



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

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

## Rooted in the Symbolism of the Order



With the promulgation of the Ritual of the Order, I would like to draw attention here to the importance, the depth and, I would even say, the beauty of the symbols that accompany the solemn Investiture ceremony (Vigil and Liturgy) of the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

Symbols (from the Greek *sýmbolon*, derived from the verb *symbállō*, "to put together") reveal hidden meanings. Those we use in our ceremonies are not only signs of identity but also allow us to glimpse and sense the deeper spiritual realities to which they refer.

For this reason I take the liberty of taking up the text published at the beginning of the Ritual for further reflection, especially for those who are preparing to receive the Investiture at this time, and for all the Knights and Dames who are always called upon to rediscover the richness of our Order.

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Symbolism in the Ritual of the Order:

1. **The Christian liturgy.** is rich in biblical and ecclesiological symbols and signs. They reflect spiritual realities, encourage the practice of Christian virtues, and foster a more intimate participation in the life of the Order through its rites and ceremonies.

2. **The crosier or ferula.** The symbolism of the crosier recalls the authority of the bishop in the Church, through which he constitutes Knights and Dames. The ferula, usually used by the Bishops of Rome, can be used during the Investiture of the Order; it recalls the role of the popes as Grand

Masters of the Order. The act of Investiture is the same for the Knights and Dames, and consists of placing the crosier or the ferula on the right shoulder of the investee.

3. **The Jerusalem Cross.** The distinctive emblem of the Order is the red Jerusalem Cross. The conferring of the Cross, on which Christ nailed himself vulnerable in front of the powers of this world, is among the most significant moments of the ceremony of Investiture. The Knight and Lady look to Christ who offered himself as a sacrifice for all, even to death on the Cross, to give them life in abundance. The Jerusalem Cross is thus a sign of the new member's dedication to supporting the Holy Land.

4. **The Gospels.** Of equal importance is the presentation of the Gospels to the newly invested, that is, the Word of God that nourishes and conforms the Knight and the Lady to Christ. The *magna carta* of the adherent to the Order is summarized in the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. The delivery of the Gospel therefore invites the new Knights and Dames to shape their lives with renewed fervor in the crucible of the Gospel beatitudes.

5. **The jar of perfumed oils.** is used during the ceremony of the Prayer Vigil and expresses the devotion of the invested Dames to Jesus, following the example of the women who cared for him.

6. **The Sword.** In our religious context, the sword remains present as a purely symbolic value which recalls the defense of truth and peace in justice. Therefore, its use is limited to the Vigil ceremony, unless prohibited by local laws and norms.

7. **Spurs.** They recall the care that must be taken of the things that are God's, spurring one to attend to the works of justice, peace and Christian charity.

8. **Mantle, neck cross, cap, veil, gloves.** they make up the proper dress of the Knight and Lady in the dignity they receive.

9. **The shawl for women religious.** in the respect of the religious habit, the black shawl with red Jerusalem Cross indicates the bond with the other members of the Order.

10. **The stole for men religious.** in respect of the religious habit, the white stole with a red enhanced cross indicates the bond with the other members of the Order.

11. **The mozzetta.** This is the distinctive dress of the Clergy-Knight.

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The rich symbolism of our Order includes the well-known special distinctions (the Pilgrim's Shell and the Palm of Jerusalem), as well as the banners and flags representing all the Knights and Dames belonging to its institutional area.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

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*The Grand Master's Corner will resume in September, after the summer break.*