



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Grand Magisterium autumn meeting (October 22-23, 2019)



Our Lady of Palestine - Patroness of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, celebrated on October 25 throughout the Church since 1994 - was honoured in Rome at a reception organized at Palazzo della Rovere, during the autumn meeting of the Grand Magisterium. On Wednesday 23 October, around 300 guests - including various cardinals, led by Holy See Secretary of State **Cardinal Pietro Parolin** - gathered around **Cardinal Edwin O'Brien** and the highest officers of the Order.

The **Grand Master of the Order of Malta**, numerous ecclesiastics, ambassadors, representatives of civil society and journalists were able to express their friendship to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, and support for the cause of the Holy Land.

From the vigil until the morning itself, the members of the Grand Magisterium had worked on various current issues, under the presidency of Cardinal O'Brien and in the presence of **Abp. Pierbattista Pizzaballa** (Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem), **Abp. Tommaso Caputo** (Assessor of the Order), as well as the four continental Vice Governors.

After having welcomed the new members Leopoldo Torlonia and Dominique Neckebroek, the Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone described the activities of the Grand Magisterium. He underlined the efforts made by the Order to **expand in Latin America**, thanks to the joint efforts undertaken with the Vice Governor for this subcontinent, Enric Mas and he mentioned the successful conduct of **meetings between the Lieutenancies** in Rome, Houston, Montreal and Brisbane. He also observed that **Asia and Oceania have considerable growth potential**; indeed, the Grand Master will visit them next January. The Governor General also spoke about the restoration work underway at Palazzo della Rovere, with the aim of leasing part of the building to a new hotel management company.

Archbishop Pizzaballa subsequently presented the **situation in the Holy Land**, where improvements are slow in the political and economic sectors. He underscored the precariousness of 80,000 Catholics in Israel, migrants without protection, who risk being expelled from one day to the next. The Apostolic Administrator also outlined the new financial organization of the Patriarchate, with very strict rules of conduct to ensure greater transparency. Sami El-Yousef, CEO of the Patriarchate, then intervened, explaining in detail how these financial control systems operate, especially in the management of the forty or so Patriarchate schools that have a large deficit, as well as the role of the new finance council created in July 2018.

Staying with finances, the treasurer Saverio Petrillo - president of the Financial Commission of the Grand Magisterium - presented the Order's budget, with revenues that currently reach 9 million euros, but expressing appreciation for the 13 million euros foreseen by donations promised from the Lieutenancies by the year's end. The **small projects** are of great interest to the Lieutenancies and are proving to be of great success, such as one of last year's social projects, which focused on finding employment for around forty young unemployed people in Gaza. However, the Governor General insisted that the **monthly institutional expenses** (about 600,000 euros sent monthly to the Patriarchate) should not be neglected and, in this regard, he intends to write to the Lieutenants.

The resulting debate highlighted the need to better communicate the regular needs of the Patriarchate to the Lieutenancies, among the Grand Priors and through the diocesan network of parishes, as highlighted in particular by the Vice Governor for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz.

On the second day of the meeting, Bart McGettrick - president of the **Holy Land Commission** - spoke of the Commission members visit to Jordan, in particular to Jubeiha, where the parish church should be inaugurated next April, and to Hashimi, where a kindergarten currently welcomes 300 children. He insisted on the question of the teachers' salaries that should be increased, as well as on the **education of the children of Iraqi and Syrian refugees**. Thirty small projects aimed at supporting those in need will reach the total sum of 900,000 euros in 2020, specified McGettrick.

Before the end of the meeting, Chancellor Bastianelli mentioned the **increase in admissions and promotions**, after which Abp. Caputo reassured those present about the development of the Order's new Constitution, on which he is working together with a group of experts in the Order. The next meeting of the Grand Magisterium will be held on April 21 and 22, 2020.

François Vayne

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