



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Annual Meeting of European Lieutenants and the welcome of the new Governor General



Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, presided over the Mass at the beginning of the Annual Meeting of European Lieutenants on June 27.

The Grand Master of the Order, **Cardinal Edwin O'Brien**, warmly thanked Professor Borrromeo who received a lengthy and warm applause from participants at the **meeting of European Lieutenants**.

The **new Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone**, was then presented, declaring that he hoped to focus his attention on the needs of all the members of the Order and to work in continuity with his predecessor, who has left an exceptional legacy.

Consultor Pier Carlo Visconti accompanied by Professor Pierre Blanchard – member of the Grand Magisterium – presented the **financial report**, revealing an unparalleled growth in donations to the Holy Land (over 16 million euros), made possible above all through the activity of the Grand Master who systematically visits the Lieutenancies throughout the world, giving impulse and vitality to their local life and encouraging international communications within the Order. “In this way, a climate of trust and fraternity has been created, bringing the center closer to the peripheries,” Professor Borrromeo noted.

The Order continues to see **new communities of Knights and Dames** bloom: for example, new Magistral Delegations are planned in Chile and Peru. **Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli** illustrated this continuous growth with statistics: about 30,000 members on all continents, a third of which women. Attraction to the Order in Asia and the Pacific is particularly revealing.

Regarding support provided to the Church in the Holy Land, the **Assessor, Archbishop Antonio Franco**, stressed that the St. John the Baptist Vatican Foundation, wanted by the Pope, has succeeded in restoring the situation of the University of Madaba, favoring best practices and

transparent management on the path towards full autonomy. In a broader sense, the Foundation's vocation is to promote culture and education in the Middle East.

Professor Thomas McKiernan, President of the Holy Land Commission – in charge of managing the Grand Magisterium projects at the request of the Latin Patriarchate – presented the current state of the projects concerning the church of Jubeiha, the school in Naour, as well as the pay increase for teachers in schools belonging to the the patriarchal archdiocese of Jerusalem, which includes Cyprus, Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. These **schools** – which welcome many Muslims – are **key places for building bridges** of friendship and mutual understanding, which are key elements and guarantees for a future peace. The Lieutenants have expressed the desire to be more active in Palestine where despair reigns, when at the instance of the Latin Patriarchate most of the Grand Magisterium projects are carried out in Jordan.

It is true – as Professor Borromeo pointed out – that the proportion of Catholics in Palestine is very small (2% of Christians), however a future meeting with Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator, will take place on this subject.

Vice Governor General for North America, Patrick Powers, recalled that over two thirds of the expenses of the Latin Patriarchate are covered by the Order, including, for example, 100% of formation costs for priests in the Beit Jala seminary, located near Bethlehem, Palestine. The United States, along with Germany, lead in donations, thanks to substantial legacies due to the particularly intense and participatory information activities among members (over \$ 2 million in legacies last year).

Subsequently, the **issue of the Consulta**, scheduled for 12 to 16 November 2018, was discussed. The main agenda items will include the adoption of new Statutes for the Order; the preparation of Lieutenants to carry out their functions, as well as the place occupied by the ecclesiastics in the Lieutenancies.

The Grand Master hopes that clergy will not exceed 10% of the members and that priests or religious be explicitly destined for a specifically spiritual service. Their role must therefore be better defined in this essentially secular Order, as opposed to that of Malta, which is instead a religious order.

The meeting ended with the welcome of the new Governor General, who called for a common prayer to coordinate all the Lieutenants “in a spirit of concrete, open and sincere dialogue.”

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