Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, new Assessor of the Order

After the resignation of Msgr. Giuseppe Lazzarotto for health reasons, the Holy Father approved the Grand Master's appointment of Msgr. Tommaso Caputo as Assessor of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, starting from September 2019.

Your Excellency, what has your reaction been to this appointment as Assessor of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre?

I welcome this appointment with deep gratitude to the Holy Father Francis who approved it and to the Grand Master, His Eminence Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, who appointed me to the role of Assessor of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

What has your relationship with the Order been in recent years?

My bond with the Order dates back to about two decades ago and became even stronger when, in 2012, I was entrusted with the Prelature of Pompeii, a city particularly dear to the heart and spirituality of all the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre. Pompeii was born in new life from the faith and the works of charity of Bartolo Longo, the only lay person among the Knights of the Order to have been Beatified. The founder of Pompeii recalls the Christological heart of Marian devotion, so intensely practiced by every member of the Order.

Recently you also accompanied a delegation from your Lieutenancy to the Holy Land to mark a special occasion ...

A recent initiative involved our church of Pompeii and the Order in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, during which, in the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth - the place where the Word became man in the womb of the Virgin Mary - a stained glass window dedicated to the Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii was inaugurated, a gift from the Lieutenancy for the Southern Tyrrhenian Italy of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

It was a simple sign, but since this office has also been entrusted to me, each element takes on a deeper meaning, taking into account the tasks to which each member of the Order is called, in relation to the very nature of this historic Pontifical institution, placed under the protection of the Holy See.

What do you consider to be the Order's contribution to the Universal Church and to the inhabitants of the Holy Land that you hope to help advance?

A little less than a year ago, the Holy Father Pope Francis received members of the Consulta and praising the assistance initiatives in the Holy Land towards everyone, beyond the various faith affiliations, he recognized that the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem helps “pave the way to make Christian values known, to the promotion of interreligious dialogue, mutual respect and mutual understanding."

These are the main indications for arriving at the great goal of achieving peace throughout the Holy Land. Significantly, the Pope underlined this commitment as primary, recalling that the Order is “not a philanthropic entity committed to promoting the material and social improvement of recipients"; the Dames and the Knights are called “to place the evangelical love of neighbour as the central and final aim of your works, to bear witness everywhere to the goodness and care with which God loves everyone".

On this path, and with the help and protection of the Virgin Mary, I am counting on also fulfilling this service within the great family of the Order.

Interview by François Vayne

(September 20, 2019)

Msgr. Tommaso Caputo was born in Afragola (NA) on 17 October 1950. He attended the Archiepiscopal Seminary of Naples and obtained a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the Theological Faculty of Southern Italy, section "San Tommaso d'Aquino" (Naples).

He was ordained a priest on April 10, 1974 for the Archdiocese of Naples, where he worked as a formator for high school seminarians (1973-1974), as vice-parish priest of the Parish of San Benedetto at the Arco Mirelli in Naples (1974-1976) and religion teacher in State Schools (1973-1976).

A student of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy since October 1976, he has simultaneously attended courses in Canon Law at the Pontifical Lateran University and obtained a Doctorate. At the service of the Holy See since March 25, 1980, he was Secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature in Rwanda (1980-1984) and Assessor at the Nunciature in the Philippines (1984-1987) and in Venezuela (1987-1989).

Called to the Vatican, he was responsible for the Secretariat of the Substitute Secretariat of State until June 19, 1993, when Pope John Paul II appointed him Head of the Protocol of the Secretariat of State.

On September 3, 2007, His Holiness Benedict XVI appointed him Apostolic Nuncio to Malta and Libya, elevating him to the archiepiscopal dignity and conferring episcopal consecration on him on September 29, 2007 in the Papal Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican. On November 10, 2012 Pope Benedict XVI named him Prelate of Pompeii and Pontifical Delegate for the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary of Pompeii.