



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

After a year of pandemic, the Order keeps up its commitment to solidarity

Report of the Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium



The Grand Master and the Governor General of the Order at the spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium last April 15.

At the beginning of the meeting of the Grand Magisterium, the Grand Master, Cardinal Filoni, could not avoid referring to the current situation of the pandemic, aware of the suffering that Covid-19 has caused and is causing for many, but inviting a confident outlook. In fact, he recalled at the beginning, "when water cannot flow smoothly in the river bed towards its destination, it seeks solutions by going around the obstacle."

Speaking of the Order's action, Cardinal Filoni said: "We are particularly happy to support the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and its activities, which extend to include so many non-Christian, Jewish, and Muslim people. This means witnessing to the Risen Lord Jesus through works and a dialogue that takes shape in the education of children and young people, in social and pastoral activities. The Church is always mother and teacher everywhere and with everyone, without presumption and with true esteem for all."

The floor was then taken by the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, who reported how the Coronavirus has been "a stimulus for the generosity of our members, but has led us to close the 2020 budget at a loss. This year," he announced, "will be in a better light, but the effects of the economic crisis will undoubtedly be felt." The Treasurer, Dr. Saverio Petrillo, communicated the details of the economic situation that you can read in his interview published here below.

Faced with the present challenge, various initiatives have been put in place to effectively respond to the economic needs and difficulties caused by the Covid-19 emergency. The Governor General briefly outlined them: the policy of saving resources has been tightened and projects in the Holy Land have been reduced as several of those planned have not been completed due to the health situation. At the same time, humanitarian initiatives have received greater impetus, with a desire to prioritize

interventions in support of those most in need in the Holy Land. Finally, promotional initiatives have been put in the pipeline to collect donations and offerings.

Looking to the future remains central, as recalled by Ambassador Visconti di Modrone: "For us the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is a modern reality that looks to the future, more than to the past, in our commitment to the Holy Land. In this perspective, the participation of young people in the activities of the Order was an important topic discussed during the meeting.

The Patriarch, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, could not be present at this meeting due to a concurrent meeting with the Israeli President Rivlin and a message from him was read out. The floor was then passed to the CEO of the Latin Patriarchate, Sami El-Yousef, who updated the members of the Grand Magisterium on the situation in the Holy Land. Operating within three different states - Israel, Palestine, and Jordan - the current conditions vary considerably in the territory of the Latin Patriarchate, both in terms of health issues and economic repercussions.

One worrisome figure is that concerning the collection of school fees for the more than forty schools run by the Latin Patriarchate. It is clear that with the current crisis many families have not been able to pay their dues, but this is translating into a deficit of more than \$7 million.

Regarding projects, it was with joy that the completion of the construction of St. Paul the Apostle Church in Jubeiha, a construction site that has been open since 2016, was announced. The major projects that the Grand Magisterium had decided to support in 2020 were carried over to 2021 for obvious reasons of slowdowns due to the health situation while in 2021 the increase of funds to support humanitarian and pastoral projects that are clearly central in this immediate post-emergency phase will continue. It was exciting to see how about 20,000 people benefited from the Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Fund established by the Grand Master: 75% of the contributions went to help the families of students who could not cover their school expenses while the remaining 25% went to humanitarian aid of various kinds.

Various challenges remain to be addressed. Among them, as Sami El-Yousef points out, is the desire and need to "maintain as many employees as possible at the Latin Patriarchate, thus avoiding increasing the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis considering that the Patriarchate is the largest Christian employer in the Holy Land with its 1950 employees." In addition to this, the objective is to work to create new employment opportunities, as has been done for example for some time through a project supported by the Order in Gaza to initiate young people into professional activities, and to reactivate pastoral life by readapting it to the needs of the pandemic that is still ongoing.

Prof. Agostino Borromeo, Lieutenant General and President of the Commission for the Consulta, gave an update on the work in progress of the aforementioned Commission in light of the new Constitution recently published which must be taken into account in the final report.

During the discussion that followed the presentation of the update by the Latin Patriarchate, the members of the Grand Magisterium focused on the difficult situation regarding the educational opportunities offered to refugee children primarily in Jordan. With schools closing and teachers overburdened by online classes, the system that had previously been organized of afternoon shifts in order to offer a good educational opportunity to the children of refugees of school age has failed for practical and structural reasons, more than economic. However, it is hoped that we will soon be able to return to "normalcy" and, in the meantime, there is a decrease in the number of refugees who are slowly moving to other countries.

Taking the floor towards the conclusion, the Assessor, Archbishop Tommaso Caputo, Territorial Prelate and Pontifical Delegate for the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary of

Pompeii, took advantage of this venue to recall the important figure of Blessed Bartolo Longo, model of faith and charity for the Knights and Dames of the Order (you can find the prayer for the canonization of this Knight here).

The Grand Master then shared some final reflections that touched on all the main points to which he drew the attention of the members of the Grand Magisterium and which can be read in full here.

(May 2021)

“SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN THE HOLY LAND IS OUR PRIORITY”

The Order's 2020 Budget in a Time of Health Crisis

Interview with Dr. Saverio Petrillo, Treasurer of the Grand Magisterium

Dr. Petrillo, as Treasurer, during the meeting of the Grand Magisterium you presented, as usual, the Order's budget for fiscal year 2020. What can you tell us about it?

The Order's budget for the year 2020 closes - quite exceptionally and for the first time - with a deficit of €1,397,729.07. This negative result is attributable to the social and economic emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has seen all the Lieutenancies involved in a great economic effort. This commitment has resulted in the collection of €2,574,749.46 to help our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, specifically for the Covid-19 emergency.

How would you explain this result, so different from previous years?

Despite the increase in total donations - which went from €14,743,685.47 in 2019 to €15,363,788.71 in 2020 - the generous attention of the Lieutenancies towards the public health emergency and the contributions sent for the “Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Fund”, established by the Grand Master in May 2020, has meant at the same time a lower availability of “unrestricted” contributions (annual contributions, oblations for admissions and promotions, pro Holy Land offerings, etc.).

What choices have therefore been made by the Grand Magisterium to deal with this problem?

The situation has in fact obliged the Grand Magisterium to draw on its reserves to meet the monthly commitments made with the Latin Patriarchate. For the year 2020, therefore, the Order has made available to the Holy Land the total sum of €16,112,788.71.

We wanted to fully honour our commitment to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, even though we are aware of the risk this would have entailed for our budget. Supporting the people currently in difficulty in the Holy Land is our top priority.