



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

«I pledged to uphold the values of justice, mercy, and peace»

The testimony of a new Dutch Knight : Michiel Dijkman, 40, received the Investiture on October 12, 2024 in the Netherlands



Michiel, a young Dutchman, has taken on the commitment of Knight in service of the Church in the Holy Land. He is eager to embark on a spiritual journey within the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

It is Monday, November 11, 1996. We sing: "Saint Martin, oh Saint Martin, he shares what he can spare. He does not forget the poor beggar, sitting out in the cold." I'm wearing a hat, my collar is turned up, and it's freezing cold. But fortunately, it's dry.

As a young boy, I joined the Saint Martin's procession every year, carrying a lantern. Hand in hand with classmates, teachers, and parents. It was pitch dark, but beautifully lit by all the lanterns. Leading the way was a man dressed as a sort of knight in a red cloak on a white horse.

This beautiful tradition reminded us of the valuable stories of Saint Martin of Tours.

Again and again, my teachers and parents told us the story of how he shared his cloak with a beggar. It left a deep impression on me and my classmates. It wasn't just a story but a life lesson about "caring for one another" (compassion) and "supporting each other" (mercy).

As a child, I not only learned the virtue of sharing, but also how important it is to commit yourself to others. Now, as a father, expecting our second child in March, I teach my son that it's much more fun to share food and toys with other children than to keep them all to yourself. This is the essence of Saint Martin's story: sharing with others, even at a personal cost.

Today, as over 1 billion people globally suffer from obesity and someone like Elon Musk makes headlines with a fortune exceeding 300 billion euros, the contrasts are unmistakable. At the same

time, over 275 million people face acute hunger in regions such as Gaza, South Sudan, Somalia, and Mali.

The world seems a place of enormous contradictions, where even the threat of war in Europe grows increasingly realistic, and polarization between different groups continues to deepen.

I live in the Netherlands, where my family is thriving. We have a warm home, an electric car, and enjoy life. However, how difficult it may be, it is important to remember that this prosperity is not universal.

During a business trip to Silicon Valley, I met a noblewoman, who introduced me to the world of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Despite my Catholic upbringing, I delved deeply into what it would mean to be a Knight. It's not just about wearing a cloak but about embracing the underlying values: compassion, servant leadership, loyalty, and self-discipline.

The moment of my Investiture on Saturday, October 12, 2024, was a special one for me. As a Knight, I pledged to uphold the values of justice, mercy, and peace. It's not merely a ceremony but a lasting reminder of my responsibility to provide both financial and moral support.

During a visit to Rome in November, I received the book *The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume* by Cardinal Fernando Filoni. He uses the lessons of Mary of Bethany as a metaphor for our Order. She selflessly offers Jesus her precious oil as an act of love. Especially now, communities in the Holy Land face great challenges and need our emotional and, certainly, humanitarian support.

On Tuesday, November 19, I turned 40. This milestone made me realize that it's a wonderful moment to consciously practice the knightly virtues of compassion, spirituality, and mercy. As a Knight, husband, and father, I am determined to leave the world—and my children—a little better off, rooted in the values that Saint Martin and many other Catholic examples continue to teach us.

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