Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium 2023

On 19 April 2023, following the Mass celebrated in honour of Our Lady of Palestine, Patroness of the Order, presided over by the Grand Master in the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, the members of the Grand Magisterium met in Palazzo della Rovere. "It gives me great pleasure to meet with you in person for the first time after the years of the pandemic," said Cardinal Fernando Filoni, opening the proceedings and recalling the purpose of this meeting: to share with confidence and encourage each other for an ever more generous service of the Mother Church in the Holy Land, in Palestine, Jordan, Israel and Cyprus.

The Governor General, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, welcomed the new members, John Secker, Vice Governor for Asia-Pacific, and Tom Standish, who was Lieutenant Governor for the United States, and thanked Mary O'Brien, also from the United States, who had reached the end of her term. The Governor emphasised the Order's expansion efforts, particularly in Latin America and Africa, and then spoke of the importance of the Consulta scheduled for next November, announcing the publication of the Order's new Regulations at this important event. The Governor General also informed the members of the Grand Magisterium about the details of the contract for the lease of part of the Palazzo della Rovere to a hotel company, which will fully cover the Grand Magisterium's operating expenses.

Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa, busy in Cyprus, participated in the meeting with a letter in which he thanked the Order, not only for the support it has provided through the financing of numerous projects, but also for the links woven with the Catholics of the Holy Land during the pilgrimages that have resumed following the pandemic. The meeting continued with the approval of the budget and the report of the Treasurer, Saverio Petrillo, who highlighted the generosity of the Lieutenancies, which has enabled over 14 million euros to be sent to the Patriarchate in 2022.

In his presentation, Sami El-Yousef, CEO of the Latin Patriarchate, welcomed the resumption of pilgrimages (over two million visitors in April), despite the serious political crisis in Israel, where the government is strongly contested for its supremacist tendencies. The CEO extensively described the projects supported by the Order in the various countries that make up the Holy Land, especially those in favour of education and youth employment in the most disadvantaged areas, such as Gaza, indicating the Patriarch's desire to develop pastoral and humanitarian activities in Cyprus, where the reception of migrants is mobilising the Church.

With respect to this issue, the President of the Holy Land Commission, Bartholomew McGettrick, spoke of an "underground Church" with regards migrants, vulnerable and deprived of the most basic rights, victims of a form of modern slavery, not only in Israel but throughout the Middle East. The Grand Master, who personally discussed the Order's mission with the Holy Father on 28 January 2023, spoke of this service to migrants as a priority.

The Vice Governors then took turns to speak. Tom Pogge, for North America, emphasised the spiritual formation of members through the Grand Master's book on the spirituality of the Order, now available in audio-book format, for the moment in English. Jean-Pierre de Glutz, for Europe, testified his commitment to making all the important documents of the Order available in different languages, so that the Knights and Dames can have the necessary tools for their formation. Enric Mas, for Latin America, described the Order's expansion initiatives in new countries such as the Dominican Republic, where a Magisterial Delegation will be created, Uruguay and Paraguay, and expressed his wish that the Bishops receive the Newsletter published by the Grand Magisterium to be better informed on the Order's mission and work. John Secker, for Asia Pacific, presented his programme for the further development of the Order, for example in Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Indonesia.

Chancellor Bastianelli, for his part, appealed for a broader recruitment for the Order, noting that the statistics are declining after the pandemic. He then reported on the technical preparations for the Consulta. With regard to this event, scheduled for next November, the Grand Master is working on the drafting of an instrumentum laboris based on the reports received from the Lieutenancies, which will enable the Lieutenants to jointly discuss the issue of members' formation.

The Governor General, concluding the exchanges and highlighting the Order's communication activities and external relations, indicated the date of the next Grand Magisterium meeting, set for 9 November 2023. The meeting concluded with a moment of prayer led by Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, Assesor, who invited the members of the Grand Magisterium to be "Dames and Knights of the Resurrection," following the example of Blessed Bartolo Longo, apostle of the Rosary and founder of the Marian Shrine of Pompeii.

François Vayne

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