



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Concerning problematic situations of some members of the Order



From time to time I receive letters in which people share their concern about situations that are not in conformity with the moral doctrine of the Church. Some concern the matrimonial situations of divorced and remarried Knights and Dames. Some also denounce the fact that our members belong to Entities and Orders that are not recognized by the Apostolic See, or even contrary to it. I will speak about this another time. With regard to the aforementioned issue, we all know, as our Constitution says, that a member of our Order is required to have self-discipline, a witness of faith, zeal for the good and a special commitment to the Holy Land (see Art. 4 about “Commitments”).

In particular, Art. 34, about the Candidacy for Admission to the Order, specifies that the candidates “must be Catholics of exemplary faith and moral conduct”; in addition, they must be faithful to the “Obligations” provided for in Art. 36, especially with regard to behavior that may constitute a serious public violation of divine or ecclesiastical law (§ 5). It is clear that we are not talking about perfect, idealistic lives, but the real lives of people.

Pope Francis has written that the demands of the faith and the Church's own teachings are not always easily understood or appreciated by everyone. He adds, “Faith always remains something of a cross; it retains a certain obscurity which does not detract from the firmness of its assent” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 42). As for married life, we know well that, if Jesus is not kept at the center of the relationship, the vocation of marriage and conjugal love is also easily lost. “The life of every family,” says Pope Francis, “is marked by all kinds of crises” (*Amoris Laetitia* 232), and there is no shortage then - John Paul II wrote - even breakups and separations at times, “a last resort, after all other reasonable attempts at reconciliation have proved vain.” (*Familiaris Consortio* 83).

Similar situations exist in our Order as well. However, the Order is not indifferent to those who are victims or find themselves in situations of marital division. Discernment and pastoral sense on the part of priors, and understanding on the part of confreres, are needed, as well as strong commitment

to help in prayer and closeness to those who are suffering. In addition, participation in the life of the Order is certainly a moral help, especially when, in such cases, there may be a weakening of faith and witness. This does not detract from the fact that divorce is an evil (cf. *Amoris Laetitia* 246) and that with a new marriage, at times, there is a tendency to self-marginalize from full participation in the sacramental life, even if not from the Christian faith.

In these cases, especially those who hold responsibilities in the Order, are regretfully invited to renounce their office of service without losing the purpose of their belonging to the Order. The Order, in truth, is not a merely honorary institution, but a way to witness fidelity to Christ and the Church, with special attention to the Land of Jesus, in support of the Mother Church of Jerusalem.

In this sense, the choice of members of integrity and high moral life and generous commitment is fundamental and constitutes a delicate step in the process of adhesion, as well as in the evaluation of those who are appointed to offices of responsibility. But it is also necessary, since we are dealing with moral matters, that members should avoid gossip, envy, jealousy, and damage to reputations. At the same time, that there be true availability for service on the part of those who have a responsibility (Lieutenants, Presidents, Delegates, etc.) in the life of the Order. Let us always look to Christ who came not to be served but to serve, as he calls us all to fully trust in him.

Fernando Cardinal Filoni

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