



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

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

## Some reflections on the Order's institutional meetings during the pandemic



During the meetings of the Latin American and European Lieutenants, the Governor General, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, coordinated the debates, encouraging the exchange and sharing of experiences between the Lieutenancies of the Order.

The final month of this difficult year registered two important institutional events of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre: the meeting of the Latin American Lieutenants on December 10 and that of the European Lieutenants on December 11.

They hadn't taken place for a long time in the hope of being able to do them in person, but the ongoing health emergency forced us to hold the meetings online. This afforded us the opportunity to extend participation to the members of the Grand Magisterium, which in turn allowed us to broaden the scope of sharing information, something that hasn't been possible in the past.

By analysing the consequences and effects of the Coronavirus, we have tried to capture some positive aspects of these last two meetings, in addition to those held during the year after the outbreak of the pandemic.

Already the Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium, thanks to the formula of sending written contributions to Rome by the various members, had allowed, in addition to a significant saving in expenditure, to have precise documentation in Italian and English on what was analysed and discussed.

The subsequent meeting of the North American Lieutenants was the first experiment of connecting virtually, very successful, but objectively facilitated by the use of only one language, English.

The meeting of the Grand Magisterium in the autumn had to reconcile the needs of great distances between members residing in Europe, Australia and America, but despite the differences in time

zones, and the commendable sacrifice of those who had to intervene in the middle of their own night-time, it allowed a complete and constructive dialogue with a significant saving in travel and accommodation expenses compared to the past.

The two December meetings represented a further step forward from a technical point of view, having to provide for translations into four languages for Latin Americans (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and English) and in five for Europeans (Italian, German, English, French, Spanish).

In the first of the two meetings, all six Lieutenants (Argentina, Brazil-Rio de Janeiro, Brazil-San Paolo, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela) were able to intervene in a broad and in-depth manner. Given the numerous participants (36), the speeches were limited to seven speakers the following day, who acted as spokespeople for their own group and presented the information on the problems common to their geographic/linguistic group.

All the meetings were introduced by a prayer from the Cardinal Grand Master and benefited from his final reflection of great encouragement and assured guidance. His Eminence was also able to present his book on the spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre (which is available in Italian in bookstores and which will soon be available with translations into various languages) and the "Ritual for the Liturgies" which he drafted for the benefit of all Lieutenancies.

In a live link with Jerusalem and Glasgow, we heard updates from the CEO of the Latin Patriarchate and the President of the Holy Land Commission.

In this regard, the issues of greatest interest to the Order were addressed in a constructive and proactive atmosphere, such as: the rescheduling of activities as a result of the pandemic; the outcome exceeding expectations of the appeal for a Covid-19 Extraordinary Fund; the definition of commitments deriving from the New Statute and the prospect of an update of the General Regulations; the problem of the aging of the average age of the members and the connected one of the initiatives in favour of the younger generations; the initial formation of candidates and the recovery of those who leave; the deepening of the spiritual aspect of our life and definition of uniform liturgies; relations with the clergy; the need to intensify communications; administrative transparency; disciplinary aspects; relations with the other Orders; information on projects in the Holy Land; restoration work of Palazzo della Rovere; the organization of promotional events; the hoped-for resumption of pilgrimages; the results of the 2018 Consulta and the expansion of the Order to new countries.

Certainly, the climate of dialogue is not as warm when communicating through screens, compared to a past that also allowed common moments of prayer and informal meetings on the side-lines, as well as moments of conviviality that favoured fraternity. For this reason, I encouraged discussions also between small groups of Lieutenants, united by linguistic affinity or similar problems, with the support and coordination of the competent Vice Governors, and reiterated my full availability for dialogue from Rome both by email and by phone.

In conclusion, it would appear that if Covid- 19 has certainly introduced many critical variables, eliminating ceremonies, meetings and pilgrimages, it has also stimulated communication and determined some cost savings. Finally, the exchange of information between the political-programmatic work of the Grand Magisterium and the field activities of the various Lieutenancies, in the many geographical areas, registered a significant improvement this year. And this element should not be underestimated.

Therefore, let us not be discouraged and continue on our journey, enlightened by a sure faith and generous charity.

**Leonardo Visconti di Modrone**

**Governor General**

*(January 2021)*