



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

A path to holiness within the Order



I walk through the streets of my adopted city, Padua, the city of the “Saint without a name”, loved even beyond our nation and our continent. I have a black veil on my head and a cloak of the same color surrounds me, embraces me, as I like to think, to guard a “Yes” pronounced nine years ago at the altar according to the Statute of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

I am in procession, like every year on June 13, and my thoughts turn to the Exhortation of our Holy Father Pope Francis. The whole document is an invitation to break with our comforting habits to listen to the voice of the Lord who calls us to be saints in the simplicity of everyday life, in the dense web of human relations. The invitation is strong and destabilizing at the same time, because it is not enough to have pronounced that “Yes” finally, rather it needs to be renewed every day in the places and events of our personal history.

My story of love for the holy places, for the living stones of Jerusalem, begins with the books of theology that I devoured as a young and enthusiastic student. Almost at the end of my studies that lasted so many years (Licence in Theology with specialization in Catechetics), I took part in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land: I desired a special encounter in the place where the Gospel is read, heard, breathed. This experience transformed me and, even if after a week I had to return to my usual life, I was now aware that Jerusalem had become part of me, had taken root in my heart.

Years pass, I meet the reality of the Order in my Parish and I begin to ask myself questions. In the meantime, my life’s journey is marked by a fundamental “Yes” to my existence: marriage, the transfer from a southern city to a northern one, acceptance of the mysterious will of the Lord not to send me children to make my love for my husband Luca full and perfect. I still have a full life within in my small family unit, in my encounters with the Lord in church, in work.

However, I feel it is not enough, I need something else, there is still a sense of the unfinished and I want to leave the door open to welcome the voice of the Father.

One day I take courage and send an e-mail to the Lieutenancy for Northern Italy: I wish to speak with one of the people in charge. It's December 31: I want to close the year by opening the door to the new, to what the Lord still reserves for me. The answer is not long in coming and within a few days I was in contact with the then Delegate for the city of Padua. I well remember that winter afternoon: I was in the Cloister of the Saint and I was very excited. I expressed my desire to become part of the Great Family of the Order but also the perplexities that stirred within me.

The answer is simple: "Come and see, then you will decide if this is really your path". Over the months I touched the reality with my hands and I became aware that yes, it is really what God wants for me. My concerns were not dispelled rather I acquired a new awareness: the Order is made up of people who, as such, are an expression of love, but also of so many weaknesses and annoying limits. To me the task of imitating the models of Holiness leaving aside the rest.

I can remember so many particularly happy moments that bind me to the Order: the moment when I was wrapped for the first time in the cloak and perceived His blessing embrace, when I knelt before the Holy Sepulchre as a member of this great family, when I received the pilgrim shell... But there are also times when the heart becomes small in front of the diatribes for or against our Jewish or Palestinian brothers and sisters, the small arguments over placings in processions, the way the title of Dame or Knight sometimes seems to overcome the privilege of charity in favor of worldly feelings. The temptation is strong, the weakness is infinite, and the only hope is the merciful Father.

Certainly, membership of the Order does not end in the strong moments of encounter in which we all breathe together and take on renewed strength and hope. There is in fact another type of belonging that takes shape in the reality of everyday life: in the family, with friends, in associations, in work. Then, testimony is not so much carried out in words but in many small gestures that express the choice made, the response to the call that is renewed every day.

Mine comes about in my little family formed by my husband and I, where, even in moments of fatigue, we must try to smile, understand each other and help each other to walk in the same direction. The strength of our love always wins. My holiness is also put to the test within the class groups because I am a primary school teacher and I am at the service of so many children, many more than I could generate in the flesh. Children who have everything from the material point of view but who sometimes have difficulties in relationships but are so thirsty for love. After all, my students are not very different from their peers who attend schools supported by the Order and who are so thirsty in their eyes and hearts not only for the water denied them because of the closure of wells but for peace and freedom.

We Dames and Knights are here for this; this is our mission, our path to holiness. My call to holiness is still realized in the encounter with the many people who pass through the 'Scoletta del Santo' to receive the bread of St. Anthony, to feed on the beauty of the artistic treasures or in search of a word of comfort, of sympathy, of closeness. I confess that my journey is made more by stumbling than by worthy works, but every time I am about to fall someone helps me up and I start again.

This is who I am. A few simple words to give an account of my life. I thank the Lord for what He has given me and for what He still reserves for me, I ask Him for the strength to raise me up again and my brethren their support in prayer to always see His gaze of love on the face of those I meet, regularly or by chance, on my path.

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