



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

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

## Learning a lesson – Faced with a choice

There is in fact no region in the world that has not been affected, to some extent, by COVID-19. Thousands of dead, millions of sick, billions in economic and financial damage. A transversal plague that has placed everyone - individuals and public entities - under one common denominator: fear.

The need to safeguard our health was the first concern, the interruption of everyday life the first effect, the labour crisis its serious consequence, the downsizing of our own views and safety the obliged perspective.

The Holy Land, where the very economic lifeblood of thousands of families lies in religious pilgrimages and tourism, has been seriously affected.

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre – which has the support of the Mother Church of Jerusalem, the schools it manages, and its charitable and social initiatives as its institutional aim – has taken to heart the new needs by establishing a fund for the collection of extraordinary aid.

Beyond the important initiative, there is a reflection to which the Members of the Order, and not only, are called to make and which is part of the broader reflection which Pope and numerous international institutions refer: *What lessons are to be learned from this new, unexpected / unpredictable situation?*

We all have a responsibility. And while international finance must decide whose side it will take – with people or with power and one's own castle – we choose to put people first, their work, their health, their family, their quality of life, and the future, redirecting ourselves if necessary.

Taking care of people is part of the gift of the Christian faith, but also a duty to be fulfilled.

**Fernando Card. Filoni**

Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Appeal



In agreement with the Latin Patriarchate, and following the suggestion of several Lieutenants, the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has decided to launch a special “*Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Fund*” specifically dedicated to the consequences of the pandemic. The virus is having a severe impact on the Holy Land, especially in Palestine and Jordan.

At the present time, it is urgent for the Christian families living there to be supported for their basic needs, especially for those people who lost their employment, due to the collapse of pilgrimages and tourism and the impossibility to daily commute to Israel for work. Financial aid support is equally necessary in order to provide the cash flow to keep operational the 38 LPJ schools in Palestine and Jordan with their over 15,000 students and over 1,300 teachers and staff employed.

As it might be remembered an ordinary humanitarian fund financed by the Order and amounting to 650.000 US \$ for the current year was agreed between the Presidency of the Grand Magisterium and the Latin Patriarchate in January 2020, before the outbreak of the pandemic. Such amount is clearly inadequate in the present circumstances. Therefore, while keeping that fund for ordinary humanitarian activities already established, it has been agreed with the Patriarchate to respond to the two aforesaid new emergencies – the families in need and the functioning of LPJ schools - through this new fund.

The “*Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Fund*” would help those who lost their employment to cover the basic needs of their families such as food, hygiene and baby care supplies, medicines. It is expected that approximately 2,000 families will have to be supported by the Patriarchate in this regard during the crisis.

At the same time the fund would provide financial aid to the approximately 10.000 families that will not be able to pay the tuition fees and the relevant necessary financial aid will be distributed according to criteria that favor those who lost their employment and have no other means of support.

The humanitarian aid to families will be processed by the Patriarchate through the parish priests, in cooperation with the LPJ local councils. Each parish priest will submit an itemized report of all aid distributed. The financial support for the schools will be forwarded in the same time through the

coordination of the school principals, school accountants, social workers and parish priests at each location. Each school will submit an itemized report of all aid distributed.

I therefore appeal to all Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations all over the world to respond generously to this emergency through donations to this newly established Grand Magisterium "*Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Fund*" which will be forwarded immediately to the Patriarchate, with the usual and well established procedure.

My thanks in advance for the generous support that will certainly be provided on behalf of our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

*Grand Master*