



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

History, organization and activities of the Order

The historical origins of the Order are somewhat obscure, although according to an undocumented tradition they are traced back to the First Crusade. In fact, **the first documentary evidence** of an investiture of Knights referred to as "of the Holy Sepulchre" dates to **1336**. Following Pius IX's restoration of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Pope issued apostolic letters to proclaim the reconstitution of the Order, entrusting its members with the task of providing material and spiritual support to the Latin rite Catholic Church in the Holy Land. The Order opened up with the appointment of Dames of the Holy Sepulchre under Leo XIII. The title of Grand Master was held by the Pope himself until Pius XII transferred it to a cardinal. Following this, **John Paul II made the Order a legal canonical and public personality, constituted by the Holy See.**

An estimated 30,000 Knights and Dames from forty nations are currently organized in nearly 60 **Lieutenancies** and - where the Order is still in the process of foundation - about ten **Magistral Delegations**. These peripheral structures are themselves composed of several **Sections** which are in turn subdivided into **Delegations**. The local leaders, Lieutenants, Magistral Delegates and the Presidents of Sections or Delegations are assisted in their task, to varying degrees, by the clergy, who are Priors. **The members' spiritual commitment is accompanied by an important call to financial support for the Church in the Holy Land, in particular - but not only – for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.** The **Grand Prior** of the Order is the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Each Lieutenancy or Magistral Delegation manages the donations of its members according to rigorous accounting rules, in order to present an annual budget to the Grand Magisterium, the Order's governing body which assists Cardinal O' Brien, the Order's Grand Master since 2012. The Grand Magisterium coordinates the entire aid sent to **Latin Patriarchate**, which counts **68 parishes, 44 schools** and **90,000 faithful**, in **Jordan, Palestine, Israel** and **Cyprus**. The global amount of aid sent to the Holy Land is close to 10 million Euros each year. In addition, members of the Order are required to travel regularly on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, bringing important moral support to the Christians of this region of the world who, in a climate of both economic and political crisis, strive to be protagonists of the "**culture of encounter**" in the service of peace.

Today the Order seeks to garner the commitment of its members in local churches hopeful for their sanctification. This is the essential and profound reason that motivated the revision of the Constitution during the "Consultations" that took place in 2013.

For more information:

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