# The Order is growing on the Latin American continent

An interview with Enric Mas, Vice Governor of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for Latin America

Vice Governor Enric Mas, together with the Governor General and the Grand Master.

**The new position of Vice Governor for Latin America was created a few months ago, what does your mission involve?**

The Latin American continent represents great potential for our ecclesial institution and this justified the appointment of a Vice Governor to coordinate the development of the Order in this area of the world. I travelled a great deal before the pandemic, meeting Grand Priors and Lieutenants. This contact continues principally through virtual means while we await the return to normality.

We emphasize the spiritual life and commitment of the members within their dioceses, where they are a sort of ambassadors of the Holy Land, to quote an expression of Cardinal Pietro Parolin. Brazil has two Lieutenancies and we are planning to expand further into this immense Catholic nation. The Order's annual magazine is distributed here thanks to a generous initiative of the Lieutenancy of Portugal, which financed the translation and production of the Jerusalem Cross in Portuguese.

The Order is also present in Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico. For the moment we have around 400 members in total, but the development projects in Ecuador and Panama allow us to count on a future growth in the number of Knights and Dames, despite the crisis that is hitting this part of the world hard.

**How do you go about choosing new members of the Order, careful to avoid those who are more interested in appearing than in serving?**

Our relationship with local bishops is essential. In this regard, I received very clear instructions from the Grand Master Cardinal Filoni and from the Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone.

It is the bishops who help us to identify and choose men and women of the Church, capable of offering the right image of the Order, avoiding those candidates who seek social promotion, for example. Even the members already engaged in our institution turn out to be excellent advisors, as they know their respective areas well, thanks to the exercise of various professional activities. The spiritual life of Knights and Dames represents a priority for us, as does their parish commitment. We insist a lot on deepening the formation of candidates within the peripheral structures of the Order.

The relationships between the Lieutenancies of Latin American countries allow for multiple exchanges of experiences and a positive mutual stimulus. It is not the quantity of members that matters, but the quality of their Christian witness and the pastoral will to support the Mother Church in the Holy Land.

**How does the Order currently represent a space in which its baptismal vocation is expressed?**

I work as a lawyer, I am married and I have three children. My commitment to the Order is a way of serving the Church, that is, the Catholic community. I believe that it is very important to boost awareness of the fact that the Order is a modern and avant-garde institution in many ecclesial aspects, since the baptized lay people fully assume the utmost responsibilities, be they men or women, under the aegis of the Grand Master appointed by the Pope, in collaboration with – but not dependent on – the clergy.

Leo XIII allowed women to enter the Order at a time when they did not vote and this was a revolutionary decision. With the same impetus, we continue to offer women an important place and, in fact, some of them are at the head of certain Lieutenancies. Beyond the distorted archaic image of the Order, I am happy to testify that my vocation as a lay person – priest, prophet and king through baptism – is fully expressed in the Order itself, a spiritual family that reminds us that the Church is above all a community of brothers and sisters who love each other.

**Interview by François Vayne**

*(October 2020)*