



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The mission of the Order's Lieutenants at the heart of the 2018 Consulta

About sixty Lieutenants from around 40 countries attended the five-year assembly of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Rome, gathered around the Grand Master, Cardinal O'Brien.



The Lieutenants of the Order who arrived from six continents participated in the **Consulta's five-year assembly (November 13-16, 2018)**, seeking together to better define their role and exchanging their respective experiences, in the presence of the Grand Master and the leaders of the Grand Magisterium.

Received by **Pope Francis**, at the end of the gathering, they had the joy of hearing him pronounce important words, reflecting the exceptional bond that unites the Order to the Successor of Peter: **"Here in the Vatican, you are, in a certain way, at home**, as you constitute an ancient pontifical institution under the protection of the Holy See." The Holy Father encouraged members of the Consulta to promote interreligious dialogue, as well as mutual understanding and respect in the Holy Land, asking them to set an example for the Knights and Dames of which they are responsible. "It is a task above all of you as leaders to offer the example of intense spiritual life and true following of the Lord: in this way you can render a valid service of authority to those who depend upon you", he stressed, urging them to constantly invoke Our Lady, venerated with the title of Our Lady of Palestine (See the complete text of the Papal address [here](#)).

After the welcome address of **Cardinal O'Brien** and the clarifications on the program provided by the **Lieutenant General Borromeo** and the **Governor General Visconti di Modrone**, the Consulta – held in the Crowne Plaza hotel, on the Via Aurelia Antica – began with the intervention of Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and the representatives of the Holy See, Msgr. Paolo Borgia, Assessor of the Secretariat of State and Father Oscar Marzo, Franciscan, of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

Archbishop Pizzaballa recalled with strong words that without the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the Mother Church of Jerusalem could no longer exist. He insisted on the need to continue to **support especially Christian families in the Holy Land**, despite the incessant political crisis, noting that the closeness of Knights and Dames to local communities allows an opening to the world that reignites the hope of a very tested population.

In the same vein, **Msgr. Borgia** stressed the importance of contact between the 30,000 members of the Order and the inhabitants of the Holy Land, which **contribute to fostering peaceful relations, especially through pilgrimages**. **Fr. Marzo** – speaking in the name of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches – stressed the crucial role of Knights and Dames for the Church in the biblical territories, insisting that the Order is “the only secular institution of the Holy See to care for the Christian presence in the Holy Land,” working for a future of **respect and collaboration among inhabitants of different religions**, through educational and training initiatives.

Subsequently, the Lieutenant General Agostino Borromeo presented the working sessions based on the ***Instrumentum Laboris***, which centred on the **mission of the Lieutenant**, the principal theme of the Consulta, specifying the two aims of the Order: the sanctity of members and concrete solidarity with the Church of the Holy Land.

Regarding this solidarity, a much appreciated video – produced by the Order’s Communications Office in partnership with the Communication Office of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem – has allowed Church officials to thank the Lieutenants directly for their constant help offered in the educational and pastoral sectors, showing the joy of children and young people expressed with unforgettable smiles that have impressed the members of the Consulta. **“We are a Church that changes because of the complex context in the Middle East, but not a dying Church,”** commented Abp. Pizzaballa, mentioning a “new way of being in the future ...”, which will not mean the disappearance, but a ecclesial transformation that has become necessary in the aftermath of the politicalstrategic “earthquake” that is shaking the whole region.

In the course of the following two days, the **Lieutenants met in three linguistic discussion groups**, to reflect upon the documentation made available to them. The *Instrumentum Laboris* has been carefully analyzed, especially with regards the themes of the figure of the Lieutenant, his appointment and the transmission of directives from his predecessor, the collaboration with the Prior of the Lieutenancy, relations with the Grand Magisterium, with the Sections / Delegations and with members, the recruitment of Knights and Dames, as well as the organization of activities and their eventual succession.

Every morning, the celebration of Mass experienced in community gave a spiritual dimension to the event of the Consulta. A **meditative oratory** – exclusively staged on the evening of November 13 in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (built to keep the relics of the Cross of Christ brought by Saint Helen from the Holy Land) – helped the Lieutenants to deepen the Christian meaning of their mission, in light of the journey of conversion of Bartolo Longo, the only lay person of the Order to have been beatified and a model for all the members. The **Grand Master of the Order of Malta** fraternally took part in the evening, alongside the Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and other ecclesiastical personalities, including the Archbishop of Pompeii.

On the eve of the concluding audience with the Pope, the Lieutenants shared their reflections during a general assembly, following the speakers of the three groups: Enric Mas of Europe, Agnes Sheehan of Australia and Vicky Downey of America. Essentially, it emerged that the **Consulta favored the exchange of experiences between Lieutenants, contributing to strengthening the family spirit in the Order** and the vitality of this pontifical institution. The ecclesial rootedness of the Order in the diocesan Churches was strongly emphasized, beyond the questions of technical organization, by presenting the Lieutenant as a man or a woman of the Church called to collaborate with the

bishops and the clergy, as a “local ambassador” of the Church in the Holy Land. The summary offered by the Lieutenant General Borromeo based on the work of the Consulta, emphasized the need for an improved definition of the role and responsibilities of the Lieutenant and more attention to their formation and training to offer Lieutenants the means to provide a free voluntary service with humility and efficacy.

Before the conclusion, the assembly welcomed some new leaders (who will take office from January 2019): the **Vice Governor for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz, and for North America, Thomas Pogge**; their two predecessors – Giorgio Moroni Stampa and Patrick Powers – were greeted with a standing ovation.

During the **papal audience**, Pope Francis summarized in few but precise words the mission of the Lieutenants of the Order, declaring, “Do not forget that you are not a philanthropic entity committed to promoting the material and social improvement of recipients. You are called to place the evangelical love of your neighbour as the final aim of your works, to witness everywhere the goodness and care with which God loves everyone.”

François Vayne

(December 2018)