



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Youth of the Order in Germany: learning about the life of the Order and discovering the Holy Land



A meeting with Father Oliver Rothe, Prior of the Düsseldorf Delegation of the German Lieutenancy of the Order and a member of the Youth of the Order, during their pilgrimage to the Holy Land. who are inspired by the ideal, the mission and the concrete life of the Knights and Ladies. The Youth of the Order is a group of very young boys and girls who are not members of the Order but who are inspired by the ideal, the mission and the concrete life of the Knights and Dames.

Father Oliver Rothe is the Prior of the Düsseldorf Delegation of the German Lieutenancy of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

I happened to meet him in Jerusalem during a pilgrimage he was leading for the young people of his Diocese to the Holy Land. It was such a blessing to see so many young people drawing closer to the land and places of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and of the Land of the Bible.

“I came here with youth of the three parishes where I have been ministering for the past ten years,” Father Oliver shared.

One of those young people was 19-year-old Henry Gottlob, who is a member of the Youth of the Knights of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Father Oliver leads the group, introducing the young members from a young age to the life of the Order. There are more than 100 in the group’s WhatsApp chat with a core of about 20 highly active members. They attend Investitures and begin to familiarize themselves with the mission and work of the Order.

“I got involved in the group of the Youth of the Knights thanks to the invitation of Father Oliver. Since I joined the group during the pandemic, we hold some introductory sessions online and then we were lucky to join the Investiture that took place in Munich in mid-May,” Henry told me.

But why should young people be interested in the Order of the Holy Sepulchre? Father Oliver Rothe answers passionately to this question explaining why he invites them to share this experience.

“Because it’s a wonderful community I am part of which I enjoy a lot and therefore I am happy to share it with young people in my parishes. Secondly, I think it’s so important to have young people as early as possible in connection with the Holy Land,” explained Father Oliver.

This love for the Holy Land is so evident in Father Oliver’s life. In fact, his path into the Order predates his ordination as a priest.

“I became a Knight before entering the seminary. I was a lawyer and at some point in my life I felt I wanted to explore the possibility of being ordained. During my time of discernment, I had a friend who was a Knight in the Order and he invited me to join,” he said.

Since the Order supports itself through contributions of its members, Father Oliver tells us smiling that he was a bit hesitant to tell his Lieutenancy about his choice of leaving the well-paid position as attorney to enter the seminary. “When I finally informed my Lieutenancy that I was going to enter the seminary, everyone was so happy and they supported me so much then and still do today,” he concluded.

Before leaving Father Oliver and Henry in Jerusalem, I asked Henry what he’s bringing back from the days in Jerusalem, what memory will stick with him. “We managed to celebrate the Mass in the Holy Sepulchre. We all woke up at 5am and walked to Jesus’ Tomb for this mass at 6am. It was a wonderful experience,” he shared. “I also enjoyed the interplay of different religions and communities here. In Germany I mostly know only Protestant and Catholic Christians while here there are so many different traditions,” he concluded.

In March 2023 Father Oliver is hoping to organize a group pilgrimage only for the Youth of the Order and it will be a great chance for them to discover the Holy Land. Let’s keep them in our prayers starting from now.

To read more in German about the pilgrimage Father Oliver Rothe led, see here: [Heilige Orte und aktive Christen – 18 Jugendliche begeistert von Israel- Kirche+Leben \(kirche-und-leben.de\)](https://www.kirche-und-leben.de)

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