



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 mission in the Holy Land



When Cardinal Pizzaballa visited the wounded in Gaza, one of them kissed the Patriarch's pectoral cross, so uniting his own suffering with that of Christ's.

"I have never seen such a hard time." The person who uttered these words is the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who has spent 35 years of his life in the Holy Land and has faced many crises. The ceasefire of 13 October in Gaza does not erase the difficulties facing the Holy Land, and although there have been important developments, uncertainty remains about the next steps.

"We are distraught, deeply wounded by what we are living through, by the climate of hatred that this violence has created, which in turn generates more hatred in a vicious cycle that cannot be broken." These were Cardinal Pizzaballa, Grand Prior of our Order's comments, during a video call from Jerusalem for the prayer vigil "Peace for Gaza" organized in Rome on September 22 by the Community of Sant'Egidio, before the ceasefire. His analysis continues to resonate: "We have left the field open to many extremists on both sides; but I also see many gentle souls. These are individuals who take risks, who work for justice even at personal cost. There are Israelis, Palestinians, Jews, Christians, Muslims. Here it is not a matter of belonging but of humanity, above all."



The closeness of the Order

In a situation of such gravity, the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre can only strive to carry forward their mission of supporting the Mother Church of Jerusalem with perseverance and faith, while embracing the hope to which this Jubilee invites us. This support takes the form of prayer, care and closeness, and financial aid to meet the immense needs.

“Through their voluntary and ongoing donations, the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre have enabled the Grand Magisterium of the Order in Rome to send weekly contributions to the Holy Land, which totalled more than 16 million Euros in 2024. The average of four million per quarter has already been largely surpassed during the same period in 2025 due to the current need, which has clearly inspired greater generosity among our Members,” confirmed the Governor General of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone.

Gaza at the center of our concern

“The vast majority of these contributions (about 80%)”, continued Ambassador Visconti di Modrone, “are regularly allocated to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which through its parishes and institutions is engaged in humanitarian initiatives, including sending food, water, medicine, and fuel to Gaza (about 1.5 million Euro in 2024 and continuing to increase in 2025).” Gaza is clearly at the center of our concerns: a tragedy before which we feel powerless. After the July attack on the Church of the Holy Family, the only Latin parish in Gaza, where for two years the few hundred Catholics remaining in the Gaza Strip have taken refuge along with other Christians. After the attack, the Latin Patriarch, accompanied by Patriarch Theophilos III, went to Gaza to comfort this small community mourning its victims.

In the following months, we witnessed the evacuation of Gaza City, pushed by the Israeli army. George Akroush, the director of the Development Office of the Latin Patriarchate, recounts the decision of the Catholic parish of the Holy Family not to leave the church: “Our priests and religious

chose to remain, sharing the little they had, because those who decided to leave following evacuation orders faced constant humiliation and had no truly safe place to go. Those who did leave risked being killed at every step, in addition to facing scarce (if available!) water, food, tents, medicine, and electricity, along with the constant fear of bombings, demolitions, and displacements, which became part of daily life in Gaza.” We continue to pray for this community and for all the people of Gaza, who now face the reconstruction phase.



The Order supports numerous projects in the Holy Land, particularly in the field of construction, so that the local Catholic Church has the means to welcome and instruct those entrusted to its pastoral care.

A crisis spreading to the entire Palestinian population

The situation is not calm in the rest of the Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem either. “These areas often go underreported by the international media, and yet, notes Akroush of the Latin Patriarchate, their population suffers from increasing restrictions, checkpoints, and isolation that erode livelihoods and hope. Now, in the West Bank alone, more than 1,200 iron gates, barriers, and military posts have been erected with the aim of isolating Palestinian cities from one another. For many Christian families, especially those who depended on tourism and services linked to pilgrims and visitors, which is estimated at over 60% of Christian families, unemployment has become chronic.”

In the face of these challenges, the Patriarchate is intensifying its services, and the Order stands beside it in supporting the basic needs of the population by creating jobs and supporting small businesses for unemployed Christians. In addition, there's contributing to urgent medical operations and healthcare costs for those unable to afford treatment, as well as providing food vouchers and important support for the network of schools run by the Patriarchate. Thanks to the Order's contribution, the Patriarchate has been able to carry forward the Jubilee initiative of cancelling school fee debts up to the year 2024/2025, which was a burden that many families – amid Covid, war, and unemployment – had experienced with tremendous anxiety.

Looking ahead

The journey is long, while diplomacy takes its steps. For us, in faith, it is our task to pray for peace. The small actions we can support as the Order of the Holy Sepulchre are practical and immediate. As George Akroush comments, “They do not resolve the deeper political causes of suffering, but they keep people alive and give families the dignity of a future,” and he concludes by addressing those strategic partners, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre was first among them, “We will never forget your solidarity. Your donations directly translate into lives protected, children in school, surgeries carried out, elderly cared for, and fragile hearts supported.”

Elena Dini

(October 2025)