



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Autumn Meeting of the Grand Magisterium 2022



The members of the Grand Magisterium gathered in Palazzo della Rovere, Rome, around the Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, for the autumn session on 12 October, after a Mass in honour of Our Lady of Palestine celebrated in the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia and presided over by Cardinal Fortunato Frezza.

Before the convivial lunch, the Grand Master presented Cardinal Frezza - former Master of Ceremonies of the Grand Magisterium and appointed Cardinal by the Pope during the last consistory - with the insignia of Knight of the Grand Cross, warmly thanking him for his generous and appreciated service to the Order.

The working session of the Grand Magisterium opened in the afternoon and was addressed by the Governor General, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone and a read text from the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who was unable to attend in person. The meeting also heard from the Treasurer, Saverio Petrillo, and the Administrative Director of the Patriarchate, Sami El-Yousef. Their reports were followed by a debate among the participants and the conclusions of Cardinal Fernando Filoni.

The Governor briefly recalled the highlights of 2022, such as the pilgrimage and first official visit of the Grand Master to the Holy Land, the resumption of meetings in presence on the occasion of the Investitures, and the meetings between the Lieutenancies after the pandemic. He particularly insisted on the presence of the Grand Priors at the Order's next Consultation, the General Assembly scheduled in a year's time, together with the Lieutenants, to deepen the theme of the spiritual formation of members. He also spoke of the work being carried out in the Palace, which will be taken over by a hotel company chosen to manage part of the building for the benefit of the Order and therefore of the Holy Land. Ambassador Visconti di Modrone also underlined the Order's recent development in Slovakia and plans for expansion in other countries, especially in Africa.

In his speech, Patriarch Pizzaballa thanked the Order, without which the Mother Church of Jerusalem could not live peacefully. He mentioned several pastoral projects that he considers important, including the pastoral centre for Galilee in Haifa and the next Vicariate to be created in Cyprus, where pastoral activity is growing.

The Grand Magisterium Treasurer presented the budget for 2023, confirming that €13.4 million will be paid to the Latin Patriarchate thanks to members' contributions. Sami El-Yousef stressed, on behalf of the Patriarchate, the importance of the Order's support to cover the salaries of 2000 employees of the Diocese of Jerusalem, Jordan, Palestine, Israel and Cyprus. He then illustrated the diocese's needs in the humanitarian field (due to the economic crisis and unemployment, especially in Palestine and Jordan) and again highlighted the priority of education, with the network of schools and universities that the Catholic Church must maintain.

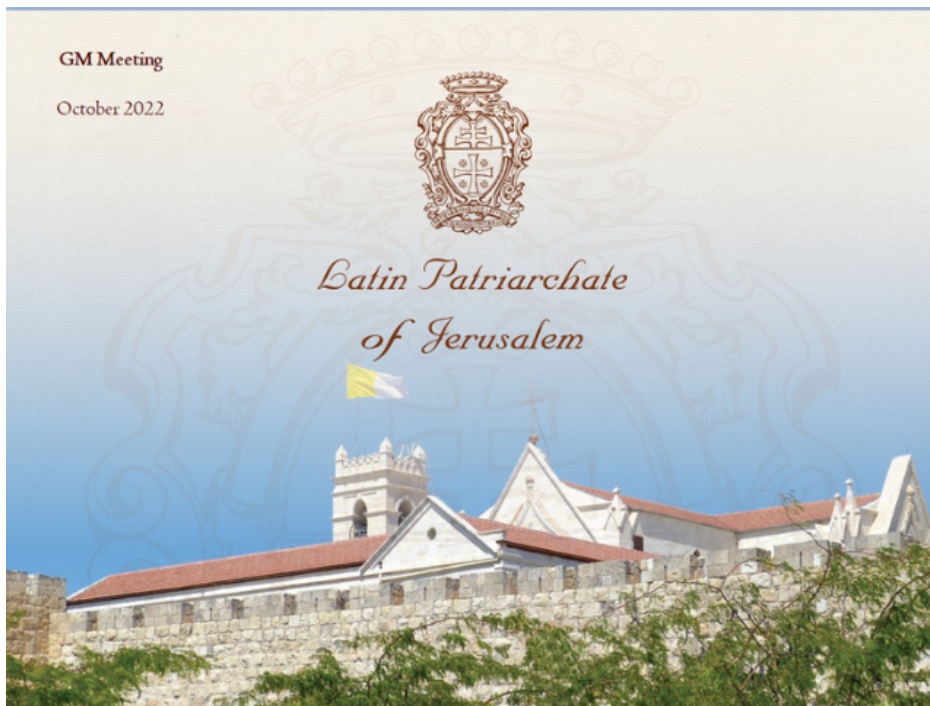
The Governor General then gave the floor to the President of the Holy Land Commission, Bartholomew McGettrick, who last September led the Commission's first field trip in three years. He said that, in his opinion, some of the Lieutenancies have not yet grasped the urgency of the population in the Holy Land and that there is still much to be done to push donations from them.

After the debate that followed the various speeches and online exchanges (several members of the Grand Magisterium were in fact connected virtually), the Grand Master concluded the proceedings by insisting on the ecclesiological significance of support for the Holy Land, explaining that each member's contribution is first and foremost a gesture of love towards the Mother Church of Jerusalem, an expression of the profound faith of the Knights and Dames.

Cardinal Filoni's essential and fundamental text on this subject had just been published by *L'Osservatore Romano* - the official newspaper of the Holy See - with an announcement on the front page, after having been sent to all the Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates for transmission to the Priors, Grand Priors and all the bishops of the world.

François Vayne

(October 2022)



Latin Patriarchate administrative director's report emphasizes pastoral activities that could be resumed after the pandemic

With the resumption of many activities following a prolonged period of closure due to the pandemic in the Holy Land, Sami El-Yousef, Administrative Director of the Latin Patriarchate, took advantage of the Grand Magisterium's autumn meeting on 12 October to share the state of activities on various fronts in the diocese that are supported by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and also to make a presentation of what has been achieved over the past four years with small projects.

In fact, in 2019, the Grand Magisterium and the Latin Patriarchate decided to work not only through fixed monthly support for institutional expenses, schools, the Seminary, the financing of some large and medium-sized projects and humanitarian aid, but also to open up the possibility for the Lieutenancies to select small projects to be taken over entirely, thus facilitating the implementation of activities that require a smaller budget and which, at the same time, can be an opportunity to establish a direct relationship between a Lieutenancy and a local community in the Holy Land.

Unfortunately, the initiative of small projects largely coincided with the time of the pandemic, which slowed down and, in some cases, stopped initiatives altogether. The projects have been very varied in recent years: from renovations or construction of new rooms in various buildings of the Patriarchate (youth centres, old people's homes, convents of nuns, etc.), to the renovation of classrooms, libraries or science labs in schools, or the necessary security work in various facilities.

Sami El-Yousef first described the current challenges on an economic level (due to the war in Ukraine and rising cost of living as well as the drastic impact of the collapse of the euro exchange rate against the dollar) and a social level (high unemployment rate in the Latin Patriarchate areas). While much of the major renovation work on the facilities has been carried out in the past years, more attention is now needed for pastoral activities.

"The main difference between this year's budget and that of previous years is the request from all sides to increase the resources dedicated to pastoral activities, considering that coming out of the period of health restrictions, these can finally resume," commented the Patriarchate's administrative Director. These activities testify to the vitality of the local communities and include youth activities, summer camps, care of liturgies, and much more.

In addition to pastoral activities, special attention must now also be paid to humanitarian initiatives.

In recent years, the humanitarian fund agreed upon by the Grand Magisterium and the Patriarchate is one million dollars and this manages to cover various important actions: the purchase of medicines for those in need, social assistance, support with the payment of school fees for families in need, empowerment and work initiation programmes for women and young people, especially in Gaza and East Jerusalem, support programmes for Iraqi refugees, etc.

It should not be forgotten that the items that have the greatest impact on the Patriarchate's annual budget are salaries (about 2,000 employees, 80% of whom are Christian) and the 44 schools that offer an education within a Catholic context to about 20,000 students (60% Christian in total but with different percentages in Palestine, Jordan and Israel).

On this 175th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Latin Patriarchate in 1847, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, present all over the world, continues its mission to walk side by side with this diocese, supporting it and accompanying its efforts in favour of the living stones of the Holy Land.

Elena Dini