fixed on the Grotto of the Annunciation, the House of Mary.

[...] From there, we travelled to Tiberias, where we visited Tabgha, the Primacy of

Peter, and, in the afternoon, Capernaum and Jericho. In addition to each of us having the deep sense that these places had been waiting for us, we were also warmly welcomed by the people who live there and who, because of the war, have been experiencing serious economic difficulties for some time and therefore look forward with hope to the return of pilgrims.

In the late afternoon, we arrived in Jerusalem with immense joy in our hearts. After settling into the recently renovated Casa Nova, located in the Old City, we immediately immersed ourselves in the streets, rich in history and contradictions where diverse forms of spirituality are expressed in many different ways.

The following day, we travelled to the



Pilgrims from the Lieutenancy for Central Italy and their Lieutenant, Stefano Petrillo, in front of the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, last summer.

Mount of Olives, where we stopped at the Ascension before making our way to Dominus Flevit, reaching Gethsemane and celebrating Holy Mass in the Basilica of the Agony, each of us making the immense suffering experienced by Our Lord in these places our own!

The afternoon was spent in Bethlehem, where we were able to admire the Basilica of the Nativity, descend into the Grotto and kneel before the silver Star, despite the fact that the site was open for only one hour a day because of the restoration work on the ceiling, which is due to continue until next January. As had already happened at the places we had visited previously, we found it remarkably easy to enter the Grotto several times during the time allotted, because we were alone, far too alone! [...]

Thus, although the joy of being able to kneel before the Star was the same, the atmosphere was particularly sad, far too silent, devoid of life because there were no pilgrims and therefore no one whose presence could provide a tangible witness and bring help! These alternating emotions reached their climax during our visit to the Hogar Niño Dios orphanage that afternoon. There we met some of the 41 children currently living there and lovingly cared for



by the Sisters, who explained to us the reasons for the presence of almost every one of them.

[...] After this moving visit, we then had the opportunity to go to the Effetà Institute, where children with hearing difficulties are taught to speak. The loving care they receive, together with highly advanced technology, gives them back a future, a life!"

[...] We were then received at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, where we were



welcomed by His Excellency the Most Reverend Giacinto Boulos Marcuzzo. Many Knights and Dames who were visiting Jerusalem for the first time received the Pilgrim's Shell to mark their first journey to the Holy Land. Later, at the Co-Cathedral Basilica, again in the presence of Bishop Marcuzzo, our Coadjutor Grand Prior, His Excellency the Most Reverend Bishop Edoardo Aldo Cerrato, and me, each of us renewed our Promise as members of the Order.

The climax of the pilgrimage was the moving Solemn Entrance into the Holy Sepulchre. Guided by the friars, who intoned the *Te Deum*, we entered the Holy

Sepulchre wearing our mantles and insignia and remained silently in prayer before the empty Tomb.

There, each of us was able to gain a clear understanding of the mission that membership of the Order entails, receiving renewed strength and greater enthusiasm to care always and continually for the Holy Land and for our Christian brothers and sisters who live there. We all had ample time to pause in this place, so rich in spirituality and emotion, and to fully understand where we come from: there, where it all began!

Stefano Petrillo

Lieutenant for Central Italy

The Volunteers' Experience in the Holy Land: An Invitation to All

Last July, a group made up of members of the Lieutenancy for Western Spain and friends of the Order travelled once again to the Holy Land, not as pilgrims, but as volunteers. They served at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and at the Franciscan Custody in the Basilica of Gethsemane, as well as in Bethlehem, helping the children at the *Hogar Niño Dios* family home run by the Sisters of the Incarnate Word. Tasks that were anything but heroic: accompanying, cleaning, carrying, translating with our hands what words were not enough to express, pushing wheelchairs, setting and clearing the table, playing with children who did not know our names, nor we theirs. Nothing that required talent. But time and love.

[...] What the volunteer discovers is not a representation, but a small Christian community, ancient, weary and full of dignity, running schools, clinics, care centers and parishes in heroic circumstances. We met families who, for generations, have asked themselves each year whether they will stay. We discovered the name and the

specific reality of a nun, a teacher, a sick person, a child with disabilities, and each of these faces contributed more to our understanding of the Order than many speeches could have done.

In volunteering, above all, one finds the opposite of what one set out to do. One thinks one is going to give, and returns having received. Those who served us a full meal thanked us for the glass of water we offered them. We learned to say *shukran*, but by then it was too late: they were the ones saying "thank you". None of us has ever prayed for the Holy Land in an abstract way again. From now on, when we say "Jerusalem", "Bethlehem" or "Nazareth", we also say names and surnames.

[...] I also know the objections. They were all raised before we left: "I'm too old for this"; but most of the tasks entrusted to us required nothing more than patience, and the gift that was most appreciated was our ability to listen without ever being in a hurry. "I don't speak Arabic or Hebrew;" no one expects us to, and English and gestures are used far more than one might think. "I'm neither a doctor nor a teacher;" neither



Volunteers from Spain serving with the Order provided practical assistance in the Holy Land, including support for children with disabilities. In the photograph below, they pose on the steps leading to the Chapel of the Franks, located to the right of the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



of these is an indispensable requirement, and the Patriarchate's works need fewer specialists than they do willing hands.

"The situation is delicate;" yes, it is, and that is precisely why one should not set out on one's own initiative or on impulse, but approach the Lieutenancy, informing the Grand Magisterium and coordinating with the Patriarchate and other institutions, which know when, where and how one can offer one's services. All it takes is a simple email to ask for information.

[...] For centuries, *Deus lo vult* was a cry of conquest. We have inherited its meaning, stripped it of every trace of weapons, and we must no longer live in the past. Today, it means that God wants His native land not to be left without Christians, and for this reason it is not enough to make a bank transfer, nor to wear the mantle, nor to write articles such as this one. We must go there. Return with tired hands and light luggage. And discover there, with a certain sense of wonder, that the Holy Sepulchre we guard has been empty since the very first day, so that we might seek the Lord precisely where He truly is: among the living.

Go to the Holy Land. The living stones of the risen Lord Jesus are waiting for us.

Daniel Berzosa y López
Lieutenant for Western Spain

