



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

“The Order is one of the expressions of the universal embrace of the Church”:
Abp. Pierbattista Pizzaballa tells the Consulta



The Consulta afforded participants the opportunity to benefit from the presence of **Abp. Pierbattista Pizzaballa**, Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. He shared some reflections regarding the situation in the Holy Land and willingly responded to the many questions that the Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates addressed to him.

“I have already met with many of you in the Holy Land. This is a beautiful sign of your constant presence in that land but it is also what allows me to say that **here I feel like I am among family**, finding faces and stories that I am already familiar with and I am grateful to the Lord for this,” Abp. Pizzaballa began.

Recalling the divine nature of the Church, the Apostolic Administrator affirmed: “No one is indispensable and the Church in the Holy Land even without the Order of the Holy Sepulchre would survive because it is the Lord who provides for everything. However – he continued clearly – **most of the Church’s activities in the Holy Land are possible thanks to your presence and support**. For this we thank the Lord and each of you, because if today the Church of the Holy Land, despite all its limitations and problems, is still able to be an energetic and vital expression to the presence of God in this land, it is also thanks to you.”

The activities carried out not only through individual projects but above all in the Patriarchate’s parishes, schools and hospitals, are closely followed with affection and attention by the members of the Order. “We are more often faced with problems and tend to become a little negative compared to our reality. Yet when we feel like saying that we cannot do enough, a Lieutenant arrives with his group asking us to find a new initiative, which forces us in a certain sense to get back into the game and really see all the beauty that is there, beyond the problems. **Your eyes, which are so passionate, help us to see our reality from constantly fresh perspective.**”

The Apostolic Administrator did not hide the fact that churches in the Middle East are facing many challenges: for example, the decline in participation in the sacraments due in part to the low birth rate caused by the problems facing couples who want to form families in realities such as Gaza but also in Jerusalem. As for the **problem of unemployment**, Abp. Pizzaballa insists it can be countered through the promotion of self-sustainable opportunities and projects: "In Southern Jordan, small businesses have been set up where some women make cheese and ricotta. These families were already leaving to go to Amman and instead, in this way, they managed to stay. Initiatives like this need initial support but then it is important that they are able to support themselves independently."

Beyond thanks for the material support offered by the Order, what most touched the hearts of the participants in the Consulta was understanding how much our prayer and interest is not a secondary aspect for our brothers and sisters for the Holy Land: "The Order is one of the expressions of the universal embrace of the Church – declared Archbishop Pizzaballa – and **knowing that there are 30,000 Knights and Dames in the world means knowing that there at least 30,000 people who are interested in and pray for the Church in the Holy Land. This fact is a great comfort, it tells us that we are not alone.**"

Elena Dini

(dicembre 2018)