



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

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

## Giving Thanks for the Past, Welcoming the Present, and Opening to the Future



The Knights and Dames of the Order, from various generations, transmit the Christian faith in their living environment (Photo: members of the Rieti Delegation, Italy).

I often receive letters from Knights and Dames of our Order in which they tell me about their moment of entry into our pontifical institution. These are fond memories that in some cases go back 20, 30, or even 40 years.

The fact that this memory remains so engraved in the lives of our members is a clear sign of the importance for each of them of this belonging that has accompanied so many years of their lives along with their many personal and professional experiences.

This richness of life is a gift for the Church and for the entire Order, which grows thanks to the life experience of its members. At the end of July we said goodbye to Monsignor Franco Croci, Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Central Italy, who passed away at the age of 91. As I had the pleasure of recalling during the celebration of his funeral, Archbishop Croci "lived for 60 years as a minister of the Lord, first in Crema and then, for over fifty years, in the service of the Holy See. He held many offices and, for our Order as well, he never failed to be present with his deep spiritual stature and his attentive and constant pastoral accompaniment.

Like him, many other Knights and Dames have contributed for many years to the life of the Church and of the Order in particular, and continue to do so with generosity and dedication. What a great wealth they are with their human, social, cultural and professional experience founded in faithful adherence to the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In his message for the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly, which was celebrated on July 25, Pope Francis starts from the mission that Jesus entrusts to all of us:

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells the Apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (28:19-20).

These words are also addressed to us today. They help us better understand that our vocation is to preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young, and to care for the little ones.... there is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel and handing down traditions to your grandchildren. You just need to set out and undertake something new.

Addressing himself directly to all those who are bearers of so many experiences, the Holy Father launched a special invitation in his message:

Given this, I want to tell you that you are needed in order to help build, in fraternity and social friendship, the world of tomorrow: the world in which we, together with our children and grandchildren, will live once the storm has subsided. All of us must "take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 77). Among the pillars that support this new edifice, there are three that you, better than anyone else, can help to set up. Those three pillars are dreams, memory and prayer. The Lord's closeness will grant to all, even the frailest among us, the strength needed to embark on a new journey along the path of dreams, memory and prayer."

Sometimes society pushes us to look anxiously at the passing of time. God offers us to enter into a different dynamic, one of thanksgiving with respect to the past, of acceptance with respect to the present, and of openness with respect to the future. I invite every member of the Order to live this temporal dimension to the full and to be the bearer of the noble vision that the Church has always proposed to us because it is founded on the dignity of the person, of every person, at whatever stage of life he or she may be. I entrust to the Knights and Dames who, even in family life, bring their own rich experience of life the gift of this reflection.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

*(September 2021)*