



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Investiture of a Religious-Dame with a long history of service to the Holy Land



“The Shawl, showing a printed Cross of Jerusalem, and with which you are clothed above your habit, may be the sign not only of membership in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, but also of the embrace of Christ and the Mother Church of Jerusalem.”

The Grand Master of the Order travelled to the United States where, on September 21, in Meriden, Connecticut, he celebrated the Investiture of a religious sister of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist in the presence of her community and of the head of the US Eastern Lieutenancy, Victoria Downey. A delegation of Knights and Dames participated in the celebration. Before his departure, His Eminence had a short meeting in New York with Ms. Downey and several members of her staff.

Despite the fact that the annual meeting of the North American Lieutenants had been cancelled due to problems related to the health crisis, Cardinal Fernando Filoni nevertheless confirmed his trip, meeting with the Vice Governor for North America, Tom Pogge, and His Lady.

“The Investiture of Mother Shaun as a Religious-Dame, and consequently her inclusion into the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is a profoundly ecclesiological act, and the solemn Liturgy of Investiture, preceded by the Vigil of Prayer, is, as for every Knight and Dame, the culmination of a renewed spiritual commitment.”

This is how the Grand Master’s homily began at the Investiture Mass of Mother Shaun Vergauwen, Co-foundress of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, reminding us of what is present at the core of this act that inducts new members into the life of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. As Cardinal Filoni

often reminds it, this “is not an high honorific attribution.” How can we then better describe the choice of entering the Order as Knights and Dames? “This assumption of responsibility, this commitment represents a great honor,” says the Cardinal Grand Master. He continues, “to love the Holy Land is to love Christ. [...] We are not asked to do this just occasionally, but on an ongoing and deeply conscious basis.”

The commitment of men and women religious in this direction finds its place in our Order. Saying a few words about the new Religious Dame, Cardinal Filoni explains that she is “a religious who has given much to the Holy Land and continues to do so through her sisters who work there in the pastoral, educational, and social fields.” In fact, soon after the founding of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, in 1978, Mother Shaun and Mother Rosemae Pender, Mother Foundress, sent sisters to take steps toward establishing a center in the Holy Land. In 1996 the sisters founded the “Holy Child Program,” a therapy and educational center to address the needs of children and families experiencing intergenerational trauma and they remain as spiritual advisors to the staff.

Lieutenant Vicky Downey together with a delegation of Knights and Dames, were there to welcome the new member of the Lieutenancy for Eastern USA. The following day Vice-Governor General Tom Pogge as well was able to join the group and congratulate the new Religious-Dame.

(September 2021)

