



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The official welcome of the new Grand Master to the Order



On January 16 the Order's new Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, accompanied by the Governor General, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, was officially welcomed to Palazzo della Rovere, the Rome headquarters of the Grand Magisterium, during a ceremony in which his predecessor Cardinal Edwin O'Brien participated.

The dignitaries of the Order received the Grand Master at the entrance and accompanied him to the Hall of Throne where he greeted the members of the Grand Magisterium present. Cardinal O'Brien subsequently spoke some words of welcome, assuring his successor the faithful and enthusiastic support of all the Knights and Dames worldwide. "Our noble Order thanks the Lord and certainly our Holy Father for granting us the privilege of having you as our new guide! You represent a true blessing for our Order," he concluded.

Before delivering his first public speech (available below) in his role as Grand Master, Cardinal Filoni received Investiture within the Order from the hands of his predecessor who placed the Knight of the Collar insignia on him. After this ceremony, His Eminence was able to personally meet all the staff members, before going to the chapel for a moment of silent prayer in the company of Cardinal O'Brien.

Address by Cardinal Filoni

"Let us begin again from the empty Sepulchre of Christ"

"If you knew the gift of God" (Jn 4:10)

This expression is taken from the Gospel of John.

Jesus finds himself in the village of Sicàr, in Samaria; along the road there is a well, the one that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. The well recalls a sepulchre in which life, water, which must be drawn, is hidden.

Tired, Jesus sees a woman busy fetching water and asks her for a drink.

This is a common scene in regions where water does not flow to the surface and must be drawn from underground.

In the dialogue that opens up between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, Jesus tells her that, besides natural water, there is 'other' water, coming from "*a spring of water welling up to eternal life*" (Jn 4:14), just as Jesus says he has 'other' food, "*that you know nothing about*" (Jn 4:32), this in reference to the food that the disciples had gone to buy in the village; Jesus then meets the inhabitants of Sicàr, who will recognize him as "*the Saviour of the world*" (Jn 4:42). This in short is the story of the evangelist John.

This episode of the life of Jesus which I mention allows me to encapsulate the meaning of the service to which the Holy Father has destined me; to give meaning to being with you, to belonging today to the large family of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. I could say that I am almost the parish priest of this great 'Parish' spread across the continents.

We all need to draw on the "*depths*" - a Pauline term - of that mystery of grace that allows us to "*know this love that surpasses knowledge*" (Eph. 3:18-19).

Today we begin a new chapter in the history of the Order; a history full of events and gestures that have ennobled it.

I renew my gratitude to the Most Eminent Cardinal Edwin O'Brien for the duty he has fulfilled with competence and generosity at the helm of the Order. Thank you your Eminence!

I greet those present: His Excellency, Mons. Tommaso Caputo, the Grand Magisterium, His Excellency, Mons. Franco Croci, Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Central Italy, Lieutenant General of Honour, H.E. Prof. Giuseppe Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto and all of the staff.

I wish to assure you of my commitment to the Order and offer my encouragement to you all. In order to journey together, we need together to ask Christ for the gift of "his" water and "his" food so that our journey and that of every Knight and Dame, be faithful to the "vocation" and "ministry" that we are committed to.

As Knights and Dames, we all know we have a mission to carry out; we must live up to the 'noble ideal' which the very nature of our institution requires of us. But the 'nobility', the honour to which I refer does not come, as Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishop and Doctor of the Church says, from the "*titles of our parents or from their life's work, rather from being and calling ourselves Christians*" (Discourses 43, 19-21).

The commitment undertaken, in truth, comes from that empty Sepulchre, that is, from the Resurrection of Christ from which all profound knowledge derives, both of the hidden and public life of the Lord, and of his words. The empty tomb speaks to us of the living Master, whom the Apostle

Thomas recognizes and confesses his "Lord and God" (Jn 20:28) and whom the Church is always called to announce and witness to all peoples and at all times.

The Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre always begin from there; from there originates the commitment to the life, spirituality, social life and participation in the needs of the Holy Land. And this will always be our starting and reference point.

Let us begin again from the empty Sepulchre of Christ, which many saw, but only Peter, John, Mary Magdalen, Joan, Mary mother of James and others "*saw and believed*" (Jn 20:8). We could consider them the first Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre. We are the heirs of those witnesses; and it is precisely in this that we are witnesses today and give meaning to our belonging to the Order.

Before concluding these words of mine, allow me to address an affectionate greeting to my closest collaborators from the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and Pontifical Mission Societies, present here today: H.E. Archbishop Protasio Rugambwa, H.E. Mons. Giovanni Pietro Dal Toso, Fr. Ryszard Szmydki, O.M.I., Mons. Ermes Viale, Head of the Administration Office, and Sister Raffaella Petrini, F.S.E. My dear heartfelt thanks go to you all. And God bless you. A special thank you to Mother Shaun Vergauwen, F.S.E., co-founder of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, who surprised me and came directly from the United States.

Thank you all.

(January 16, 2020)