



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

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

## The Grand Magisterium Spring meeting (April 17-18, 2018)



Welcoming participants in his opening address for the Grand Magisterium Spring meeting, **Grand Master Cardinal Edwin O'Brien** asserted the importance of fostering a wider and deeper understanding of the mission and action of Knights and Dames. This particularly in the few months leading up to the important appointment of the *Consulta*, when representatives of the Order from across the globe gather in Rome. He fervently encouraged the participants to invite a reflection on the presence of priests in the Order for the spiritual accompaniment of the members, a subject that he also dwelt upon again during the meeting. **The Governor General, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone**, presented the major current issues for the Order, concerning the first nine months of his mandate. A new direction is emerging regarding the projects followed by the Grand Magisterium: human formation will be privileged over the construction of buildings, in particular through the support of the Catholic schools network of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land, which corresponds to two thirds of the diocesan budget.

Following the agenda, **Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa** - Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate – updated the members of the Grand Magisterium about the situation in his diocese, especially on a pastoral level. He rejoiced that the influx of pilgrims has been once again reconfirmed this year, especially from Latin America and Asia, despite a rather tense political context on the ground. As regards the activity of the Patriarchate, the Archbishop emphasized the desire for **better coordination of the schools**, thanks to the creation of a "**central office**", insisting on the importance of catechesis. "We are not an NGO. What is important to us is first of all pastoral in nature, it is a question of forming future generations in a Christian way", he remarked in essence, thanking the Order for offering him the means to continue in this direction.

An overview of the **financial management of the Order** also shows that, thanks to the reserves, the contributions sent to the Holy Land remain at the same level as the previous year, despite a reduction in donations received by the Grand Magisterium (about 14.5 million euro in 2017, compared to the

historical record of over 16 million euro in 2016). The Lieutenancies of Germany and Italy are always on the front lines in their generosity, after those of the United States. During a debate concerning operational expenses, the Vice Governor for North America Patrick Powers considered the need to boost the Order's possibilities by increasing its visibility so that its vocation to serve the Mother Church in Jerusalem may be better known and attract new members.

Subsequently, **Sami El-Yousef, chief executive officer of the Latin Patriarchate, presented the budget for the year 2017**, explaining the rationalization under way for a clear and precise control of management, especially for the 41 schools and 34 kindergartens that - with almost 20,000 students and 1,500 employees - constitute the diocese's greatest financial involvement. He thanked the Grand Magisterium for the continuous contribution provided in this regard, as well as for the coverage of institutional expenses, especially relating to the formation of future priests. The question of the Patriarchate's debt that will begin to be reimbursed in 2020 has particularly occupied the exchanges among the participants of the meeting, knowing that a loan was signed by the Vatican Foundation St. John the Baptist at a Swiss bank, with guarantees offered by the Secretariat of State of the Holy See.

Following the items on the agenda, the **President of the Holy Land Commission of the Grand Magisterium, Thomas McKiernan**, commented on the help given to the Patriarchate for evangelization activities, emphasizing that in addition to the **major projects in 2018** (the school and the presbytery of Jaffa of Nazareth, in Israel; the kindergarten in Hashimi in Jordan; the church of Jubeiha in Jordan; the renovation of the parish house in Anjara in Jordan; as well as the raise in teachers' salaries), some "small projects" will be favored on a human scale, allowing to diversify the motivation of Knights and Dames. These **small projects 2018** - proposed by the Patriarchate - amount to little more than 300,000 euros and can be consulted by the Lieutenants on a dedicated section of the Grand Magisterium's administration website.

These themes together with the role played by the Lieutenants will be reflected upon during the general assembly of the Order, the **Consulta**, scheduled in Rome from November 13 to 16. **Lieutenant General Agostino Borromeo** spoke about it, underlining that he is currently cooperating with a preparatory commission for the *Instrumentum Laboris*, which will guide the work. This event will also be an opportunity to develop the Order's communications, as was pointed out by Chancellor Bastianelli, who also ascertained the need for a renewal and rejuvenation of the membership, the number of which remains stable (about 29,000). The number of deaths increased by 12% in 2017 compared to 2016, highlighting the essential need for measures in favor of recruitment. North America is still leading with 15,000 members, followed by Europe with 12,000 (a 5% decrease is observed in Europe, while the trend is on the upside in other regions); then follows Oceania, Latin America - revitalized thanks to the restoration of the Mexican Lieutenancy - and finally Asia, together with Southern Africa.

**François Vayne**

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