



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

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

## The opportunities of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in the American continent



**Interview with Vice Governor General Patrick Powers who describes the action of the Order in North America and tells more about his recent visit to Mexico, a Lieutenancy in his geographic area of responsibility.**

***What does it mean to be a Vice Governor General? How would you define the relationship between North America and the Holy Land?***

The responsibility of Vice Governors General is to oversee the Lieutenancies and the Magistral Delegations within the geographic area assigned to them. In North America, for which I am responsible, there are five Lieutenancies in Canada, nine Lieutenancies in United States and one Lieutenancy each in Puerto Rico and in Mexico. All together those Lieutenancies in North America account for about 50% of the membership worldwide. They also account for about 65% of the financial contributions raised for the Order worldwide.

***What are the principal challenges for the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in America?***

The main challenges in North America have to do with making other Catholics aware of the Order. We are well known to our members, but we are not well known to most Catholics. Most Catholics

have never heard about us because the work that we do is very visible in the Holy Land, but it is not very visible in our local communities.

It is important for us to attract younger members to the Order, as well. Members have to be at least 30 years old in order to join. We are looking for Catholics who have already shown their willingness to involve themselves in the activities of their parishes, their dioceses or other Catholic organizations, because that indicates they could also be willing and capable of supporting our mission as members of the Order.

Because of the nature of the Order and the financial contributions we ask from our members, sometimes it is difficult for younger people that are raising families to allocate money to causes such as ours. However we have to continue to try to bring younger members into the Order.

### ***What is the presence of the Order in Latin America?***

We have six Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations in Latin America right now: one in Argentina, one in Colombia, one in Venezuela, and three in Brazil. Mexico is technically in the North American area and it was the first Lieutenancy to be established in North America.

### ***What can the North learn from the South?***

It is a good question. The cultures are very different between the North and the South, and I think what strikes me when I visit Latin America, even when I visit Mexico, is the depth of the devotion that these people have to their faith, and in particular to the Blessed Virgin Mary as expressed in the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

I think that this deep and spiritual devotion is something that North Americans can really learn from our brothers and sisters of the South.

### ***Your Excellency, would you like to tell us an experience of one of your recent trips around America?***

In April, my wife and I were in Mexico where we are trying to rejuvenate and re-energize the Lieutenancy because until recently the members were without a Lieutenant for a number of years.

The first night we met with the members of the Order in Mexico City. After vespers with them, Deb and I went to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe with its rector, Monsignor Enrique Glennie. After 9 pm the *tilma* or image of Our Lady of Guadalupe that is stamped or fused onto the apron of Saint Juan Diego is retracted into the vault where it is locked and kept all night. Monsignor Glennie opened the vault, allowed us to go into it, and we spent half an hour in front of the *tilma*.

It was such a spiritual and moving experience. I sincerely felt I was standing, kneeling and praying in the presence of Our Lady. It was like she was physically present with me. I was so excited about having this opportunity and during mass the Sunday before I was think about what I would pray for when I was in front of Our Lady. A friend of mine with cancer came to my mind and I prayed for him. It was a wonderful time and I feel very grateful to have had that experience.

The devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is amazing. In 1531 she appeared to Juan Diego. At that time the priests in Latin America were converting maybe 30,000 indigenous people a year. In the 10 years after the apparition, 9 million people converted to Christianity. It was so inspiring to go there and experience their devotion.

Then we went to Morelia where we met with Cardinal Alberto Suárez Inda, archbishop of Morelia. We shared news of the Order with him and invited him to join the Order. Then, we went to Guadalajara and met with the members of the Order there who received us very warmly. We had vespers and then dinner together and they celebrated Saint Patrick's Day, my feast day, with me. They invited my wife and me to come back on October 12 and participate with them in the procession from the cathedral to the Basilica de Zapopan. We accepted their invitation with honor. It is a seven mile procession involving over one million people!

### ***Why did you decide to join the Order?***

I was acquainted with the Order because my mother and father are members. But that is not how I entered the Order. To enter the Order one has to be identified and nominated by two members of the Order who are not related to the candidate. What attracted me to the Order were the responsibilities of knighthood; the virtues of chivalry; and the mission of the Order. The mission of the Order inspired me because it serves the Church in the Holy Land of Jesus Christ, and we are called to serve people whose family roots go back that far. We do not want to see the Holy Land become a museum, we do not want it to be something that 'used to be', we want it to be something that is alive now and I think that it is a very worthwhile mission. We invite others that feel the same way to join us in our mission.

### **Interview by Mercedes de la Torre**

*(June 22, 2017)*

#### **OVERVIEW OF THE ORDER**

Worldwide the Order has approximately 28,000 Knights and Dames and they are organized into Lieutenancies, which represent the geographic areas around the world. Currently there are approximately 64 Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations.

The mission is really twofold. The first important part of the mission is the sanctification of the members, so our mission is to continue to develop the spiritual life of the members of the Order, and that is very, very important. Ongoing formation in the faith for example, worshiping together, doing corporal works of mercy.

The other part of the Order's mission stems from the charge given us by the Holy Father, which is to support the Church in the Holy Land, and we do that through the contribution of our members. For example, we provide about 85-90% of the financial resources for the operating expenses of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. We cover 100% of the running costs of the seminary; as for the more than 40 schools operated by the Latin Patriarchate we cover about 90% of their operating deficit, the difference between their expenses and tuition.

In addition to that, we support another 40-60 Catholic or Christian charitable institutions in the Holy Land each year, from hospitals and clinics to orphanages and homes for severely disabled people,

or institutes for the hearing impaired, as well as legal aid societies. We also support the building of houses or renovation work on convents, churches, and rectories, for example. And we support two universities: Bethlehem University which is in Palestine and the University of Madaba which is in Jordan.

**H.E. Patrick Powers**