



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

A journey of unity in Scandinavia

Interview with Bo Theutenberg, a member of the Grand Magisterium



In this interview, Bo Theutenberg, a member of the Grand Magisterium and former Regent *ad Interim* of the Lieutenancy for Sweden and Denmark, talks about the new stage for the Order in these two countries where Catholics form an active minority.

What position does the Order of the Holy Sepulchre occupy in Sweden and Denmark where the Catholic Church is a tiny minority? How do the Knights and Dames carry forward their Christian mission to be leaven in the Scandinavian countries?

Catholics are a minority in the Nordic countries. In Sweden, out of a population of about 10 million inhabitants, there are only 150,000 registered Catholics. These countries have been Protestant since days of the Reformation, that is since 1527 when the king broke off all relations with the Catholic Church. Generally it can be said that Lutheranism prevailed until the twentieth century. The Religious Freedom Act was promulgated in 1951 and the Swedish National Church existed until 2000 when it was then equated to all other religious communities operating in the country.

Only two Catholic Orders of Chivalry are active in the Scandinavian countries – the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and the Order of Malta – which are often viewed with suspicion, curiosity and even criticism. We are therefore called to be very open about our activities, to explain and inform about the origins and purpose of the Order, as well as to present Catholicism clearly, inviting everyone, especially the press, to follow our initiatives.

As for the participation of Catholics in my period of regency of Lieutenancy I made a decision to reduce the contribution for membership for young people under the age of 35 years in order to foster their presence. There are many ways to encourage general interest in the Holy Land from the increased

publicity of our activities. Even the ecclesiastical members of the Order can contribute through their witness in the daily life of the Diocese they belong to.

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre is united in Sweden and Denmark, beyond national borders. How was this beautiful experience of being Church born and what message might it convey to the whole Order?

In a region of the world in which religious issues are set aside, an excellent way to achieve our goals is to join forces with the Catholics of the neighboring countries, as has been done by Sweden and Denmark via the decree of last October 2016 by which the Lieutenancy for Sweden- Denmark was created. Due to the geographical shape of Sweden, for example, it is easier for Catholics residing in the southern part of the country to meet with the Bishop of Copenhagen (thirty minutes by train) than to go to Stockholm, Sweden's capital, which is an hour by plane.

Currently in the new Lieutenancy, the Lieutenant is Swedish and the Grand Prior Danish. The basis of the Nordic Catholic cooperation is particularly supported by the presence of the Scandinavian Bishops' Conference. When the Lieutenancy for Sweden was established in 2003, the idea was to bring together all the Nordic countries except Finland, especially for the strong language difference, and the integration of Sweden and Denmark moves in this direction.

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THE INVESTITURE IN STOCKHOLM

Last winter, the **Lieutenancy for Sweden and Denmark** welcomed the visit of the **Grand Master, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien**, who celebrated the Investiture of seven new Knights, Dames and ecclesiastical members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Stockholm.

The visit began with an appointment on February 10 at the **Royal Castle**, where the Grand Master met with the highest Swedish state authorities for the Royal Orders of Chivalry. It was an important signal of friendship, mutual trust and mutual recognition between our Catholic Order and the (Lutheran) Kingdom of Sweden. Cardinal O'Brien was welcomed by the Honor Guard and escorted to the Halls of the Royal Orders of Chivalry, where the **Chancellor of the Royal Orders, Mr. Ingemar Eliasson**, delivered a welcome address to which the Grand Master then responded. This was followed by lunch, during which Mr. Eliasson was awarded the **Cross with Gold Star of Merit**, a sign of gratitude and friendship between the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and the Kingdom of Sweden. The same afternoon there was a Vigil in preparation for the Investiture of the next day.

The **Investiture ceremony** was held on February 11 at the cathedral of Saint Erik and was, as always, a great moment of communion and fraternity. The Eucharistic celebration was followed by a dinner in honor of the Grand Master during which Bo Theutenberg resigned as Regent ad Interim of the Lieutenancy and Cardinal O'Brien presented the **decrees appointing Tommy Thulin the new Lieutenant and new Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy, the bishop of Copenhagen, Msgr. Czeslaw Kozon**, who will be joined by the Swedish Grand Prior coadjutor, Msgr. Stejpan Biletic. In fact, last autumn, Sweden and Denmark merged into a single Lieutenancy and both are well represented in the organization of this peripheral structure of the Order.