



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Are we "visible"?



From Spain, Dame Maria José writes to us (a summary): "Your Eminence, the Members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem have a commitment to the Holy Land and the spirituality of the Order draws strength from it; however, our help is not always known, nor evident; sometimes it appears more theoretical than practical ... Shouldn't the Order further strengthen its presence by also promoting volunteering and cooperation with the Latin Patriarchate, orders and congregations? ".

The question closely concerns us as Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre who are aware of their mission to the Holy Land. I believe that the question can be answered on three levels: The Order's visibility, pilgrimages and visits to the Holy Land, and its voluntary activities.

Historically, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is an institution connected with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; this bond is clearly mentioned in our Statute. However, the Order, is not a shadow of the Patriarchate, rather it is a presence by its side that seeks to support its journey with the means it makes available in order to allow it to carry out many pastoral, social and educational activities. Our main objective is therefore not self-referential in its aim, to highlight ourselves, but to allow the daily life of the Latin Church of Jerusalem, as well as other ecclesiastical institutions, to carry out its service to God and to our brothers and sisters with generosity, strength and vitality.

In the words that Pope Paul VI, today a saint, entrusted to the members of our Order in 1964, after his historic pilgrimage to the Holy Land, we find this spirit and this invitation: *"Continue to love those Holy Places, with an increasingly intense and ever more pious attachment; continue to seek and honour the land sanctified by the steps of the Son of God who became the Son of man; continue to promote there the works of religion, education, charity, which attest to the tenacious and loving presence of*

the Catholic Church; if possible, increase your effort of spiritual and corporal benevolence for those populations" (Address of Paul VI to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre).

It is clear, however, that this must be accompanied by a suitable effort in information and communication, particularly of and for our Members, so that they know which initiatives are supported by their generosity and their prayer. Through its own means of communication, the Order tries to shorten distances and to give a constant flow of information that makes realities in the Holy Land visible and concrete. Speaking further of the 'visibility' of the Order, I would like to recommend that it is up to you, dear Knights and Dames, to know and become 'ambassadors' of the Holy Land in your Dioceses and communities. Know how to warm hearts for the Land of Jesus and for the 'living stones' that still inhabit it today. This is part of our mission. Be like the prism that transmits vibrant colours thanks to the light that does not belong to it but which it receives as a gift.

With regard to pilgrimages, it must be recognized that they are clearly occasions of great spiritual, cultural and social importance for the life of a Knight and a Dame of the Order: breathe the air that belonged to Christ, walk the same roads, read the Word in the places where It was embodied is always an experience rich in good. It is also an opportunity to touch the work we support in the Holy Land and to take interest in the many practical issues that the Order has at heart. In your pilgrimages, plan to take some time to visit some projects and meet those who work there or who receive benefits from these works. This will enrich and deepen our 'call' and our 'commitment' as an everyday memory. Do not hesitate, therefore, to be 'missionaries', not 'proselytes' of the Order, and the testimony of the days spent in the Land of Jesus is beneficial to this, especially when you do not wear the cloak that identifies you as Knights and Dames.

Finally, I always find the idea of having some volunteer experience in the Holy Land stimulating; this can only be of great benefit to both Members and friends close to the Order, especially if it is a question of young people. Choosing to make one's time available to those who need it, means having a gaze full of awareness of oneself, the world around our relationship and us with God; this helps and matures. Various experiences have already been lived and some of them can be found on our website www.oessh.va. I hope that these initiatives will continue to bear fruit in the lives of those who participate.

Fernando Cardinale Filoni

Grand Master

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