



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Lieutenancy for Western Australia and its Malaysian domiciled Members



The creation of a section of the Order in Malaysia – a country where Islam is the state religion – represents an important milestone: it is a transitional stage towards a Magistral Delegation and perhaps in the future a Malaysian Lieutenancy, as explained in this article by Australian Lieutenant Jack Gardner.

In February 2019, the Grand Master approved the establishment of a Malaysian Section of the Order belonging to the Lieutenancy for Western Australia. Lieutenant Jack Gardner tells us the story that led to the birth of this new presence of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Asia.

Western Australians, through familial, study, business and travel interact with South East Asians, particularly Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. You may be aware that Malaysia is a Muslim majority country. Most of its Christians do not live in Peninsular Malaysia – of which Penang Diocese is part and where Christians are a small minority, of mostly Chinese ethnicity – but in the States of Sabah and Sarawak, on the Island of Borneo.

Lieutenant of Honour for Western Australia Bob Peters, an Australian immigrant from Burma worked with Monsignor Michael Cheah of Penang to find a way that faithful Malaysian Catholics could join the Order. Their efforts were made in Penang Diocese, and we are not to date in touch with any Catholic jurisdictions outside of the Penang Diocese.

Early in 2014 the Bishop of Penang agreed that Catholics from the Diocese could become members of the Order under certain conditions – they could only be members of the Australia – Western Lieutenancy and only if their parish priest agreed. There is a political balance in Malaysia that is wary of the Church and exposure to an Order of Knights should be discreet. We only have members from the Penang Diocese. We are careful to contain the wearing of Regalia to liturgical events.

With a suitable letter from the Diocese of Penang, the Grand Magisterium approved the arrangement, accepting the first Malaysians as non-domiciled members of the Western Australian Lieutenancy. All of this developed before Vice Governor General, Paul Bartley, assumed responsibility for the Order's growth in the region.

In September 2014 an initial 13 Candidates from the Diocese of Penang were invested in Perth. This included Monsignor Michael Cheah, KCHS. It also included Andrew Khoo, KHS who is now studying for the priesthood at "Our Lady of Sheshan" Major House of Formation, Institute of the Incarnate Word, at San Celestino, Lipa City in the Philippines.

After the Perth 2018 Investiture we have 26 Malaysian members of the Lieutenancy. Eleven are women. Each year since 2014, our Malaysian members, including Monsignor Michael, have been well represented in Perth at the annual Investiture, supporting their new members and sharing with the broader membership.

I was pleased to announce in February 2019 that His Eminence the Grand Master had approved our request for the formation of a Section for our Malaysian domiciled members. The Section has appointed its committee and has held its first formal meeting. Creation of this Section is an important milestone, for our Malaysian domiciled members. It is for them, a precursor for transition in time to a Magistral Delegation, and eventually we hope to a Malaysian Lieutenancy.

Our Malaysian members impress with two virtues: charity to the poor and love of pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Government restraint on visas for Israel makes the Holy Land difficult for them to visit; they tend to organise their own short visits months ahead of departure. We endeavour to visit Penang annually, where the Council conducts a retreat/workshop for members and prospective candidates. We have also attended the pilgrimage centre of St Anne's Church and Shrine in Bukit Mertajam, where a mass for 3,000 to 5,000 attendees is not unusual. This exposes us to Catholics from all of Peninsular Malaysia.

Jack Gardner

Lieutenant for Australia Western

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