



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Mother and Daughter, Dames of the Order



During a recent Investiture in Malta, the Governor General met Maria and Gloria, mother and daughter, who are both Dames of the Order.

Maria and Gloria Montebello, who are mother and daughter, and both Dames of the Lieutenancy for Malta, shared the journey that led them to join the Order. Gloria received her Investiture when she was just 25 years old, which is the minimum age required for entry into the Order. Today, Gloria works in Mental Health Services and is a doctor specializing in Psychiatry. Maria is currently the head of St Ignatius College, Handaq Middle School, which is one of the newest educational institutions in Malta and, as of September 1, she will be the first lay woman to lead the Jesuits' St. Aloysius College. Maria and Gloria were invited to participate in the pilgrimage to the Holy Land organized by the Lieutenancy for Malta in July 2023. Upon their return, both mother and daughter decided to begin the formation process to become Dames. They were invested on the same day in November 2024.

It is often said that particular doors in life open at the right moment, guiding us toward paths we never anticipated but ultimately feel destined for. Our journey – mother and daughter – into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was one such experience, marked by a profound sense of calling and a deep personal commitment to faith and service.

We both sincerely wished to visit the Holy Land from an early age. For Gloria, this was not a common aspiration for someone so young. It is rare for a youth to express such a strong desire to embark on a pilgrimage, yet, for her, this was a heartfelt wish that transcended age. That wish became a reality when we were blessed with the opportunity to travel to Jerusalem, an experience that proved to be transformative. Interestingly, we were among the last groups to make this pilgrimage before

war broke out just weeks after our visit. This timing was not lost on us—it reinforced the preciousness of the experience and deepened our appreciation for the path we were about to embark upon.

The first seeds of our journey into the Order were sown in Jerusalem, a city of immense spiritual significance where history and faith intertwine in ways that touch the soul. During a memorable lunch meeting, our Lieutenant Ambassador Roberto Buontempo, first invited us to consider joining the Order. This was not a casual suggestion but a heartfelt call to serve that immediately struck a chord with us. At the time, we did not realise that our Grand Prior, Archbishop Charles Scicluna, had already encouraged us to embark on the pilgrimage, setting in motion a journey that felt divinely orchestrated. The symbolism of this moment was profound—it was as though a door was opening before us, inviting us to step forward into a path of more extraordinary spiritual dedication and commitment.

This invitation was both an honour and a responsibility for us. It signified a deep connection to a legacy of faith, an Order that has stood the test of time in its unwavering dedication to the Holy Land and the Church. But this journey was even more meaningful because we were embarking on it together as mother and daughter. What made this moment even more remarkable was that arguably, Gloria became the youngest member of the Order worldwide. Recognising the significance of her dedication, she was granted a special dispensation to join, an exceptional acknowledgment of her faith and commitment. Entering the Order side by side reinforced the values that we hold dear – faith, service, and solidarity – and deepened our shared commitment to upholding the mission of the Order.

The concept of a door opening carries immense spiritual significance. Throughout history, passing through a door has symbolised new beginnings, commitments, and transformations. In the Church, the Holy Door symbolises renewal, marking a passage into deeper faith and devotion. Similarly, our entrance into the Order represented a pivotal moment in our spiritual lives, an opportunity to dedicate ourselves to a cause much more significant than ourselves. It was not merely about joining a historical institution; it was about embracing a call to serve, to stand in solidarity with the suffering, and to contribute meaningfully to the Order's humanitarian and charitable mission.

Our commitment to the Order goes beyond our Investiture; it extends into active participation in the Lieutenancy's commissions that shape its mission and outreach. Dr. Maria Montebello serves on the Secretariat Commission, ensuring the smooth coordination of official event documents, particularly for the Vigil and Investiture ceremonies. Additionally, she plays a key role in the Formation Lectures Commission, helping to organise and facilitate the essential educational programs that prepare new members for their responsibilities within the Order. Furthermore, she is also a dedicated member of the Spirituality Commission, contributing to the organisation of retreats, faith discussions, and liturgical functions that nurture the spiritual well-being of all members.

On the other hand, Dr. Gloria Montebello is actively involved in the Esquires Commission, a vital initiative that cultivates a deep love for the Holy Land among young individuals who are not yet eligible for full membership. Her participation in this commission reflects her dedication to inspiring the next generation to embrace the Order's values and mission.

Through these roles, we continue to live out our commitment, ensuring that our service within the Order is symbolic and an active and meaningful contribution to its legacy. Our journey is one of faith and action, embracing opportunities to give back, supporting the Christian presence in the Holy Land, and upholding the principles of charity, unity, and unwavering devotion.

Being part of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is an immense privilege, and we embrace this commitment with deep reverence and joy. As we walk through this door, we do so with a renewed sense of purpose, knowing that this is not the end of a journey but the beginning of a lifelong dedication to faith, service, and hope.

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