



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Between a paralysing shock and a creative awakening

German Delegations facing the pandemic



Procession on the occasion of the Investiture ceremony in Fulda, September 2020.

The months of the pandemic have touched everyone deeply: from the health dimension, to the economic, to social relations, everyone has had to face various difficulties. The Knights and Dames have endeavoured in many ways to carry on the activities of the Order: charity, prayer, and mutual support. Now, within the Lieutenancies, there is hope that in the months to come we can reunite, with fewer restrictions, with our brothers and sisters and again experience the joy of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

For the Delegations of the German Lieutenancy - as for the Delegations of all the European Lieutenancies - the Coronavirus pandemic has represented a great challenge: For a year, it has meant keeping one's distance, wearing masks, and abstaining from the majority of face-to-face meetings. Only summer 2020 offered a few welcome weeks of relaxation.

At the start of the pandemic, most commanderies went into shock. All the Order's events were cancelled: Delegation meetings, spiritual retreats, jubilee celebrations, the Spring Investiture, and planned trips to the Holy Land. In the summer, the Delegations benefitted from a relaxation of sanitary regulations, and showed remarkable creativity in holding their meetings: pilgrimages were organised in the local area, and processions respected social distancing. Gatherings were held in the gardens of the brothers and sisters of the Order and masses celebrated in the open air. Individual organ recitals were organised, and the first hybrid family excursion took place. The Delegations' meetings were relocated to churches where we not only celebrated masses but also attended conferences. Face-to-face meetings were moved outside - to the church forecourt or even in a cloister.

The second lockdown, from the end of autumn 2020, has freed up more creativity in the Delegations (we had no choice!) to find new ways of meeting: now, we often meet online to take part in conferences and to come together for retreats.

In some cases, unfortunately, the Delegations have failed to actively maintain the life of the Order. The long distances to travel to meetings without having the opportunity of spending time together deterred participants as much as a fear for their personal health. Additionally, we have observed a certain reluctance to use digital media.

Despite all the restrictions, the two Investitures in Fulda in the Autumn were a positive experience for all 100 participants. As parish singing was of course prohibited, it was replaced by soloists. The procession took place respecting social distancing and the wearing of masks. Thus 37 new confreres and consoeurs were able to be invested in a dignified setting. Through live streaming, those attending the celebrations could connect with the members of the Order at home. In parallel, more modest celebrations took place in the Sections to pray for the newly invested members.

The less that face-to-face meetings were possible, the more spiritual closeness and alternative methods of communication became increasingly important. Now, Delegations receive spiritual instruction often through newsletters and regularly through the Lieutenancy app. The Delegations meet with the representatives of the Latin Patriarchate by videoconference and thus have a first-hand insight into the situation in the Holy Land. Finally, we are especially united through our common prayer - and more than ever in this time of pandemic.

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