



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

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

## The presence of young people in the Order



*Your Eminence, can you share your thoughts with us on the question of the presence of young people in the Order? (Jérôme, Paris)*

Thank you for this question. Yes, I must say that I agree with you, as I think many do, with the opportunity to reflect on this important aspect of the life of our Order. In 1962, on the occasion of the updating of the Constitution, Pope Saint John XXIII said that the Order must have its "vitality"; this should not be restricted to its commitments to the Holy Land, but above all internally, both from a spiritual, organizational and participatory point of view.

The question is however: How to proceed?

The recent Synod on Young People and the subsequent Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit* (25.3.2019) encourage us to think seriously about the *presence* of young people in the Order, to their *formation* and *participation* in the spiritual and social purposes entrusted to us by the Supreme Pontiffs.

You say that in France the Lieutenancy, for about twenty years now, has been carrying forward the experience of *Écuyers et Demoiselles*, which has allowed, so far, to include in the Order the presence of thirty young members. This appears to be an important fruit, if it is true that "from the fruits" we can recognize the goodness of the initiative. Another non-secondary aspect on which to reflect is the presence in the Order of many Members who, once they have entered to become part of it, no longer participate: Why? This aspect also calls us all to reflect. As we know, and Pope Francis has recently reminded us, ours is not a "philanthropic" Order (16 November 2018) nor merely an honorific one.

Introducing young people who can bring the enthusiasm of their participation, I believe is healthy, as is recovering the "distant".

The words of the Holy Father in the Message for World Youth Day which we celebrated last April 5 are still striking: "In a culture that makes young people isolated and withdrawn into virtual worlds, let us spread Jesus' invitation: *Arise! [...] Arise and become what you are!* If this is our message, many young people will stop looking bored and weary, and let their faces come alive and be more beautiful than any virtual reality. If you give life, someone will be there to receive it [...] And if a young person is passionate about something, or even better, about Someone, he or she will arise and start to do great things; [...] and become witnesses to Jesus and devote their lives to him."

Even the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre are called to fire up passion for the beauty of the values and of the Order's Christian witness, in all those young people who, after appropriate discernment, could enter our family.

I would then be of the opinion that the various Lieutenancies - responding to requests expressed in the past - inform the Grand Magisterium if they already have, or if they plan to start some experience with the participation of young people, together with their evaluation (regarding age, denomination, attraction and formation initiatives, etc.). Perhaps, after listening to each other, we will be able to better identify the lines of common orientation, while respecting the freedom that each Lieutenancy will have in carrying out its own initiatives. A small ad hoc study group could be created in the Grand Magisterium as soon as we receive responses.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

Grand Master

*(May 1, 2020)*