



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

"It is good to set out into the world to rise again in the dawn of God's love".



Presided over by Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the celebration of the funeral of Professor Agostino Borromeo, Honorary Lieutenant General of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, took place in the Basilica of the Twelve Holy Apostles in Rome, on 6 February 2024.

The Mass was concelebrated by Archbishop Tommaso Caputo, Assessor of the Order, and Archbishop William Shomali, Patriarchal Vicar for Jerusalem and Palestine, who came on behalf of the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, who was Grand Master of the Order when Professor Borromeo held the position of Governor General, the Grand Master of the Order of Malta, Fra' John Dunlap, and the Grand Hospitaller, Fra' Alessandro de Franciscis, also participated.

A delegation of Knights and Dames, led by the Governor General Amb. Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, and many friends came from various countries to be close to the family of the deceased.

At the end of the celebration, Father Davide Meli, Chancellor of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, read out a moving message from Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, paying tribute to the work carried out by Professor Borromeo in the service of the Church in the Holy Land.

We publish here the homily that Cardinal Fernando Filoni gave in tribute to the memory of the Professor.

"I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live"

(Jn 11, 25).

Distinguished Authorities,

Dear Family and Friends of Prof. Borromeo,

Dear Brothers in the episcopate and in the priesthood.

With the splendid and comforting words of the Gospel of John, I wish to introduce this moment of reflection for the Liturgy of Farewell to our Brother Agostino Borromeo. Ours is a Farewell in prayer, which, even in the sadness of separation, is filled with gratitude to God for having given him as a husband and father to his family, as a devoted son to the Church and as an upright citizen to our country, wherever he carried out outstanding tasks in various fields.

We cannot forget, first of all, that Prof. Borromeo, belonging to the noble Borromeo Family, had in him a distinctive trait, never self-congratulatory, of counting among his ancestors the great Archbishop of Milan, St. Charles, one of the ecclesiastics who most masterfully interpreted the renewal of the Church of his time.

He was a man of great historical culture, who made an extremely valuable contribution to knowledge and historical criticism of complex and not infrequently controversial events. Agostino Borromeo graduated in Political Science (with a focus on history) from the University 'La Sapienza' in Rome, where he became Professor of *Modern and Contemporary History of the Church and other Christian Confessions*, and later also lectured in History of Christianity and the Churches at the Free University Maria Santissima Assunta in Rome (LUMSA); he obtained a Diploma in Archival Studies at the School of the Vatican Secret Archives and attended the theological courses of the Institute of Religious Sciences at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Among other things, he was President of the Italian Institute of Iberian Studies, a Collaborator of the Italian Historical Institute, and a Member and Academician of numerous Italian and international scientific and cultural associations. It would take a long time here to list all his numerous publications and professional and non-professional activities. However, I cannot fail to mention his inclusion in 2002, at the behest of Pope Saint John Paul II, among the Members of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, and by Pope Benedict XVI among the Lay Auditors of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops in 2010. I must also mention his membership of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and his generous commitment to UNITALSI. However, it was in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, of which he was a Knight of the Collar, that he lavished the wealth of his gifts and manifested his organizational skills: first as Chancellor and Member of the Grand Magisterium, and then as Governor and Lieutenant General, also becoming its Honorary Commander.

As Grand Master, on the occasion of my official pilgrimage to the Holy Land, I wanted to count him among the Members of the Delegation; an inclusion that he welcomed with great pleasure; indeed, he himself said: "It will be my last trip to the Land of Jesus"; it was May 2022. He remembered it as a memorable event, almost as if he foresaw that it would be the ultimate synthesis of his entire commitment to the Land of the Lord.

Count Borromeo indeed had an extraordinary passion for the Holy Land, which he always visited with the spirit of a 'pilgrim' even when he went there to have a direct perception of the works the Order was supporting in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. As we have often commented among ourselves, the Holy Land must not be reduced to a mere archaeological site of the faith or a land where we are forced to watch helplessly as Israelis and Palestinians dispute. All Christians have a

role and a task to play, and he was proud that the Order of the Holy Sepulchre carried it out with humility, simplicity and effectiveness.

Dear Professor Agostino, at the center of your faith was the mystery of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection, and this faith in the Risen One was the sure and certain line you followed throughout your life. Yours was a living faith, witnessed with humility, simplicity and serenity, but also with that strength that came from nobility of spirit and intelligence; a faith deeply anchored in the words of the Gospel that we have heard: Jesus addressed Martha of Bethany, at a time saddened by the death of her brother Lazarus, proclaiming: "*I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die*"; then he asked: "*Do you believe this?*" To this question, like Martha, you too, Agostino, answered: "*Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.*"

This was the faith of Agostino Borromeo, which he lived throughout his life in a fruitful and rich way, remaining a devoted son and servant of the Church, always with a constant and ideal commitment, almost in deference to the spiritual legacy of his illustrious ancestor St. Charles.

Dear Prof. Borromeo, with your fidelity you have contributed to bringing about that Christian animation in society that accepts the challenges of modernity without opposition, and, at the same time, with due analysis and comprehension of the facts.

Your hidden work in the service of the sick with UNITALSI showed us the meaning of your charity, while in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre you manifested your generosity towards the poor and the needs of the Land of Jesus; all this, we can say, with that character of a layman who lives his 'vocation' in the world and fulfils the far-sighted and sacred 'mission' of the baptized.

Thank you for your lucid testimony of faith that certainly cannot be encapsulated in these brief words of mine.

Allow me now, however, to add a word about that Agostino who lived family life in an exemplary manner, where he found the sap for an engaging and life-giving serenity. Today, to his wife Beatrice, his children Carolina, Renato and Francesco, as well as his sister Ludovica and brother Gianalfonso, goes all our sympathy and human closeness. You loved him and he loved you; may the memory of an unforgettable living together accompany you and console you, even if his departure opens a void in your existence; but his testimony of good will not be lost, for you nor for all of us. And may this give us the sense and fullness of a life beyond death and of Christian consolation.

Today to Christ the Lord we all entrust our brother Agostino, and with our prayers we ask that the Risen Lord, in his mercy, purify him of any weaknesses and faults he may have committed in his own existence and, thus purified, introduce him, as a good and faithful servant, into the Father's house.

May he pray for his family and for us, and may he continue to sustain us with his affection before the Lord.

I would like to conclude here with the words of a great Bishop of Apostolic times, Ignatius of Antioch, who said to his Christians: "*It is good to set out into the world to rise again in the dawn of God's love*".

And this, dear brother Agostino, is what the Lord grants you.

Amen.

(February 6, 2024)

A letter from Cardinal Pizzaballa read at the funeral of Professor Borromeo



Professor Borromeo (on the right in the photo, wearing his cloak and insignia) accompanied the Grand Master to the Holy Land in May 2022: it was his last pilgrimage to the holy places of the Christian faith.

Most Reverend Eminence,

Your Excellency, Mr. Governor General,

Dearest Borromeo Family,

May the Lord grant you peace!

On behalf of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Auxiliary Bishops and the priests, religious and faithful of the diocese, represented here by the Vicar General, I address to you the sentiments of our sincere condolences accompanied by our prayers for the soul of dear Professor Borromeo.

His love for the Order and the Holy Land, his noble figure as a Christian committed to works of charity, and his witness of deep faith remain etched in our souls. We nurture deep gratitude for all he did for the Latin Patriarchate throughout his life in the Order and especially during his tenure as Governor General.

A year ago, he returned as a pilgrim to the Holy Land despite his faltering health. He wanted to venerate the Holy Sepulchre of Christ, to which he dedicated most of his life, for the last time. We are sure that the Lord Jesus, whom he loved so much on Earth, will welcome him graciously into the Jerusalem of Heaven. We are certain that the maternal intercession of Mary, His and our Mother, will be a consolation to his loved ones, and especially to his spouse, Mrs. Beatrice, his daughter and children.

Dear Family Members, dear Members of the Order, in this time of sadness, we are close to you, trusting in the Risen Lord, who gives His consolation and fills us with Christian hope.

In Christ,

+Pierbattista Cardinal Pizzaballa

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre

(February 6, 2024)