"How should a Knight of the Order face the political reality of the Holy Land?"

I decided to write to you of an inner need of mine ... The Holy Land is not at the centre of my attention alone ... What happens in that land always has a strong impact... How should a Knight of the Order face the political reality of the Holy Land? ... What is the best possible future for the Holy Land ... one that is able to bring peace and coexistence among peoples? I hope my question is not too 'uncomfortable' . (Cav. F. Stocco)

Your question is not '*uncomfortable*'. Rather, it is the entire situation in the Holy Land that is '*uncomfortable*'. Having in many and always at heart a land dear to us Christians, as well as to Jews and Muslims, although each with their own reasons, we, by belonging to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem - which has as its goal zeal and support for the Land of Jesus - we have a duty to ask ourselves this question. From the point of view of the Order, we know that generating peace and coexistence is always our first desire and our ultimate goal.

Peace is not achieved once and for all, but by working daily, and it is possible to defend it through respect for the rights of all and for all. Our Order is committed to peace through our serious contribution to it: care of holy places, providing education for many children and young people, support and attention to people in particular need and to numerous families.

We are not the great architects of peace and civil coexistence, rather, resorting to an evangelical image, we prefer to be 'little workers' in the vineyard of the Lord (cf. Mt 20:1 and ss.). Not presumptuous, not murmurers, but happy artisans for having contributed to our mandate. If it is up to everyone to contribute to it, then the commitment for us is primary and we make it the reason for our "vocation" as Members of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. A Dame and a Knight profess *"faith*

in Christ through testimony, generosity towards every man and woman in need and promotion of mutual understanding in compliance with the rights of all" (from the Liturgy for the Investitures).

The Holy See pursues this policy in the Holy Land. Events, which are often provoked or provoke contrary reactions, cannot allow us to lose sight of the goal we pursue. The manifestation of arrogant actions, which generates cruel violence and disastrous forms of poverty, neither belong to the sacredness of the Land of Jesus, nor are they to be attributed to God himself; they are the result of human intolerance. We must also beware of the temptation to pessimistically believe «that nothing ever changes there!». Nourishing the dream of peace and working for it is of great honour for us.

I lived for a few years in the Holy Land and in the Middle East and I know the good that can be generated as artisans of peace. Whoever works for peace will be called the son of God (cf. Mt 5: 9). This is a beatitude that the Order of the Holy Sepulchre will always have to hold in the highest consideration. After all, wasn't the wish for peace the first gift of the Risen Christ to his disciples, "My peace I give to you"?

Ferdinando Cardinal Filoni

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