



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Living as pilgrims to the Holy Land at home



Along the west coast of Ireland is Máméan, a pass in the Maamturk Mountains. It is said that this place was already a religious sanctuary at the time of the Celts and that Christians transformed it into a Christian sanctuary. Closer to our days, in the 18th and 19th centuries, during the time of the Penal Laws,* given the not easy accessibility of the place, it became an ideal location to celebrate Mass secretly. Father Francis Mitchell, Ecclesiastical Master of Ceremonies of the Lieutenancy for Ireland of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and diocesan secretary of the Archbishop of Tuam, tells the moving experience of walking the Via Dolorosa meditating the passion of Christ together with 150 young people in this special place on Good Friday last year, reminding us how much the experience of pilgrimage to the Holy Land that every Dame and Knight of the Order is called to undertake, can often be replicated even a few steps from our home.

In his Apostolic Letter *Sanctuarium in Ecclesia*, Pope Francis says: “The Shrine has ‘enormous symbolic value’ in the Church, and becoming a pilgrim is a genuine profession of faith”. Of course, going on pilgrimage to the top of a mountain is nothing new.

Scripture scholars tell us that the mountains are mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible and, since the summits of mountains are closer to God who “sits above the vault of the world” (Is 40,22), these were places of prayer (Mt 14,23) and often locations for divine revelations (Mt 17,1-13).

Having been first invited by Divine Grace to climb the mountain and then in allowing himself the opportunity to encounter God there, who is love, the pilgrim cannot but change as Moses did, as the disciples on the Mount of the Transfiguration did and as Jesus himself did.

When the pilgrim does all that he can to accompany Jesus on his Good Friday pilgrimage, he will experience a change like that of Simon of Cyrene at the Fifth Station and will be blessed in some

special and personal way like Veronica for her act of tenderness at the Sixth Station. Máméan is very far from Golgotha and is little known even in western Ireland, let alone in the Holy Land.

However, every year, on Good Friday, its Way of the Cross is sanctified by the feet of the pilgrim people of God who come and join the universal chorus: "We adore you O Christ and we praise you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."

*The Penal Laws were a set of laws imposed by the British government in Ireland that took all power away from the Catholic majority in the country.

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