



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

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

**"Is it fair to say that our Order is a religious Order of lay people?"**

(A question from Paco Garcia Burgos, Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Mexico Lieutenancy)



**A modern ecclesial reality**

Ours is not a religious Order, but a "Pontifical Equestrian Order" made up of lay people, in which ecclesiastics, religious men and women have their place. We are an Institution with legal personality which, because of its activity, operates as a 'Central Body of the Catholic Church'. All its members, men and women, are in fact baptised, faithful followers of Christ. The executive officers of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre (Lieutenant General, Governor General, Vice-Governors, Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates), are all lay, voluntary and unpaid. Among the high officials, two are ecclesiastics: The Grand Master, appointed by the Pope, and the Assessor, appointed with the approval of the Roman Pontiff.

The Grand Priors and the religious men and women who belong to the Order have the mission of spiritual accompaniment of the members, in coordination with the Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates.

We hope that the laity, who represent the majority at all levels in the Order, will be able to live their baptism in depth, by virtue of which they are 'priests, prophets and kings'! They are called, with the support of prayer, to bear witness to the Word of God lived in their daily lives, with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them, since they are members of the Body of Christ, which is the Church, and share with Christ the dignity of sons of the Father in the Kingdom of God.

Thus, our Order, although very ancient, is a modern ecclesial reality in its mission, since it participates in the solicitude of the Roman Pontiff for the Holy Places and Catholic institutions in the Holy

Land. This mission is nourished by giving primary importance to the vocation to personal holiness (spirituality) and to the life of faith practised and lived in all its contents and in the forms of life that each member practices.

I wish to strengthen these particular aspects of our Institution by encouraging lay members to follow a program of ongoing Christian formation, including regular pilgrimages to the Holy Land, so that they can be ever more missionaries of the Gospel of Christ in today's society, where God is too often ignored.

We want to live our co-responsibility in a synodal manner, to be an example of a 'family' where dialogue and fraternity between different vocations are experienced, for a noble ideal.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

Grand Master

*(November, 2022)*