"Mary’s gaze makes us feel her maternal embrace"

Cardinal Edwin O'Brien wanted the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine, patroness of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, placed inside the Palazzo della Rovere, seat of the Grand Magisterium, located in Rome near Piazza San Pietro, so that all those who are welcomed to this place can venerate her and entrust to her the intentions of the peoples of the Holy Land. To this end he offered his own personal icon of her, painted in an atmosphere of prayer by the nuns of the monastery of Beth Gemal in Israel.

The icon depicts the Virgin Mary who carries the city of Jerusalem in her arms and, symbolically, all of the new humanity in which everyone - Jew, Christian or Muslim - is called to find their place in the service of universal brotherhood and in the light of the faith of Abraham. Contemplating the sacred icon we see that "Mary’s gaze makes us feel her maternal embrace", as Pope Francis recently said during a Jubilee meditation. "She shows us that the only power capable of winning human hearts is the tenderness of God".

After a photo of this icon was published on the cover of the magazine of the Order, at the beginning of 2016, several Knights and Dames around the world asked to receive a copy of the prayer to Our Lady, Daughter and Queen of the Holy land, which accompanies it. The Order’s new website aims to offer an ever wider reach of this image destined to support our faithful and persevering commitment to the "culture of encounter" in the biblical territories. "Our Lady of Palestine is the Virgin of the Holy Land who intercedes for all, Jews, Muslims and Christians, for the gift of peace and reconciliation", underscores Msgr. William Shomali, the current Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem.

On July 15, 1920, Patriarch Luigi Barlassina was the first to invoke the Virgin with the title "Queen of Palestine", during his solemn entry into the Basilica Cathedral of the Holy Sepulchre and the consecration of the Diocese of the Holy Land to Mary.

"In Mary we find the promised land - the mercy of the Kingdom established by the Lord - that is, in this life"

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre's special bond to Our Lady Queen of Palestine dates back to the pontificate of St. John Paul II. In 1983, fifty years after the establishment of the feast, addressing the Knights and Ladies - this Pope urged them to be witnesses of Christ in their daily life and to continue the work of the Order in the Holy Land under the protection of Mary.

Ten years later, in 1993, the then Grand Master of the Order, Cardinal Giuseppe Caprio, asked the Holy Father that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine, be elected Patroness of the Order.

On January 21, 1994, the Pope issued a decree granting the request and now in all of the Order's Lieutenancies, the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Palestine is celebrated with joy on October 25, which is the day in which this event is celebrated in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

For the Knights and Dames it is an opportunity to allow her gaze to fall upon them, since "those merciful eyes are also the ones that help us perceive God's works of mercy in human history and discover Jesus in the faces of others," as Pope Francis noted in the spring of this jubilee year. "In Mary we find the promised land - the Kingdom of Mercy established by the Lord - that is, even in this life."

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Holy Land

This prayer was written in 2012 by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Mgr. Fouad Twal:

Our heavenly Mother,

Daughter and Queen of the Holy Land,

we turn to you to obtain your powerful intercession.

May graces fall like abundant rain on your people,

heal all the hardened hearts

and bring justice and peace to the Holy Land.

May Jerusalem shine like a beacon of unity

between Christians who are privileged

to live close to the Holy sites,

sanctified by the life, the passion,

the death and resurrection of Jesus.

May this Holy City be a haven of friendship

and understanding

between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

May intolerance and suspicion vanish,

may love eradicate fear.

Our Heavenly Mother,

look with pity on all those who live on the land

which is yours,

afflicted by the differences and the conflicts

for many generations.

May all those who do not believe in the one God

be touched by your grace

and reach the fullness of faith, hope and love.

Through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Our Lady, Daughter and Queen of the Holy Land,

pray for us