



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

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

## The Autumn Meeting of the Grand Magisterium



**The meeting of the Grand Magisterium was held in Rome on October 8, 2024, around the Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, and the Assessor, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, Archbishop of Pompeii, the day after the day of fasting and prayer desired by Pope Francis for the intentions of peace in the Holy Land and the Middle East.**

During the opening Mass, celebrated in honour of Our Lady of Palestine, Patroness of the Order, the Grand Master commented on the reading from the Book of Revelation, which prophesies the “new Jerusalem”, indicating that this long-term vision requires the cooperation of the Knights and Dames, “little workers who are not afraid because Christ, the architect of Peace, is risen.”

The Governor General introduced the proceedings and led the meeting, stressing in particular in his speech that the contributions of the members of the Order have doubled in favour of humanitarian aid in the Holy Land. Though it is necessary not to forget the monthly aid of almost a million dollars sent to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem which supports its vital structure (its institutional expenses for schools and parishes particularly). He welcomed the success of the dissemination of the new documents of the Order in several languages (a book on spirituality, the statutes, the ritual and a text on formation), announcing the imminent publishing of the Regulations which are currently being translated.

Regarding the expansion of the Order worldwide, the Governor General spoke of the creation of new Magistral Delegations in Malaysia and Slovakia, and of promising contacts in India, Africa (Congo, Tanzania, Ivory Coast) and South America (El Salvador, Honduras, etc.).

The Patriarch of Jerusalem, who was hindered from departing from the Holy Land, addressed the participants via video message, thanking the Order for all its moral and spiritual support - "we need your prayer" - also referring to the beautiful letter from the Pope to the Catholics of the Middle East, published on October 7, in which the Holy Father invokes the Queen of Peace and declares that "prayer and fasting are the weapons of love that change history."

In line with the agenda, the floor was given to the Treasurer, Saverio Petrillo, who presented the 2025 budget. With the expected income (fifteen and a half million euros) the objective is to confirm the commitment of the Order to support the life and projects of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, whose faithful are facing a terrible financial situation, due to the war. The Treasurer stated that the operating expenses of the Order will soon be covered by the rental of part of *Palazzo della Rovere* to a private hotel company.

The debate revealed a problem with donations from members who have distanced themselves from the Order. The Grand Master intervened to ask for vigilance and transparency of management at all levels, so that Knights and Dames can be informed precisely, in particular about the institutional expenses of the Patriarchate which are less publicised than humanitarian projects, and therefore raise less generous donations.

In the absence of Sami El-Yousef, the Patriarchate's CEO, who was not in attendance for health reasons, the president of the Holy Land Commission, Bartholomew McGettrick, commented on the report received from him. He emphasised the deficit of schools (especially in Israel where the State is mobilised by the war effort, no longer provides school subsidies).

He described the expenses related to food coupons for the population in financial difficulty, and for the psychological support centres set up to help traumatised people, following the bombings and deaths.

Regarding the work of the Commission, the president recounted the four days of virtual meetings that were organised with about twenty local institutions (in the educational, pastoral and humanitarian fields), showing how these "conversations on the Holy Land" are important so that the actors of solidarity acting on the ground feel supported and accompanied at a global level. Following these discussions, each of the Vice-Governors spoke. For North America, Tom Pogge spoke about the fundraising initiative for the Patriarchate's schools, which, in addition to restructuring the establishments, helps families who are unable to pay school fees and also helps reduce unemployment by allowing the hiring of staff in these establishments. For Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz proposed a meeting of the Lieutenants in Pompeii, the first to be held after the pandemic. For Latin America, Enric Mas described his work in various countries to establish the Order and the need to build relationships of trust with local bishops. For the Asia-Pacific region, John Secker welcomed the development of the Order in Malaysia and the upcoming 40th anniversary of its presence in Australia, which the Governor General will attend in the spring 2025.

At the end of the meeting, the Chancellor gave reassuring statistics, stating that the number of Knights and Dames (29,470 members) is rising after the difficult years of the pandemic, with admissions exceeding promotions this year. He also outlined the program of the Order's Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome, which will take place from October 21st to 23rd, 2025, with nearly 3,000 people due to attend. A pilgrimage of young people from the Order is also being considered.

The members of the Grand Magisterium, at the conclusion of the meeting, signed a message of solidarity to Cardinal Pizzaballa, before setting the next date for their meeting for April 15, 2025.

**François Vayne**

*(October 2024)*