

News



Letter

ORDO EQUESTRIS SANCTI SEPULCRI HIEROSOLYMITANI

THE KINGDOM IS COMING

Abbot Maximilian Fürnsinn, Grand Prior of Austria

*Just a few years ago we crossed the threshold of a new millennium.
The horizon of a new age is opening up before us:
we are on the doorstep of the Coming of the Kingdom.*

Sometimes there is an approach of threatening and overpowering clouds. The concerns of our time have very solemn names: the endangered environment, which threatens to overturn the earth's ecological balance; gene technologies with unforeseeable consequences that will determine how our world looks in future and are trying to decode the "secret of Man"; the threat of atomic catastrophe; the fear of terrorism, that brings sweat to the brow of even the strongest world centres of power; a world in decline which, in ten years has allowed 90 per cent of mankind to fall below the poverty line (and the other 10 per cent have nothing to laugh about).

Nor is there any sight of peace in Jesus's Holy Land, where rage and

terror, violence and revenge have become a spiralling course of madness.

Where do destruction and hate and poverty fit into the Coming? From these oppressive facts, it is certainly not easy to see the coming of God in our time. Yet we must trust that, in the dark of night, in cold and poverty, in hate and doubt, God is making a start – the start of a mighty love. In Bethlehem, God began with a poor, defenceless child in a humble manger. But that child bore all the names of hope that mankind was longing and waiting for: Prince of Peace, Light of the World, Saviour, "God is with us" – to mention only a few. Whoever trusts in this heavenly child will receive the gift of God's mighty love.

That's how God always starts. He doesn't come down like a bombshell. He takes inconspicuous but powerful steps. He always starts right at the very bottom. He always starts in the very heart of the world. He looks for tools that are often totally unsuitable: us! Belief in the Coming is just that: the power of God begins to shake us in dreams and visions; we long to believe in promises; our trust increases. Let the light shine in the dark! God wants His light to shine through you! Every good deed, every good word, every loving action accelerates the Coming of God to our world. The Coming is a heavenly adventure within us. All Comings are unbelievable – but they overcome reality and that fills us with hope!



Despite our statistics, it is a fact that the number and percentage of Christians is constantly falling. How much longer will Christians in the Holy Land even show up in the statistics?

THE CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

Attempt of a statistic for Israel and Palestine

In the course of the centuries the Mother-Church of Jerusalem has been dramatically diminishing in member numbers. Due to flowing socio-demographical situations it is rather impossible to raise exact numbers of membership in the thirteen Christian Churches present in the Holy Land. Thus the reader should keep in mind that most numbers are estimations. Often Church-leaders wont quote the number of its individual members, but the number of the families.

So it is up to you to estimate the average number of family-members and then multiply the given figure.

According to a census done by the Ottoman Empire, the Christian population in 1914 was 20% of the total population. This percentage is denied by others who accept the figure of 13%. If we accept an average percentage between the two figures, we will see the contrast with the present situation which sees the percentage of this small community dwindling dramatically to 2%.

According to a British source of the mid-nineties, the total number of Christians (great majority of Palestinian origin) in Israel is 115,000, in the Palestinian Territories 50,000 (2,500 in the Gaza Strip and 47,500 in the West Bank), whereas the total number of Palestinian Christians worldwide is estimated 400.000.

Two-thirds of Palestinian Christians have already left the region to live abroad

According to professor Sabella, a lecturer at Bethlehem University and expert in sociology, the best way to understand the diminishing Christian presence is, to project what the population would be with a conservative growth rate of 2 %. If the Christian Population had maintained a 2 percent growth rate from its pre-war population of about 145.000, by the year 2000 it should have reached about 420.000. That means that some 287.000 Palestinian Christians are living in the Diaspora or more than two times as many as

there actually are in lining in Israel and the Palestinian territories.” According to him if the Christian decline continues at this rate, Palestinian Christians as a demographic category “would represent a fraction of a percent of the population and become statistically unrecognisable”. Some examples can illustrate this reality. The number of Christians originally from Bethlehem and living in the States and South America are ten times more than the number living in Bethlehem area. This applies, to a less degree, to Ramallah Christians living in the States. Another example comes from Jerusalem. The population was 25.000 in 1948 but is now 11.000 only. The troubles which the city endured since 1948 and even before can explain this sad phenomenon.

Regional distribution and breakdown by the different Christian denominations

The 165.000 Christians living today in Israel and Palestine are distributed over the country as following:



In Israel – Galilee:

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| Latins: | 12.000 |
| Melchites: | 60.000 |
| Maronites: | 9.000 |
| Orthodox: | 35.000 |
| Protestants: | 3.000 |

**In Palestinian Territories
incl. Jerusalem:**

In the midst of the 20th century the vast majority of the Bethlehem-Jerusalem-area was Christian. But already before 1930 and in growing number in 1948 Christians emigrated, preferably to South America (Chile, Honduras). Today Christians emigrate to Jordan, other Arab countries and to Canada, U.S.A. and Australia, remaining only 50.000 Christians in the area.

Other Christian groups and uncertain estimates of Russian immigrants

In addition to the presence of the traditional Christian Churches there is the movement of the Messianic Jews, mainly of non-congregational protestant theological origin, divided in several groups with unknown number of members, but growing and working as missionaries among the Israeli Jews.

The Latin Church serves communities of Hebrew speaking Catholics in Beersheva, Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Jaffa of around 300 – 400 participants. The number of Jewish members is unknown.

Bethlehem (population 50,000): 11.000 Christians

| | |
|---|-------|
| Latins: | 4.500 |
| Greek Orthodox: | 3.100 |
| Syrian Orthodox: | 1.500 |
| Syrian Catholics, Armenians and Protestants: | 1.900 |

Beit Jala: (Population 12000) 7.350

(150 emigrants between 2000-2002)

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Latins: | 1.150 |
| Melchites: | 200 |
| Orthodox: | 6.000 |

Beit Sahour: (Population 14.000) 9.000**Ramallah (with some villages around): 10.000****Jerusalem: 11.500**

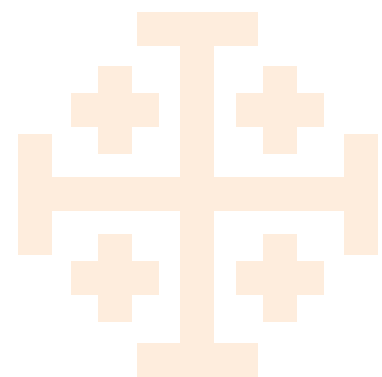
| | |
|--|-------|
| Latins: | 4.500 |
| Greek Orthodox: | 3.500 |
| Melchites, Syr.Cath., Syr.Orth., Maronites, Armenians, Protestants: | 3.500 |

Gaza: (Population 1,000.000) 2.000**Naplouse: (Population 100.000) 1.500**

A special phenomenon in the Christian world of the Holy Land are the Russian immigrants. From the more than one million a rather high percentage is not Jewish, but of Christian origin. Exact numbers are less available than for the Christians of other origin. There are estimations up to 400.000. But more official statements quote numbers between 180 and 200.000. The present problem for the Church and the Israeli State is the question of integration and pastoral care of the Russian Christians.

**Compiled by Fr. Bernt Besch and
Msgr William Shomali**

Latin Patriarchate, Jerusalem – December 2002



*Next big meeting of the Order:
14–17 October 2003.*

Documentation and organisation in line with the Constitution

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ORDER'S "CONSULTA"

Article 16 of the *Constitution of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem* establishes that the Order is directed and governed by the Cardinal Grand Master, assisted by the Grand Magisterium and the *Consulta* [or Council]. According to Article 28 (4), the Grand Master – who acts as its Chairman – must convene this constitutional body of the Order, called the *Consulta*, at least once every five years. As the name suggests, this body represents a form of consultation between the centre and the outlying branches of the Order, that is to say, between the Grand Magisterium and the individual Lieutenancies in the various countries, in order to discuss the main questions relating to the life and development of the Order around the world. On 25 March 2002, the Cardinal Grand Master decided to convene the next *Consulta* from 14 to 17 October 2003 (the last one was held in 1998) and appointed a special Commission with the task of “preparing the issues to be discussed and planning and organising the programme”. To form

this Commission, the Grand Master chose ten people from experienced members of the Order and appointed the “Assessore” of the Order as the Chairman.

Circular initiates proceedings

As the first step in preparation for the work of the *Consulta*, in February 2002 a circular was sent to all the members of the Grand Magisterium and to all the Lieutenants, Magistral Delegates and Grand Priors throughout the world, asking them to indicate a number of general points on matters of interest relating to the life of the Order, as well as practical suggestions that could usefully be proposed as fundamental issues to be discussed at the meeting in 2003. As a basis, they were asked to refer to the document entitled “*Guidelines for the Renewal of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem for the Third Millennium*”, which was discussed during the 1998 *Consulta* and, having taken into account the suggestions that arose during that event, was approved by the

Grand Master and published and distributed in various languages in 1999.

Five main issues

Thirty Lieutenants, often in collaboration with their respective Grand Priors and their Councils, have now put forward extremely useful suggestions, as have many members of the Grand Magisterium. The *Preparatory Commission for the Consulta 2003* has carefully analysed all the suggestions received and has selected a number of fundamental issues on which to formulate an “*instrumentum laboris*” (working document) to submit to the next meeting of the *Consulta*.

The issues are as follows:

1. Matters associated with the spirituality of the Order;
2. Matters associated with the image and development of the Order;
3. Questions relating to finance;
4. The subject of the Schools in the Holy Land;
5. In addition, the question of updating the 1999 edition of the above-mentioned “*Guidelines for the Renewal of the Order*”.



The members of the Commission are now working on these issues, except the one relating to the Schools in the Holy Land, which is being dealt with by the existing "Schools Commission".

Working document will be distributed in Spring 2003

The *Preparatory Commission for the Consulta 2003* will meet at the beginning of 2003 with the aim of completing as soon as possible the "*instrumentum*

laboris", which will cover all the issues being examined and will be sent to all those who intend to participate in the *Consulta* in October 2003, well enough in advance so that they have time to study it properly.

THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM 73 BORGO SANTO SPIRITO, ROME

As you approach St. Peter's along Via della Conciliazione, with Castel Sant'Angelo behind you, you reach, on the left, a little way before the square, the Hotel Columbus. This same building houses the offices of the Grand Magisterium, whose entrance is behind the hotel, at no. 73 Borgo Santo Spirito. Of the thousands of visitors to Rome – members of the Order included – how many know that? Only a minority of the Knights and Ladies are familiar with the Grand Magisterium, even though it is the Order's administrative headquarters for the whole world, where all the details of all the members are registered; and the source of the ideas that guide the activities of the Lieutenancies.

So, the Grand Magisterium is our Order's "Board of Directors",

composed of 16 members under the leadership of the Grand Master, Carlo Cardinal Furno, and the Governor General, Count Ludovico Carducci Arsenio. You can find all their names and functions on the Internet: www.oessg-gm.net. There are 10 office staff (including the doorman and drivers), whose work increases continually as the Order expands. Correspondence is carried out in three languages, with two more being understood. In the coming months, the staff will also have the job of preparing for the Consulta.

The Holy Land is not all the same

It is not only the administrative tasks that are increasing; the present situation in the Holy Land also obliges the Order to take on new commitments. For the majority of those who

belong to our Order, the term "Holy Land" implies unity. But the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, our Grand Prior, His Beatitude Mgr. Michel Sabbah, is responsible not only for the Catholics in Israel and Palestine, but also for those in Jordan. The conditions and requests for help from our brothers and sisters in faith differ in the various areas. In the West Bank and Gaza, something must be done to counter the immense misery caused by the conflict. In Jordan, the situation is completely different: the here, Government authorities insist that even private Catholic schools provide modern (and costly) education whereby all students must be taught to use computers. They also fix the teachers' salaries, which weigh heavily on the Education budget yet are hardly enough for most of the teachers to live on.



**Finance:
a never-ending problem**

that the Grand Magisterium has continually to face. Many Lieutenancies like to fund projects in the Holy Land, but then who is left to pay the running costs? It is very important that the Lieutenancy should pay those costs for a fixed period.

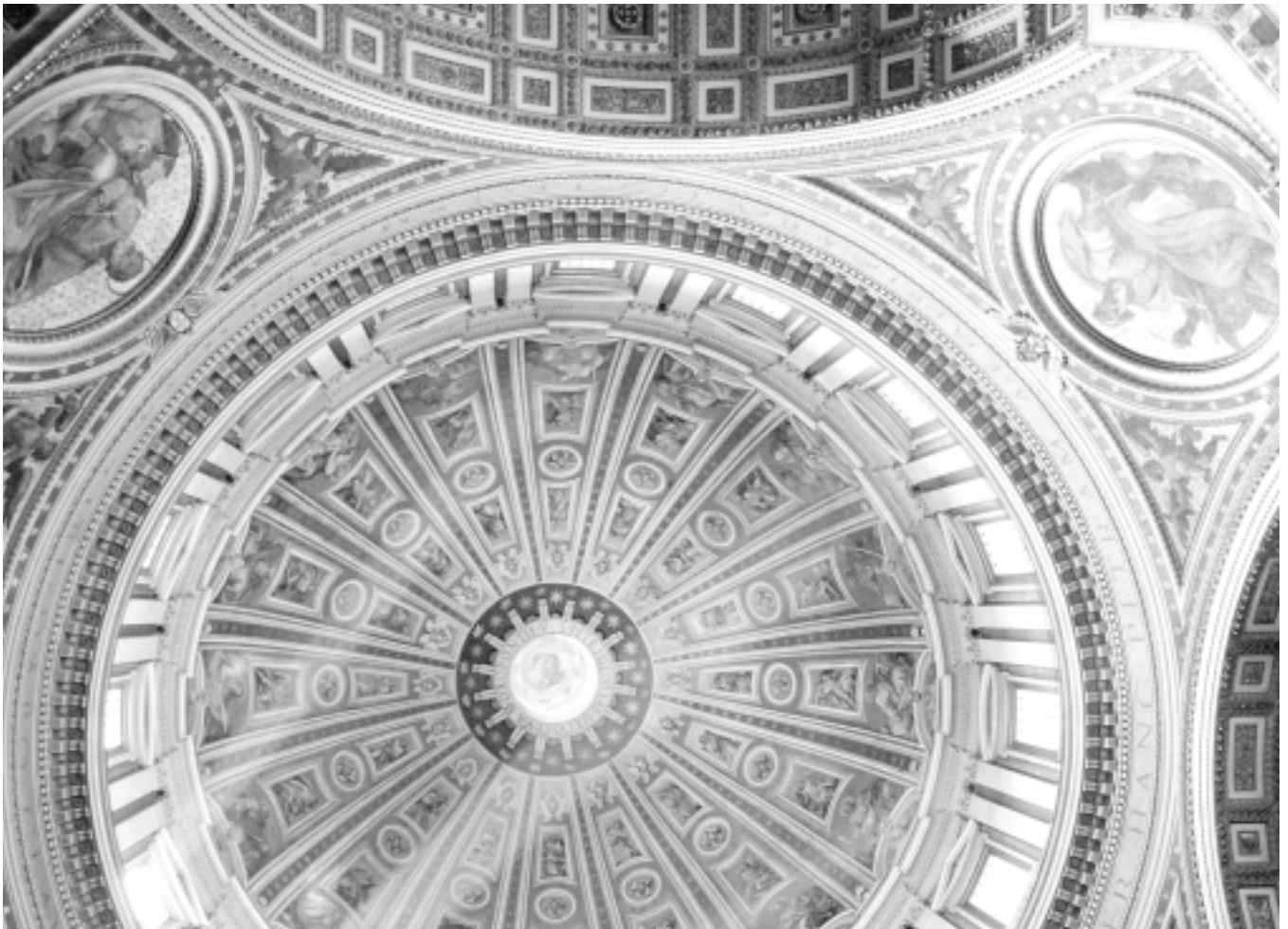
Swords into ... computers

Today's successors to the mediaeval knights use information technology. As well as coping with administrative tasks that grow from year to year, the Grand Magisterium has to provi-

de more and more information to the members about what is happening in the Holy Land. How do Christians live alongside members of other religions? What projects have already been completed or are in the pipeline? Does our aid reach the right place at the right time? It is to answer those questions that the Grand Magisterium has created the e-mail "Newsletter". This circular is transmitted electronically to all the Lieutenancies and they, in turn, take on the task of distributing it to their Sections. The Grand Magisterium is keen for every member of our Order to have an e-mail

address so that all can receive important information as soon as possible. The Order's "managers" also believe that many Knights and Ladies would be ready to give additional aid to the Christians in the Holy Land if they were sent up-to-the-minute news about their needs.

Anyone who reads this article and goes to Rome and walks along Via della Conciliazione on the way to St. Peter's should pause outside the Hotel Columbus and take time to remember that, behind those walls, beats the heart of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre.



*Methods employed for the
distribution of the Order's funds.
Approximately 6.5 million US Dollars
distributed each year.*

HELP WHERE IT'S NEEDED IN THE HOLY LAND

Over the last few years, the annual total contributed by Members has averaged approximately US \$ 6.5 million; this does not include special appeals (for example for Humanitarian Aid). The lion's share of this is allocated to the Latin Patriarchate, viz. US \$ 265,000 per month, totalling US \$ 3,180,000 per annum.

A major call on the money remaining is in respect of the creation of new schools and the constant need for repairs and maintenance. The decision on which Projects to select is secured through negotiations with the Latin Patriarchate (Mgr. William Shomali, General Administrator) and the Holy Land Commission (HLC), which was established by the Grand Magisterium for this purpose over ten years ago. Typically, until the last eighteen months when a moratorium was declared on new building, some US \$ 1,000,000 has been expended each year.

Humanitarian Aid added in May 2001 is still in operation

In the Meeting of the Grand Magisterium May 2001, an additional responsibility was lodged directly with the Holy Land Commission – to manage the distribution of Humanitarian Aid. Article 2.2 of the Constitution (1978) stipulated that while the Latin Patriarchate is in particular to be sustained, Institutions in general of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land with which the Order has traditional ties should receive aid. Accordingly, with the full co-operation of Mgr. Shomali, direct contact has been established with over fourteen “Catholic Organizations”, who meet on a monthly basis in the Patriarchate.

On a selected basis, the “Catholic Organizations” send through to the HLC a prioritised list of requests for Aid. Immediate

assessment is made by the HLC and a decision is reached, usually within twenty four hours, on what help is to be given; instructions are then issued for money to be sent to those judged in need of help.

In addition to this channel, the HLC receives numerous requests from other Agencies, as well as individuals. Many stories related are truly heart-wrenching from a humanitarian point of view, and it is becoming more and more difficult to apportion the relatively limited funds available.

Order channels funds through the experienced hands of the Solidarité Secretariat

In 1977, the Jerusalem Apostolic Delegation established the Solidarité Secretariat at the instigation of ROACO (Riunione Opere Aiuto Chiese Orientali) in Rome. This unit of church administra-



tion in the Holy Land has for many years been receiving block allocations of funds from various Bishop's Conferences, and has co-operated successfully in distributing monies as directed, for selected needs. In view of this satisfactory and proven system, the Grand Magisterium decided to function in a similar way, and thus cash is sent from Rome to be held in the accounts of the Secretariat in Jerusalem.

Over US \$ 1.1 million allocated to cases at 28 October – about US \$ 300,000 in reserve

The HLC was therefore instructed to direct the allocation of Humanitarian Aid through the Offices of the Solidarité Secretariat, currently directed by Fr. Pietro Felet fsc. This system has now been in operation since May 2001, with US \$1,151,340.70 having been distributed from the total of US \$1,484,842.74 sent from Rome to the Secretariat in

Jerusalem; these funds have been drawn from the donations received from Members, following the personal appeal of our Grand Master, Cardinal Carlo Furno, and it is the situation at the 28th October 2002.

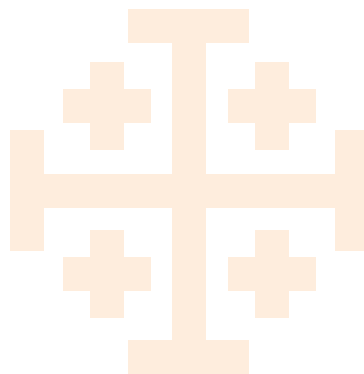
Generally, each allocation has been specific to individual and detailed needs, but due to recent difficulties with travel and communication, it has been necessary to modify in some instances the systems employed. This has in particular been in relation to medical needs and schemes for "Job Creation". In these cases, there has been an allocation of a credit holding within the Patriarchate, to be used in emergencies; full accountability is however maintained in terms of the purposes for which the funds are employed.

H.E. Robert H. Benson
Member of the Grand Magisterium:

No Christian child should miss out on Christian education because of poverty

One area that is giving rise to increased concern is the question of assistance to families to meet school and University fees. As it happens, there is considerable assistance for this need from outside sources, in particular Germany and the United States. The overall situation is, however, complex, particularly in relation to ensuring that there is an equitable distribution of resources. The overriding principle is to ensure that no Christian child fails to secure a Christian education because of an inability to pay its fees.

While the amount of Humanitarian Aid distributed to date is considerable, it will be no surprise that there is still an enormous need that has not yet been met; every effort must therefore be made, not only to maintain previous donations but to increase them.



*Over 12,000 Knights and Ladies in North America,
i.e. about 55 % of the Worldwide Membership.*

THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM IN NORTH AMERICA

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in North America is alive active and motivated. There are nine Lieutenancies in the United States, five in Canada, including a Magistral Delegation, and one each in Mexico and Puerto Rico.

Late in 2002, the North American Lieutenants welcomed the addition of four new Lieutenants. They are: Their Excellencies Patrick Powers, Western Lieutenancy, Joseph Spinnato, Eastern Lieutenancy, Enrique Vazquez, Jr., Puerto Rico Lieutenancy, and John Piunno, Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy.

We are pleased to express our sincere thanks in this international journal to the retiring Lieutenants for their years of generous service and the many accomplishments that are well known not only in their own Lieutenancies but in our total community.

The retiring Lieutenants are:

James McGlone,
Western Lieutenancy

Martin Moran,
Eastern Lieutenancy

Dr. Luis Sala,
Puerto Rico Lieutenancy

Dr. Edmund Pellegrino,
Middle Atlantic Lieutenancy

The proposal for the establishment of a North American Foundation approved in Chicago in May of 2002 awaits the acceptance of the Grand Magisterium. Delegates/coordinators have been appointed in a number of Lieutenancies. The key professionals, one in California and one in Massachusetts, are ready to activate the program. A major requirement will be a three or four year forecast of school needs. The Schools Commission has been requested to supply the forecast.

Also awaited is the Grand Magisterium acceptance of the North American Lieutenants' proposal to reactivate an earlier application for designation as an N G O, Non Government Organization, in the organization of the United Nations.

The plan to cooperate with other agencies in North America that support the Holy Land was implemented in response to an initiative of the United States Bishops Conference. The U S Bishops Conference initiated a request for funds for the Holy Land through the U S Bishops. The Bishop's Conference recommend the funds go directly to: Catholic Near East, The Bishops Relief, The Holy Land Foundation, Ecumenical Holy Land Foundation and The Order of the Holy Sepulchre. We co-operated with the staff of the Bishops Conference on the wording of the appeal. In conversation with those who have called us in response to the appeal, we have highlighted the support of schools and especially the work of our School Commission. The callers, although few were unaware of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and they were impressed with the history, size of the Order, and its commitment. This was an important outreach.

The Justice and Peace Commission of the United State Lieutenants is active with members in contacting and visiting with elected Repre-



representatives and staff members in Washington to stress the position of the Vatican regarding the Holy Land and to make the Representatives aware of the conditions of the Palestinians and the Palestinian Catholics. The delegations have been well received. All are encouraged to do more. The Representatives of the Justice and Peace Commission in the Lieutenancy are very active in support of the communication program.

His Beatitude Michel Sabbah was honored by the Knights of Columbus with the presentation of the GAUDIUM ET SPES Award. The award was presented by Mr. Carl Anderson, the Supreme Knight, at a dinner in Washington, D.C. The Supreme Officers, Directors and past Supreme Knight were present as well as the Supreme Chaplain Bishop Thomas Daily, Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore and Cardinal McCarrick of Washington, D.C. H.E. George T. Ryan, Vice Governor General of the Order, represented the Grand Magisterium at the event. Supreme Knight Anderson praised the leadership of His Beatitude and his tireless effort for the Church in the Holy Land and presented His Beatitude with

a check for \$100,000 that is part of the Award and another \$100,000 representing the earning on a fund set aside by the Knights of Columbus to benefit the Latin Patriarchate.

By agreement with the North American Lieutenants, a more timely and comprehensive reporting and fund transfer procedure has been adopted. The Lieutenants have committed to an Annual Financial audit with a large percentage of the reports received in 2002 for 2001. The financial reports of the Grand Magisterium are now audited annually by the Vatican Auditor and they have been certified.

The Lieutenants have committed to speed up the transfer of funds to Rome and reserve only the minimum funds needed for operating expenses. They have also agreed to a maximum withholding based on the number of active members. A procedure manual prepared a few years ago by H.E. Russell Kendall, Vice Governor Emeritus, is a useful supplement to the Constitution and the Guidelines. A few updates are needed and especially a standard chart of accounts is needed with a descrip-

tion of the function of the accounts so that all Lieutenants account and report in a consistent and coordinated manner. The standardization is recommended for the worldwide Order.

The Rome office publishes information quarterly to the Lieutenants on receipt of funds. It is expected that a reorganization of the data and a more timely reporting to all Lieutenancies is planned.

The year 2002 marked the following anniversaries for North American Lieutenancies:

| | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Canada | 120 th |
| Mexico | 95 th |
| U S A | 76 th |
| Puerto Rico | 20 th |

Dr. Luis Sala, who retired this year, served the Order in Puerto Rico as Magistral Delegate and then Lieutenant for the whole history of the Order in Puerto Rico. Thank you Dr. Sala. Thank you also to Lady Julia who supported Dr. Sala during his long tenure.

There are now over 12,000 Knights and Ladies in North America. About 55% of the Worldwide Membership.

Published by the

**GRAND MAGISTERIUM OF THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER
OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM
00120 Vatican City**

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