



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The 94th Plenary Assembly of ROACO

Towards the closing of the deficit of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem



From June 22 to 24, the 94th Plenary Assembly of ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches) was held in Rome, with the participation of representatives of its member agencies and presided over by Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was represented by the Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone.

In the first session, entirely dedicated to the situation in the Holy Land, speakers included Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Father Francesco Patton, Custos of the Holy Land, and Brother Peter Bray, Vice Chancellor of Bethlehem University. The speeches were followed by a lively debate with numerous questions from those present. The good news – announced by Patriarch Pizzaballa at the meeting – is the closure of the entire deficit of the Latin Patriarchate at the end of 2021. The Patriarch was keen to publicly thank the leaders of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for the valuable financial partnership offered in the context of excellent management, especially since he was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Patriarchate in 2016. He also congratulated the support provided by the Order in terms of social-humanitarian aid, through small projects, particularly in Palestine, where the situation is very difficult and painful.

Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See's Secretariat of State, as well as the Nuncios to Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon also addressed the General Assembly. Among the solidarity projects with the Christians of the Holy Land and the Middle East presented this year, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre – through the voice of Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone – committed itself to an amount of approximately 230,000 Euros, destined for the renovation of a school in Nazareth and the expansion of another school in Shefa'Amr (Israel), as well as the restoration of a convent in Bethlehem. The following day, Pope Francis delivered a much-anticipated address, welcoming the ROACO participants, led by Cardinal Leonardo Sandri.

“In your meeting, you have discussed a variety of geographical and ecclesial situations. In the first place, the Holy Land itself, with Israel and Palestine, peoples who we hope and pray will see the bow of peace that God showed to Noah as a sign of the covenant between heaven and earth, and of peace among peoples. For all too often, even lately, those skies have been darkened by missiles bringing destruction, death and fear!” said Pope Francis in his address, thanking the members of ROACO for the permanent support brought to the different Churches in the East.

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