



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Order's Consulta took place in Rome, under the gaze of Our Lady of Palestine

This year, the Grand Priors were exceptionally invited to the quadrennial meeting of Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates, organised around the Grand Master and the Governor General



"May the Virgin Mary, invoked by you by the title of *Queen of Palestine*, assist you always in your mission", said Pope Francis as he received on November 9, the participants of the Consulta of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre gathered in Rome for their statutory general assembly, the theme of which was the formation of Knights and Dames.

Before blessing all the members of the Order and their families, the Holy Father turned his thoughts to the Holy Land, gravely declaring: "We are sadly witnessing a tragedy unfolding in the very places where the Lord lived, where he taught us through his humanity to love, to forgive and to do good to all. And instead, we see them torn apart by terrible suffering that affects above all so many innocents, so many innocent dead. That is why I am spiritually united with you, who certainly live this meeting of the Consulta sharing the great sorrow of the Mother Church of Jerusalem and imploring the gift of peace."

It was in this extremely worrying context for the Holy Land that around 200 leaders of the Order from some forty countries prayed and worked from 6 to 10 November, around the Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, and the Governor General, Ambassador Visconti di Modrone.

Each day of the meeting began with morning Mass, during which the members of the Grand Magisterium and the Grand Priors, Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates, spiritually guided by the Grand Master, led the faithful of the diocese of Jerusalem in prayer, particularly during the Eucharist celebrated in honour of Our Lady of Palestine on November 8, presided over by the Assessor of the Order, Archbishop Tommaso Caputo.

As soon as the Consulta opened, after the words of welcome from the Grand Master and the Governor General, the eyes of the participants turned to the Holy Land, with the online intervention of Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, broadcast live, during which he described the terrible situation being experienced by the entire population, reaffirming his desire to work for unity and pronouncing words of hope in the midst of a deep spiritual night. He warmly thanked the Order for its regular and generous support, which is more necessary than ever.

Father Flavio Pace, Under-Secretary of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches, was one of the key speakers. He suggested that the Order could expand by welcoming non-Latin Catholics from other continents as members, in the spirit of the collaboration that exists within ROACO (Assembly of Organizations for Aid to the Eastern Churches), where the Order contributes materially to projects in the Holy Land involving Catholics from other Churches, in particular Melkites and Maronites.

"The whole Church has a moral duty to support the Mother Church of Jerusalem, because this is rooted in the apostolic tradition, ever since the Apostle Paul called the Christian communities he founded to this solidarity with their brothers and sisters of the Holy City", commented Cardinal Filoni, during a lively debate on formation, members being called upon to deepen the biblical sources of their commitment. with members also having to deepen the biblical sources of their commitment.

After the inaugural session, the first two days were devoted to unique and valuable bilateral meetings between the Grand Master and the Governor General with the Lieutenant and Grand Prior of each Lieutenancy, and to exchanges in language groups on the basis of a draft document, in Latin called an "*Instrumentum laboris*", centred on the theme of this Consulta.

The debates, enriched by the presence of the Grand Priors, touched on many aspects, having as background the ecclesiological urgency of embodying the chivalric ideal today by responding personally to the universal call to holiness launched by the Second Vatican Council, since every member of the faithful received in baptism an outpouring of royal blood.

The plenary session on the third day was marked by the presence of Monsignor Roberto Campisi, Assessor of the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, who, informed of the work of the groups, highlighted that it is essentially a question for the members of the Order of experiencing an indispensable formation of the heart, by putting the Gospel into practice, to progressively acquire "a heart that sees", according to the expression of Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Deus caritas est*. "May you be encouraged to live the present moment, which the Holy Father has termed "dark nights of conflict", like "lamps of charity" that stop hope from fading in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi, continuing to burn and kindle brilliant sparks of peace and flames of good".

The four Vice-Governors - Tom Pogge, Jean-Pierre de Glutz, Enric Mas and John Secker - used the summaries of the international working groups to provide the Grand Master with indications and input to consider as he draws up the final document on the formation of Knights and Dames, in addition to the new Regulations and Ritual that accompany the new Constitution of the Order signed by Pope Francis.

"It is not intended to answer every question, but to refocus us on the nature of the Order, its specificity, which concerns the death and resurrection of Christ. Our Order is lay, chivalrous in the noblest sense of the word, and its members are called to nobility of heart, which is expressed in their concern for the Holy Land", Cardinal Filoni summarised. The Grand Master also announced the forthcoming creation of a commission of historians whose task will be to clearly establish the origins of the Order, which are mainly linked to the great renewal of the Church initiated at the beginning of the 13th century by Saint Francis of Assisi during his historic pilgrimage to the holy places of the Christian faith.

On the fourth day, after the pontifical audience in the morning, the meeting of the Grand Magisterium was held, with the live online participation of Sami El Yousef, CEO of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, who gave an update on the status of the projects supported by the Order in 2023, thanks to more than 12 and a half million euros in donations from the Knights and Dames sent to the Holy Land this year. In his report, the Governor General spoke of the contributions being received for humanitarian aid in Gaza, and then highlighted the Order's development efforts, particularly in Asia and Africa, opening up prospects for greater participation by "friends of the Order" in the future, people who should find ways of becoming more involved in the life of the pontifical institution, perhaps by means of a foundation recognized as being of public utility.

On the final day, a pilgrimage was organized to Saint Paul Outside the Walls, followed by the Grand Master's concluding Mass at the Marian shrine of Divine Love. Before leaving, the participants in the Consulta personally signed a letter to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, assuring him of their prayers for his diocese and of their affectionate closeness at this very difficult time for all the inhabitants of the Holy Land.

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