



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Beside the sick, doctors and nurses



During the health emergency of recent months, we have been particularly close in thoughts and prayers to the sick and healthcare personnel. On the occasion of the feast of Saint Camillus de Lellis, Grand Master of the Order Cardinal Fernando Filoni, celebrated mass at the San Giovanni hospital of Rome, addressing his words particularly to those who are going through the trials of the illness and to those who dedicate themselves daily to treating these people. “In every hospital” he commented, at the beginning of his homily on July 14, “two challenges are amassed: the health of the patients, and those who dedicate themselves to overcoming the pathologies that afflict them; a hospital is always a space of suffering, hope and where professional capacities are performed. A hospital can never simply be a place of work like many others”.

In particular, during this unique period we cannot forget everything that the doctors, nurses and healthcare workers have seen on the front lines. “Everyone has witnessed the tears and words of those who in recent days, faced with helplessness in treating countless patients admitted with Covid-19, have succumbed to emotions of deeply human and spiritual sensitivity. We could never forget the sadness of those who have not seen their loved ones returning home, the anxiousness of those undergoing medical examinations, or the joy of those who have recovered,” he affirmed.

The Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has invited us to respond to the trials of the present moment by relying firmly on the Word of God: “In the limits of medicine, in the perspective of illness, if not in death, where is God? But was this not indeed the question that Christ came in order to answer? When John the Baptist sent some of his disciples to investigate whether he was the Christ, Jesus replied: *‘Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them’* (Lk 7:22). In short, Jesus was saying that God is not indifferent to suffering humanity and he even identified himself with the sick: *‘I was sick and you visited me...as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me’* (Mt 25:36.40).”

For years in the Holy Land, the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre have generously supported various healthcare establishments of excellence. Among them we would like to remember two which encompass the cycle of life from the beginning to the end: the Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem, the only paediatric hospital in Palestine, and the Saint-Louis Hospital in Jerusalem which specialises in palliative treatment, often accompanying its patients from all religions to death with love and respect. Besides these establishments, other institutions such as the Effetà in Bethlehem, specialising in the audio-phonetic re-education of children and youth, or the Our Lady of Peace Center in Amman that works with young people with specific needs, offer various services that seek to respond to medical as well as social and human needs.

The physical, psychological and spiritual suffering of the sick does not pass by unobserved by the members of the Order and, besides those who have to receive treatment, at this time we also remember in prayer those who offer such treatments. As the Grand Master Cardinal Fernando Filoni recalls “the hospital is either a place of profound humanity and exercising of love in the practice of medical professionalism, or it is a place of cold medical competencies”. And he concludes: “the Lord bless you: sick, doctors and healthcare workers.”

(July 2020)