



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

New experiences of communion among the Lieutenancies and with the Holy Land



The Lieutenancy for England and Wales normally organises two pilgrimages each year to the Holy Land, but obviously because of the Covid pandemic, the last four have been cancelled, and it is presently hoped that we can resume in May next year, but that is very much subject to health and safety conditions in Israel, Palestine and Jordan at the time. So instead we organised a “virtual pilgrimage” with streamed masses from the Holy Land, prayers, reflections and biblical videos from one of our tour guides we have got to know so well over the years. This was a completely new venture.

The first one was spread over eight days, and based upon this experience we organised a second one which was quite different in scope and execution.

This second “virtual experience” was quite different from the previous one in many ways. For the first time ever, we decided to invite other Lieutenancies to join us, and so this virtual pilgrimage was a joint collaborative effort between the Lieutenancies for England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and Gibraltar and also the Magistral Delegation for South Africa, with input from all five of us.

All five Grand Priors gave us a reflection about a different day of Holy Week, and Archbishop Arthur Roche, now Head of the Congregation for Divine Worship, gave us a reflection on Maundy Thursday and the Last Supper in the tradition of Passover.

Easter Mass was streamed from Jubeiha. The number of participants who contributed around the world was truly impressive; three cardinals, seven archbishops, four bishops and many priests. The international participation of so many people gave a real sense of unity amongst Knights and Dames with the people of Jordan even though we could not actually be with them. The week ended with a video reflection on the Resurrection on Easter Sunday by the Grand Master, Cardinal Filoni.

Our “virtual pilgrimages” would not have happened but for the pandemic, and illustrate that there are always ways forward even if not as originally planned. We began by thinking these pilgrimages were second best and could not really replace actually visiting the “living stones” themselves, but we very soon came to realise that this was not so as they took on a life and identity of their own, even if it is true that nothing can replace the reality of being actually present in the Holy Land.

These pilgrimages cost nothing and reached out to many more people than would probably actually travel out on pilgrimage. They allowed people to participate, who through either age or infirmity or other reasons had either never been to the Holy Land or recognised that their days of international travel were over. Our elderly and sick Knights and Dames were particularly appreciative, and as with all of us, found them a very moving and spiritual experience. We had clearly been led by the Holy Spirit into the realms of twenty first century technology.

We felt very close to both the Christians in the Holy Land, and also to each other around the world, and it has made us think how different Lieutenancies might continue to cooperate with each other. We have now learned by experience, and hope that the friendships and cooperation forged on these pilgrimages will continue amongst us.

Article taken from a report sent by Michael David Byrne

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