“We are at the service of the Mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord and the Mystery of His Church”

The members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre understandably wish to be more directly informed regarding the new orientations that our Pontifical Institution is following under the impetus of Cardinal Fernando Filoni, who was appointed Grand Master by Pope Francis just over a year ago. In response to this expectation, we are publishing the central points on which the Grand Master briefly dwelt in the conclusions of the recent spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium last April 15.

Dear Friends, Most Excellent Members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem,

I would like to thank you for the service that, with a noble spirit and great generosity, you give to our Order, in truth first of all to the Church and to faith in the risen Christ. The most profound and significant appreciation comes to us from the Gospel, when the Lord tells his Disciples to serve humbly and without pretension and tells them the brief parable of the faithful servant (Lk 17:7-10), which concludes: ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.’ Such an attitude implies inner freedom and appreciation for having had the satisfaction of having worked in the vineyard of the Lord: in this one can find the highest remuneration, that is, to be at the "service of the Lord". We are at the service of the Mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord and of the Mystery of his Church, both in the forms of collaboration possible in our local Churches and towards the Church in the Land of Jesus, to which we give our specific contribution.

I have heard the various Reports and I have learned of the beautiful vitality of your Lieutenancies and Vice-Governorships. We must continue with the same commitment and find new ways to support the participation of our Ladies and Knights in the life of the Order.

In this perspective, along with the Presidency and the Grand Magisterium, we are committed to making our contribution. Here I would like to recall some of the most important initiatives:

- The generous response given on the occasion of the **special collection** in support for the Holy Land on account of Covid last year. It went beyond our expectations. Thanks again to all.

- The **approval of the Constitution** by the Apostolic See: its preparation was long and participated in at various levels; the Commission worked well to arrive at a text that, I believe, is efficient and modern. Our Order is an institution of the Church in that it is established by the supreme Authority of the Church, the Pope, who recognizes its public identity, with the intention of meeting, in a stable and adequate manner, the needs of the Church in the Holy Land in collaboration with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; consequently, it has the capacity to carry out those material operations necessary to achieve its goals. The text of the *Statute* has already been sent to all the Lieutenancies; translations have already been provided; it is good that everyone knows the *Statute*.

- The **publication of a text on Spirituality** in its twofold vision: biblical and ecclesiological. From the beginning of my service in the Order, I had been asked to say a word about whether our Order had its own spirituality. This led me to prepare the text that is now being published in the various languages. It is short in length, as befits an agile instrument, but sufficiently adequate to respond to the spiritual needs of the Order. I believe that the text will be useful not only to our Knights and Dames, but also to the formation of new candidates; it should therefore also help to find new Members, young and old, and give everyone the opportunity to reflect on the great honor and burden that rests on our Order. It is good that all Priors have a copy of it and so do the Bishops where the Order is present.

- With the **revision of the Liturgical Ritual** appropriate attention is given to the celebrations; the text establishes the fundamental criteria for praising God and for emphasizing the beauty of the liturgies related to the Vigil, the Investiture, and the Assumption of the various responsibilities. These moments are never trivial or simply bureaucratic; they involve true and profound service to God, to the Church and to our Order. There should be no deviation from the guidelines outlined, while leaving the Lieutenancies a certain autonomy with regard to their own particular characteristics. The text will be sent to you in Italian in the days to come, with a request that you provide the translations.

- I wanted to give **due consideration to the men and women religious**, taking into account the particular nature of their vocation and the contribution they make, especially to the Holy Land and to our Order. The Order remains fundamentally "secular"; however, as the Holy Father has said, the inclusion of bishops, priests, and religious occurs either because of the pastoral service they render or because of the inclusiveness of those who generously offer their contribution to the life of the Church in the Holy Land and to the Order itself. The text will be sent to you in the next few days, after the last verification.

- **Young people** represent an important chapter to which we should pay attention; all the more so after a Synod of Bishops in which the whole Church has been called to reflect and work. There are already beautiful experiences that can be emulated. Young people, at least until they formally join, are not members of the Order, but, as in a family, they are prepared to make the contribution appropriate to their age and ability in view of joining the Order if they so desire. Consideration would be given to giving guidance once their general remarks have been received. Each Lieutenancy could envisage some time for experimentation and the possibility of inter-collaboration, with a request then to send what has been decided to the Grand Magisterium.

- **The Bylaws** are one of the next tasks on which we are going to work; they require time and in-depth study. The *Statute* requires that there be a set of Bylaws in order to contribute to the orderly life of the Order. I hope to have everyone's contribution.

With these brief communications I thought it would be nice to share what we are doing. Finally, I would like to note here that the Holy Father has authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the decree of the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Henry Ernest Shaw, a faithful layman from Argentina, Knight of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (discussed on a separate page). This is wonderful news to rejoice in.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

(May 2021)