



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

A year with so many needs to face

Brief account of the support of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre during 2020



2020 was an exceptional year. This has been true for everyone, worldwide, on a number of counts. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre also found itself having to manage an emergency situation involving unforeseen and crucial support for the communities of the Holy Land at a time when many are facing great financial challenges due to a reduction in commercial and manufacturing activity.

The priority was therefore to respond to humanitarian needs, and the special Covid-19 fund, together with the funds already provided for humanitarian aid, made it possible to accomplish this with a total of around 3.4 million Euro sent in recent months, 2.4 million for the Covid-19 fund and 980,000 for humanitarian aid.

As always, we must not forget the ongoing and permanent support given for schools, the various institutional expenses, and the Latin Patriarchate seminary. This substantial portion of the funds raised by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, to a total of 7.8 million US dollars, permits the regular and fundamental actions of the diocese of Jerusalem to continue uninterrupted.

At the beginning of 2020, various small projects with a more local focus had been agreed on with the Patriarchate. Local conditions, as well as the need to invest more in the humanitarian field, have prompted us to reconsider our priorities, in line with the flexibility required during this period. Seven projects are underway, while another eight that the Lieutenancies have already sponsored, but delayed due to the pandemic, will begin as soon as conditions permit.

The ongoing projects include new equipment for computer and science laboratories in various schools of the Latin Patriarchate. Access to electronic commercial equipment that means children can grow and acquire the skills needed to use these tools is vital at this time and it is important that schools are better prepared to offer students a quality education. Moreover, despite the difficulties in

carrying out structural projects during a pandemic, the renovation of the school run by the Patriarchate in Safout, Jordan, is progressing with 60% of the work already completed.

Among the major projects, one worth highlighting is the Church of Jubeiha, currently being completed, where Christmas Mass was celebrated. A medium-sized project has also been launched: the renovations to part of the Sisters of the Rosary Convent in Beit Jala, Palestine.

Alongside these initiatives, we are happy to announce that the support provided by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for the increase in teachers' wages in Jordan and for the teachers' pension fund in Palestine, agreed and initiated in 2016, at a total of 4.2 million US dollars, has been successfully implemented and the last instalments of these adjustments were paid in 2020. We are well aware of the important work done by these teachers who contribute in a fundamental way to the growth of the children and whose competence and commitment had to be recognised and adequately rewarded so that their remuneration is on an equal footing with that of their colleagues in the state system.

Furthermore, as every year, we cannot, not do we wish to forget the contribution sent for the benefit of other entities of the Holy Land with which the Order has been collaborating for many years through its participation in the ROACO, Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Eastern Churches. In this regard, nine projects were supported in 2020, to a total of 477,500 euros, most of which benefit initiatives and facilities of the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church (renovations inside churches or parish centres in Kfar Cana, Kfar Yasif, Fassouta and Acre in Israel and funding to update the computer lab of the Peter Nettekoven primary school in Beit Sahour in Palestine). There are also other projects supporting Latin Catholic institutions that do not belong to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: the expansion of the neurology department of the Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem; the renovation of some areas in the monastery of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Aida refugee camp; and the relocation and modernisation of the kitchen at the Hospice of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Jerusalem.

Also, in connection with the ROACO, this year the Order of the Holy Sepulchre was involved in another emergency following the explosion that took place in Beirut, Lebanon, on 4th August 2020. At the end of August, the Congregation for Eastern Churches organised a meeting chaired by the Prefect, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, with the participation of the Apostolic Nuncio in Beirut, Msgr. Joseph Spitteri and about twenty representatives from the ROACO Agencies - including the Order - to reflect on possible ways of helping the local population which was so severely affected. With the determined desire to show closeness and support, the Order has undertaken to finance the renovation of the house and school run by the Daughters of Charity in Ashrafiye, a neighbourhood in eastern Beirut, to the tune of about 95,000 US dollars.

The 30,000 Knights and Dames of the Order have continued this year and will continue to open their hearts to heed the needs of those who appeal for help from the Holy Land, becoming partners with that hand that binds wounds, "pouring on oil and wine" (Luke 10:34).

(January 2021)