North American Lieutenants' Meeting: a chance to get together and share

A group picture taken at St. John's Church at Creighton University in Omaha, during the North American Lieutenancies Annual Meeting

In early June **the 16 North American Lieutenants gathered for their annual meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, USA**. Situated on the banks of the Missouri River, Omaha is the heartland of America . . . a stop on the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail; it is known for its pioneer history, agriculture, beef industries, and a crossroad of railroads and commerce. His Excellency, **P. Thomas Pogge, Lieutenant of the Northern USA Lieutenancy, and his wife, Anne, hosted the meetings**.

His Eminence, **Cardinal Edwin O'Brien**, Grand Master, and **the then Governor General Agostino Borromeo**, travelled from Rome to attend the meeting. **Vice Governor General Powers** and three members of the Grand Magisterium attended two days of meetings along with Monsignor John E Kozar, Secretary General of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), and Monsignor Robert Stern, Secretary General Emeritus of CNEWA and consultant to the Order.

On Thursday evening, June 1, the Most Reverend George J. Lucas, Archbishop of Omaha, presided at Vespers in the presence of the Grand Master, at the recently renovated Jesuit Church of Saint John, located on the campus of Creighton University. It has recently been the practice of the Lieutenants to **commence their meetings with Vespers.** This year the Lieutenants and their wives had the unique opportunity to chant Vespers with over 180 seminarians from across the United States, Canada, and several foreign countries. The seminarians were participating in the Summer Spiritual Formation Program offered by The Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF), based in Omaha. Following Vespers, a reception was held at the Physicians Mutual Insurance Company, hosted by the Section Councilors for Omaha, Sir Robert and Dame Betsy Reed.

On Friday morning the meetings commenced with the Grand Master giving an **opening address** in which he emphasized the importance of the annual meeting, and asked that the **Lieutenants continue their efforts in renewing the spiritual lives of the Knights and Dames**.

Governor General Borromeo also addressed the group announcing the end of his mandate as Governor General of the Order. **Professor Borromeo reflected on his years of service**, provided updates on the Saint John the Baptist Foundation and Columbus Hotel, and the appointment of the Order's new Governor General, Ambassador Count Leonardo Visconti di Modrone.

Following the morning session, the Lieutenants and their wives returned to the Church of Saint John where Cardinal O'Brien celebrated Holy Mass and gave a moving and poignant homily for the IPF Community and seminarians.

On Friday afternoon, Vice Governor General Powers gave a detailed **presentation on the finances of the Order**, provided an update on the status of the revised Statutes of the Order, and announced the dates of the **2018 Consulta** in Rome. On Friday evening, all of the Lieutenants were invited to the home of the Pogge's for a wonderful, grilled Omaha steak dinner.

The two days of meetings included a wide variety of topics and exchange of ideas ranging from the operations of a Lieutenancy, finances, liturgy, pilgrimages, and candidate formation.

Several newly appointed Lieutenants attended and the meeting provided them the opportunity to observe and participate in various discussions.

On Saturday morning, **Professor Thomas McKiernan**, President of the Holy Land Commission, gave an **update on the construction projects currently underway** in the Patriarchate and insight into the planned 2017 programs. Additionally, Monsignor John E. Kozar, President of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), having recently returned from the Holy Land, provided first-hand insight into the on-going refugee crisis facing Christians in Syria and Iraq.

The final day of meetings included **discussions about the Speakers Bureau, a Squires Program, the Legacy Program**, recruitment efforts, and activities planned for the 2018 Consulta. The Lieutenants also enjoyed time allocated to open discussion of whatever was on their minds, and a robust exchange of best practices and a sharing of ideas. Late Saturday afternoon, the Lieutenants and their spouses attended the Vigil Mass of Pentecost where Monsignor Kozar was the principal celebrant and homilist.

The meetings officially concluded on Saturday with an evening dinner honoring the Grand Master and the Governor General. H.E. Thomas Pogge presented on behalf of the North American Lieutenants a beautiful framed image of Our Lady of Palestine to the Governor General in thanksgiving and appreciation for all he has done for the Order during his various mandates.

John Carmen Piunno

Member of the Grand Magisterium

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