Community events organised despite the health crisis

A reproduction of the Holy Sepulchre in Slovenia, a place of pilgrimage for Knights and Dames.

For years, it has been a tradition in the Lieutenancy of Eastern Spain to take advantage of the holidays in December to organise a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This pilgrimage is clearly open to all members of the Order, so that they may respond to the obligation of all Knights and Dames to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem at least once in their life. But it is also open to family and friends to whom they can pass on their love for the land of Jesus Christ and the Order's concern for the Christian community in the Holy Land. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the last pilgrimage was in 2019. The Lieutenancy therefore chose to create a virtual pilgrimage. Throughout this pilgrimage, which lasted about an hour and a half, with the help of photographs taken during previous pilgrimages, the participants were able to visit the geographical places in Palestine, which marked the main stages of the life of Our Lord. All left with a better knowledge of the earthly homeland of Jesus and a greater awareness of the needs of our brothers and sisters in faith who live there.

In Portugal, the launch of the Portuguese version of the work of the Grand Master of the Order, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, on the spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, took place on 4th November, 2021, in the Chapter Church of the Lieutenancy, the Church of Santo Condestável in Lisbon. Shortly after the Holy Mass, the Lieutenant Colonel Bartolomeu Nuno de Guanilho Costa Cabral invited the Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for Portugal, Cardinal Manuel Clemente, Patriarch of Lisbon, to present this work in which the Grand Master of the Order offers meditations on the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, based on the Gospel accounts. These meditations make the Holy Places so vivid for readers that they are a very enriching spiritual experience, especially for those who are willing to read them prayerfully. The Slovenian Lieutenancy, for its part, continued its activity through virtual meetings. Each meeting featured exchanges on the history of the Order, the rules of the Order, and the teaching of Pope Francis, while preparing the translation of the book of the Grand Master, Cardinal Filoni, on the spirituality of the Order. In Summer, the pandemic subsided somewhat and the Lieutenancy was able to make the traditional one-day pilgrimage to one of the replicas of the Holy Sepulchre in Slovenia. Built in 1752,

the replica of the Holy Sepulchre located near Moravãe, 30 km from Ljubljana, offers an extraordinary spiritual experience.

In Russia, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has signed an official contract with a publishing house for the very first Russian-language book on the history of the Order and its current activities. In Spring 2022, the book should be printed and available to readers. Unlike the Order of Malta, whose history is closely linked to that of Russia (this is especially true for the end of the 18th century, when the Russian Emperor Paul I was elected Grand Master of the Knights of St. John), the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is known only to a relatively small group of Russian historians. Until now, there has been no Russian publication on the history of the Order, and texts on the current situation of Christians in the Holy Land are scarce. When the initiative to publish a book on the Order materialised, the Russian historian Vitaly Zadvorniy, editor-in-chief of the Russian Catholic Encyclopedia and author of numerous works on the history of the Holy See, joined the ranks of Knights and Dames.

In Quebec, on, the feast of Saint Pius X, celebrated on 21st August, five new members were invested. During the Vigil, the new Lieutenant, Mireille Éthier was officially installed in her service. Among the activities offered during the year by this Canadian Lieutenancy, the recollection “The fragrance of perfume”, also open to European French-speakers, was an opportunity to learn more about the spirituality of the Order from the book of the Grand Master.

In Mexico, the pandemic has been difficult for everyone, but one of the events organised by the Lieutenancy was the “Eucharistic Hour for Peace in the Holy Land,” in the chapel at the house of the auxiliary bishops of the Archdiocese of Mexico, two of whom were present. Broadcast by the archdiocese media, the video of this prayer has been shared twelve thousand times, also highlighting the mission of the Order throughout Latin America.

The second year of the pandemic unfolded in Colombia, like everywhere else in the world, with difficulties in meeting personally, and working with restrictions on the freedom of movement. However, the Grand Master’s book on the spirituality of the Order has been a beacon for the Knights and Dames in their journey of witness to professing the Christian faith, as they strive with joy and generosity to put into practice the commitment made to serve those who live in the Holy Land. Adriana Mayol, the Lieutenant, fuelled by this reading, for example, agreed to an interview with Colombian media, which was seen by a person in Ecuador... The person thus touched by the testimony of the Lieutenant became a Knight, preparing the establishment of a future Magistral Delegation in the neighbouring country. This anecdote encourages each and everyone to give an account of their hope so that, everywhere, love of the Holy Land and people’s desire to make their own life a “holy land” may flourish.

In Brazil, the annual retreat of the Order was held, virtually, in Rio in November 2021, bringing together people from almost all the country, but also including participants from England, Italy and Portugal. The presentation of Cardinal Filoni’s work on spirituality was a highlight, awakening in everyone the desire to make it his or her bedside book so that the spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is continually exemplified in daily life.

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