



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

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

## A letter from the Pope to the Grand Master



**To Our Dear Brother Edwin Frederick Cardinal O'Brien**

**Archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore**

**Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem**

We are delighted now to turn Our attention to you, Our Venerable Brother, as you prepare to celebrate the golden jubilee of your ordination to the priesthood with a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving. Indeed, fifty years have passed since that memorable day – the 29th of May, 1965 – when, having diligently completed your philosophical and theological studies at the archdiocesan seminary of Saint Joseph in Dunwoodie, you were ordained a priest.

The occasion of this happy jubilee offers us a welcomed opportunity to recall the various stages of your pastoral journey, first in your native Archdiocese of New York, then among soldiers in Vietnam as well as within the United States of America. Later you studied in Rome at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, earning a doctorate in moral theology. Returning to your archdiocese, you assiduously carried out your many pastoral duties while fulfilling the responsibilities of Vice-Chancellor. You then showed your many talents as archdiocesan Director of Communications and as private secretary to the Archbishop of New York. In the following years, you devoted yourself to

the prudent and wise formation of priests, first as rector of St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers and then as rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

Having recognized your skills and your priestly zeal, Saint John Paul II raised you to the rank of Bishop and appointed you Auxiliary of New York on February 6th, 1996. From 1997 to 2007 you carried out the role of Ordinary of the Archdiocese for the Military Services of the United States of America, tirelessly preaching salvific truths to the enlisted men and women with due consideration to the needs of the present day. Then, in 2007, Our Venerable Predecessor Benedict XVI appointed you Metropolitan Archbishop of Baltimore, whose people you led in the way of truth and holiness for four years. You made great strides there in advancing the new evangelization, and you took particular care to promote vocations to the priesthood and to the revival of Catholic schools. Now, as you fulfill the duties of Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, which you began in 2011, ever faithful to your episcopal motto *Pastores dabō vobis*, you carefully attend to the spiritual life of this ancient and venerable association. On February 18th, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI elevated you to the rank of Cardinal, thus showing you his particular admiration, thanks, and trust in your outstanding abilities.

Neither are We unaware of the energy and expertise you bring to several Roman dicasteries, especially the Congregation for Eastern Churches, the Congregation for Catholic Education and Institutes of Study, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*. We also wish to acknowledge your zeal, your fidelity towards the Church's Magisterium and your eagerness in carrying out whatever duties you are entrusted with. In both your priestly and episcopal assignments, you have always placed primary importance on the spiritual wellbeing of those you serve, as well as of those with whom you serve.

In a spirit of fraternal charity, therefore, We are extremely happy to join you in giving thanks to God, the giver of all good gifts, and to commend you for your fruitful ministry.

We also extend our most sincere wishes to you, Our Venerable Brother, that the Good Shepherd, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may vigilantly watch over you with his care and protection. As you celebrate this special anniversary, We wish to impart to you Our Apostolic Blessing, which We also extend to all those who will join in celebrating with you. At the same time, We beg your prayers and theirs, so that We may assiduously carry out the Petrine mission entrusted to Us.

*Given from the Vatican, on the 5th day of May, 2015, the third of Our Pontificate*