

# JERUSALEM CROSS

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## Message from the Grand Master

### THE INNER MOTIVATION OF EVERY KNIGHT AND DAME

The liturgical celebration of Easter, just held, invites us to once again fix our gaze on the mystery of Christ's resurrection, because, as the Pope Saint John Paul II said to the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem on the occasion of the Holy Year in 2000, the glory of the resurrection is *"the focal point"* of our spirituality. He went on to add: *"this requires careful reflection on the Catechism and the Bible, a serious review of life and generous apostolic zeal."* ([Address to the participants in the Jubilee of the Order, March 2, 2000](#)).

Easter, every Easter is always a message of renewal for us. It is not very different from what the Most High asked of His 'chosen' people at the beginning of Revelation: *"Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy"* (Lv 19:1); words echoed by Jesus

when he taught: *"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Mt 5:48). The holiness of God belongs to us by grace, a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, by offering his life, on Easter

Jesus establishes in himself a new Covenant between God and the human being; a Covenant that transcends the ancient one and that has opened the election, once reserved for Israel, to include all peoples of all places and times, according to the beautiful expression of Saint Peter: *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism"* (Acts 10:34).

These words tell us that, as members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, we are invited to generously accept biblical teaching, more than anyone else, by virtue of our choice of life in the Order. This is our 'home' where we are



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*Official portrait of the Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, His Eminence Cardinal Fernando Filoni.*

# CONTENTS

## The Order in Union with the Universal Church

THE RESTITUTION OF TIME AND INCLUSIVE  
THINKING III

## Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

THE ORDER WELCOMES OUR NEW  
GRAND MASTER DURING WINTER 2020 VI

THE VIRTUAL SPRING MEETING  
OF THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM VII

A NEW SECTION ON THE ORDER'S  
INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE XII

## The Order and the Holy Land

THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE LATIN  
PATRIARCHATE AND THE CUSTOS FACED  
WITH CLOSURE OF THE HOLY SITES XIII

AN UPDATE ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19  
FROM THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE XV

BEIT SAHOUR AND PARISH LIFE DURING  
QUARANTINE XVII

HOW THE HEALTH CRISIS IS CREATING  
A PROBLEM TO SCHOOL FINANCES XIX

## The Life of the Lieutenancies

THE LIFE OF THE ORDER DURING  
THE GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS XXI

A DAME OF THE ORDER IN SOCIETY  
AND IN THE CHURCH XXIII



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We would like to clarify that, in this issue, the photos depicting groups of people were taken before the pandemic.

happy to be. Otherwise, we are reminded of the words of the Lord, who, horrified by the fact that the sacred Temple of God in Jerusalem had become a market, drove "buyers and sellers" out, in order not to make "my Father's house a market place" (Jn 2:16). Very strong expressions.

With our biblical and ecclesiological spirituality, which is founded on Sacred Scripture and in line with the teaching of the Church, we make this zeal for the 'house of God' ours. We do this first of all through authenticity of life and by taking on our concrete responsibility to actively commit to fostering a better society, both where we live (diocese, parish, family, workplace, political and social life), and towards the Holy Land.

Our participation in the Order, in fact, aims to clothe us completely, in body and spirit, in the One in whom we died, were buried and rose again: Baptism is the

sacrament that accomplishes this, while belonging to the Order is a significant expression of this.

A distinctive feature of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is therefore a life, a spirituality in which each Dame and Knight assumes that Christian identity which allows them to be witnesses of Christ, friends of the Bridegroom, continuers of the work of Jesus who "went around doing good because God was with him" (Acts 10:38); finally, it makes us convinced and sincere ambassadors of peace and good (Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, 5 December 2008).

May Mary, silent and certain witness of the resurrection of her Son, accompany us in our spiritual growth as a good Mother.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**



## The Order in Union with the Universal Church

# THE RESTITUTION OF TIME AND INCLUSIVE THINKING

*During the pandemic, where relationships have been taken away from us, we need them restored to us. But how? Just as before? Cardinal Filoni guides us in the following reflection.*

It is not true that the four big clocks are there, silent; two on the external facade of St. Peter's Basilica and two behind it, within it. They ask us: What are you looking at? What interests you? The time of day, or Time itself? The question is unavoidable, both for those who believe and for those who do not believe.

To think is divine! It is a gift for man. God, creating, taught us to think, thus rendering the human being 'similar' to Himself; but He also taught us to reflect, that is, to think with discernment; reflection is human. The Eternal One himself 'had seen' that what had been created "was good" (*Genesis 1:4ff*). He then taught us to give things a 'name'. Today we would say that this was a harmonizing gesture; highly environmental. To lose the name of things is to pollute; it is to lose the relationship with the beauty of creation. It goes against God!

Even for those who do not believe, to think remains a noble act. The history of thought is infinite; sociologically it is of no interest to know if he who thinks is rich or poor!

But will thinking end with human beings? Will all thought return to God, or will it vanish into nothingness? *Non omnis moriar*: I will not die entirely, thought Horace (*Odi*, III, 30, 6). But, perhaps he was referring to the fame gained by his verses. This however does not change the question. To think over time remains an act, an anthropological itinerary; it is a continuous search for self and meaning. Reflecting on God is a

*The pandemic has brought us back to the essential questions of life and our thoughts have often turned to God.*



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theological thinking; it is the continuous search for 'anOther' relationship, even if it happens over time.

Job knew well that he had a problem with his ontological, existential nakedness and with God: "[He] tore his cloak and cut off his hair. He fell to the ground and worshiped. He said, "Naked I came forth from my mother's womb, and naked shall I go back there." (*Job 1:20-21*); it was the nakedness of being and of his thinking, profound, beyond the reach of it all, and of that for which he felt himself a victim; without an answer. These were matters pertaining to his life, his children, and the things belonging to him. The answers of the self-righteous in search of the causes for his disgrace were of no interest to him.

Qoheleth, pseudonym of the son of David, king of Israel, was considering to "search and investigating in wisdom all things that are done under the sun. [Coming to the conclusion] A bad business God has given to human beings to be busied with." (*Ecclesiastics 1:12-13*). And he





*The images of an empty Saint Peter's Square were a source of shock during the pandemic, making us aware of our vulnerability.*

was not wrong, it will be said; but asked in this way, did the question not seem rather decadent, pessimistic?

Thinking implies having relationships with others; implies inclusiveness. Otherwise, everything is meaningless. Pascal made it the *a priori* postulate as a proper ontological act; it was the first step. After him, we too, consciously or unknowingly, appeal to it. By becoming aware of oneself, one either closes in on oneself (and this doesn't make sense) or open oneself up. To the other? In fact, we think because we are in relationships. And this thinking needs to express itself, to reach the other, to enter a relationship. Nobody thinks, except to speak and communicate. All nature communicates in an interconnected way. We discover this in ecology, that is, in the context of the "common home" and we see its terrible consequences, when this does not happen. John Paul II said it already and Pope Francis referred to: "*Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us.*" (*Laudato si'*, 5).

Are languages not a barrier? Yes, but small, low. They are not unsurmountable walls; the Great Wall in China has never prevented invasions and is now 'reduced' to a tourist attraction, which is a form of communication; the Berlin Wall was solid, but did not prevent attempts to overcome it, that is, to communicate; the Wall that divides Israel and Palestine is crossed by modern media (and, alas! sometimes by violence!).

To kill is to prevent the other from

thinking; it is to interrupt communication. This leads to the uniform of thought, or to an elusive fluidity; that is, not to think, not to reflect. It is diabolical! Destruction is diabolical! To remain with a few recent events: did the bloody and terrible war between Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka not begin by the burning of the Jaffna Library (1981),

one of the largest in Asia with its 97 thousand books and manuscripts in Tamil, Pali and Sanskrit? Did not the occupation of Baghdad lead to the burning of the National Library (2003), when ashes rained on the city for three days? I remember the two events well, I was there. And what about the destruction of museums, archaeological sites of the present-day devastations by the fanaticism of the so-called Islamic State? U. Eco and J. C. Carrière taught us not to hope to be liberated of books and, I would add, of art and 'of not thinking'.

"Time" defines us as humans; but the "Now" connects us to the Eternal, to the Most High. However, these are two independent traits: the first tells us that God has no time, but has entered it; the second tells us that the gaze is to be raised "Beyond". The same dial, two hands: one a chronometer, in movement, the other eternally immobile.

St. John, in the Prologue of his Gospel, explains to us how things are theologically: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*"; as light He came into the world, He was "*the true light, which enlightens everyone*" (*John 1:1ff*). The Son of God, who was "*Beyond*" time, becomes incarnate and enters time. Benedict XVI (in *Jesus' childhood*) writes that there was a lot of curiosity about Jesus: "*Where are you from?*" asks Pilate; Pilate was tormented because he could not escape the impression that man had left upon him. In truth, the question had been posed even before Pilate: by Nathanael, in Nazareth by perplexed



fellow citizens, by the Sanhedrin, by Herod Antipas, and, finally, by Peter in Caesarea Philippi.

If thinking is a gift from God, we cannot flee from it and must ask ourselves: What will our future be even after COVID-19? We are obliged to rethink the so-called 'modern' acquisitions: I am referring to respect for unborn life, to the elderly often 'relegated' to the so-called RSAs (Healthcare Residences),

to the poor, to the immense slums that surround the large metropolises, to migrants, to refugees, to the plundering of raw materials in continents and countries with economic difficulties, and finally to the nature of which we are a part. All this I have seen and encountered in fifty years of ministry in service of the Church. Everything concerns us in an inclusive thinking.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

## "AN EVEN WORSE VIRUS: INDIFFERENT SELFISHNESS"

On April 19, Divine Mercy Sunday, the Holy Father celebrated mass close to Palazzo della Rovere, in the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, where members of the Grand Magisterium of the Order regularly pray and the new Grand Master presided at his first public liturgy on taking office.

In this Roman sanctuary of Mercy, Pope Francis evoked a danger related to the end of the pandemic. "The risk is that we will be struck by an even worse virus, that of indifferent selfishness," he warned, calling for a momentum of solidarity. "The present pandemic, however, reminds us that there are no differences or borders between those who suffer. We are all frail, all equal, all precious. May we be profoundly shaken by what is happening all around us: the time has come to eliminate inequalities, to heal the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family!", he vigorously insisted as a progressive easing of restriction measures was considered. During the long and dramatic weeks of the health crisis, the Pope accompanied and supported us spiritually. An article available on our website [www.oessh.va](http://www.oessh.va) allows us to re-read the salient points of his pastoral teaching.



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Order of the Holy Sepulchre

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Order of Malta

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## Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

# THE ORDER WELCOMES OUR NEW GRAND MASTER DURING WINTER 2020

**C**ardinal Fernando Filoni, appointed Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre by Pope Francis on December 8 last, was welcomed to the Palazzo della Rovere, headquarters of the Grand Magisterium, on January 16, 2020. On that day, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, his predecessor, returned the insignia of Knight of the Collar during a ceremony attended by the highest authorities of the Order – starting from Lieutenant General Agostino Borromeo, from Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone and from Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli – as well as

various personal guests of Cardinal Filoni who had collaborated with him in his previous assignment. A few days later, the new Grand Master presided over a mass in the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia to begin his new mission in prayer, in the presence of the members of the Grand Magisterium, the Lieutenants of Italy and numerous members of the Order. The Order's annual magazine, the *Jerusalem Cross* – which you can find on our official website [www.oessh.va](http://www.oessh.va) – has a special ten-page report on the reception of the Grand Master.



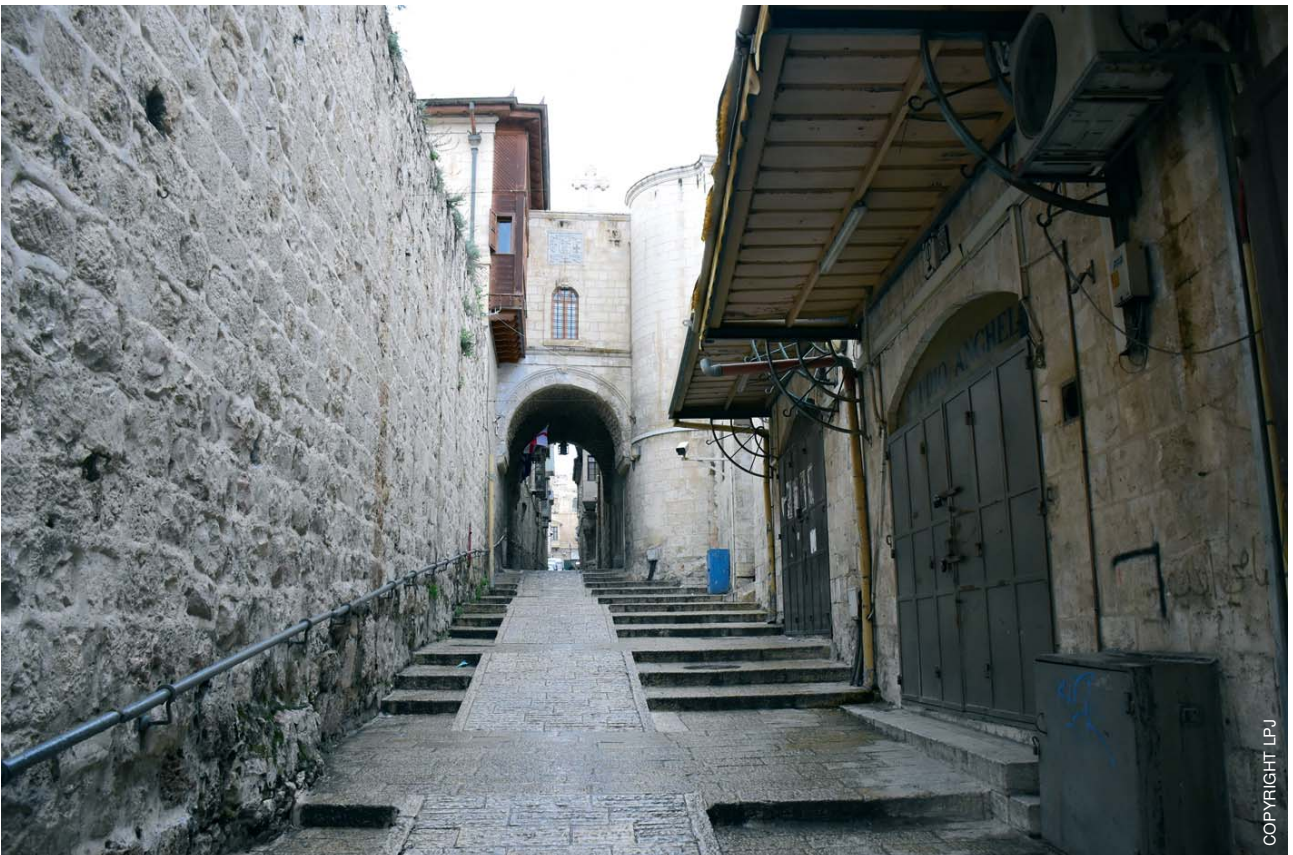
Official welcome of Cardinal Fernando Filoni to Palazzo della Rovere on January 16, 2020.



## THE VIRTUAL SPRING MEETING OF THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM

The Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium, the first to be chaired by the new Grand Master, His Eminence Cardinal Fernando Filoni, should have taken place on April 21-22, with its customary pattern and agenda. As in the past, the two-day working session would have started with a Holy Mass in Palazzo della Rovere. The meetings would have taken place in the building of the Pontifical Council for Culture, with simultaneous translation in Italian, French and English; after the meetings and during the working luncheons the members of the Grand Magisterium would have exchanged informal opinions and evaluations.

Circumstances linked to the coronavirus pandemic have forced us to change all this. Since meetings in person were impossible, we met virtually. It was deemed advisable to keep the traditional agenda and each speaker was asked to send the text of his intervention by April 21. The following days were left to comments and remarks. The meeting therefore took place at distance, in accordance with the current provisions, but has however revealed a number of advantages. First of all, the interventions that in the past were recorded by the secretariat, and sometimes simply delivered of the cuff, are now available with specific and thought-over texts, in their original



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*Due to the pandemic, which also affected the Holy Land, the Spring meeting of the Grand Magisterium was held virtually.*



*Assistance to education in the Holy Land is a priority for the Order now more than ever.*

by the Grand Master, the wish for a productive meeting in the Autumn was expressed.

Preparation for the meeting should include the submission of written proposals by each member, in the belief that the Grand Magisterium should have a more active role in determining the Order's future strategies.

I then intervened, in my capacity of Governor General, summing up the Order's activities over the last six months,

form, providing useful documentation that can be easily circulated. Furthermore, our virtual meeting has drastically reduced the costs in travel and accommodation costs for participants, for simultaneous translation and rental of space, which in a time of funding shortages, and of the need to convey every possible resource to the Holy Land, makes a difference.

The warmth of a direct meeting was of course lacking, all the more sadly in the light of the change of our Grand Master, who would have wished, attending the meeting for the first time, to personally get to know the confrères entrusted with the strategic direction of the activities of the Order, to reach a deeper communication, to listen to their evaluations, and offer them encouragement with his own reflections.

Certainly the next meeting of the Grand Magisterium, hopefully in the coming Autumn, will afford the opportunity to allow for this aspect and – according to the intentions of the Grand Master – should even be extended over three days, in order to allow the direct and deeper discussion which was not possible this time.

In the various written contributions, beginning with the initial welcome address

underlining both its dynamic and correct management, at a time when our normative framework is under review in the new Statute, and the awaited restructuring of Palazzo della Rovere is under way.

The presentation given by the Apostolic Administrator, Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa deserves particular mention. He provided a clear analysis of the situation in the Holy Land, in terms of the current health crisis and political problems (with specific criticism of the American Peace Plan). He also outlined measures taken to cover the debts of the Patriarchate.

In the same line the Chief Executive Officer of the Patriarchate, Dr. Sami El-Yousef presented the administrative data and those concerning the running of the schools in a detailed report. The report revealed how, even under the current circumstances and also thanks to the Order's support, the Patriarchate is able to guarantee the wages of 1850 employees and over 100 ecclesiastics as well as financial aid to a number of Christian families left without an income because of the pandemic, and to face the difficulties of virtual schooling being offered to children online.

The Assessor, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo,





focused on the ongoing review of the Statute, a task he was entrusted with at the beginning of his mandate and which he has pursued with notable energy. The review is being carried out in close contact with the Cardinal Grand Master, and the process will resume once the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus are lifted allowing for the final series of meetings with the Secretariat of State.

The enhanced role in terms of coordination and support taken on by the four Vice Governors was evident in their respective reports.

The Vice Governor General for Asia and the Pacific, Paul Bartley, expressed inevitable regret for the forced cancellation of the visit by Cardinal O'Brien which had been planned for January last, due to his replacement. He also spoke of the vitality of the Order in his area, namely in Malaysia, Philippines and New Zealand.

Thomas Pogge, Vice Governor General for Northern America, reported on the effort undertaken in this area to spread the message of the Order in the best possible way and to promote pilgrimages to the Holy Land. It will be impossible to hold the area meeting planned in Los Angeles for June. This will instead be replaced by a video conference in an attempt to be equally effective and open as in the past meetings of these Lieutenancies.

The problems of the European Lieutenancies were outlined by Vice Governor General Jean-Pierre de Glutz Ruchti who has, when needed, acted as deputy participating in meetings and Investitures representing the Governor General when I could not attend, carrying out important missions in countries such as Ireland and Poland, bringing them the support and closeness of the Grand

Magisterium.

The report by Enric Mas, the newly appointed Vice Governor General for Latin America, was particularly interesting: his missions in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and in other countries of Central America, his contacts with other very active Lieutenancies, such as Colombia, and his plans to expand in the Latin American continent – in close coordination with the Vatican Secretariat of State – form one of the most important and innovative aspects of recent months.

The budget of the Order, submitted by the Treasurer, Dr. Saverio Petrillo, illustrated a correct and well-balanced management and an increasing allocation of funds to the Holy Land. The budget shows a surplus of

6,853.60 Euros, achieved thanks to the contributions from the Lieutenancies, amounting to 14,743,685.77 Euros, with an increase of 1,461,190.67 Euros from the previous budget. We have therefore been able to send 14,106,087.34 Euros to the Holy Land, 1,805,125.76 Euros more than in 2018.

Dr. Petrillo, in his capacity as chairman of the

Economic-Financial Commission, briefly reported on the management of the Order's resources and on the criteria of their investment.

Ambassador Alfredo Bastianelli, as Chancellor, has provided the statistical figures of the Order, confirming roughly a membership around 30.000 units. He singled out the efforts of some Lieutenancies in encouraging the participation of young people in the Order's activities, a subject which is particularly dear to the Grand Master.

In his second report, as chairman of the Commission for the Review of the protocol rules, Ambassador Bastianelli described the changes introduced, on the initiative of

***The Grand  
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*The president of the Grand Magisterium's Holy Land Commission highlighted the missions carried out in favour of the projects of the Latin Patriarchate, especially in the area of youth formation.*

Cardinal Filoni, in the liturgy of the Investiture ceremonies, changes that conform to a greater spiritual sensibility, which is also deeply felt by the Holy Father.

The team work of the Grand Magisterium was underscored by the reports of the other commissions set up by the Grand Master to support the task of the Governor General.

The work of the Juridical Commission is particularly relevant as outlined by its chairman, Flavio Rondinini J.D, and focused mainly on comparing the statutes of the various Lieutenancies as well as sensitive issues such as disciplinary measures and tax benefits.

The vital contribution of the Spiritual Commission, chaired by the Master of Ceremonies, Msgr. Fortunato Frezza, was greatly appreciated. The report dwelt on complying with the reflections introduced by the Grand Master on the training of candidates, the rationalization of liturgical ceremonies, the enhancement of the spiritual commitment also through an increased attendance to parish activities, participations in pilgrimages, as well as on the role of ecclesiastics acting as chaplains.

The report from the International Commission for Palazzo della Rovere, chaired by Vice Governor General Jean-Pierre de Glutz Ruchti, was of a more technical nature. The Vice Governor has the delicate task of counseling the Grand Master on all of the activities involving the repossession, clearance, restoration, ensuring compliance with health and safety standards, consolidating and renovating the

premises of the palace to be used as hotel, and in the choice of the future tenant.

The report by the president of the Holy Land Commission, Professor Bartholomew McGettrick, was also very detailed in view of the missions carried out to follow the projects of the Patriarchate, the management of the schools and seminaries, the outcome of pastoral activities and the effectiveness of humanitarian aid.

Finally the Lieutenant General, Prof. Agostino Borromeo, submitted two reports: the first in his capacity as chairman of the Commission for the Third International Pilgrimage of the Order to Lourdes, planned for June 2021, where the preparations that he is overseeing are described in detail; the second in his capacity as Chairman of the Commission for the Consulta 2018, updating the Grand Magisterium on the work to draft the final document, which is also awaiting the approval of the new Statute.

The reports to the Grand Magisterium ended with the contributions of the persons in charge of two offices working in close coordination on the information about the Order and on the promotion of its image and fundraising: the Communications Service and the Office for External Relations.

Dr. François Vayne, in charge of the former, reported on the various communication initiatives in progress, such as the "Grand Master's Corner" on the website, the videos, the plan for a documentary on the presence of the Order in the Holy Land, the interviews with television and in the press.



Dr. Marcella Scotto di Vettimo, responsible for external relations, described the different activities carried out in 2019 at Palazzo della Rovere, aimed at boosting the Order's visibility and encouraging fundraising for its charitable activities.

In short we can safely assume that the Coronavirus emergency has not interrupted the activities of the Grand Magisterium. On the contrary, it has stimulated its commitment: the results of the virtual

meeting, translated in different languages, will provide the Lieutenancies with subjects for reflections and encouragement for the future and with useful references and incentives for Knights, Dames and Ecclesiastics belonging to the Order worldwide, to the benefit of their charitable activities in the Holy Land and the support for the Christians who live there.

**Leonardo Visconti di Modrone**  
*Governor General*

## REMEMBERING FRA' GIACOMO DALLA TORRE DEL TEMPIO DI SANGUINETTO, 80<sup>TH</sup> GRAND MASTER OF THE ORDER OF MALTA

*After expressing the condolences of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre to the authorities of the Order of Malta, following the death of their Grand Master on April 29, Cardinal Fernando Filoni recalls a recent meeting with "Fra' Giacomo" and entrusts his soul to the prayers of the Knights and Dames of our Order.*

Recently I had the opportunity to meet with the late Grand Master and exchange some considerations with him especially on delicate situations in the Middle East and our collaboration in charity projects, finding him both affable and attentive.

Faced with the death of such a distinguished personality, the words uttered by a 'man of God', Job, come to mind. In the face of the mystery of life and death, he said with sentiments of deep faith: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (*Job 1:21*).

We cannot fail to mention Fra 'Giacomo's cultural preparation and his marked propensity for good, qualities that he was able to put at the service of the high institution to which he was elected, as Prince and Grand Master, just two years ago, and, at the same time, the service rendered to civil and ecclesiastical entities always with deep dedication.

Personally, I remember him with great respect for his humanity and spirituality and recommend him to the prayer of the Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.



*The Grand Master of the Order of Malta had honoured the spiritual evening organized during the Consulta of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, in 2018, with his presence, attending the sacred oratory in homage to Blessed Bartolo Longo, composed for the occasion.*

**Cardinal Fernando Filoni**  
*Grand Master*



## A NEW SECTION ON THE ORDER'S INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE

One of Cardinal Fernando Filoni's first initiatives was to seek a broad dialogue with the members of the Order through a new section on our official website, the "Grand Master's corner". "Upon my arrival at the Order as Grand Master, I wanted to reflect on how I can be present not only at central offices and occasionally at Investitures, but also relate more closely to you," he wrote, presenting this novelty on the site. "I would like to create initiatives through our existing means of communications to enter into dialogue by listening to your questions and offering food for thought," he added, specifying that he awaits questions about our Order and its life, about the Church, Christian life and commitment in the Holy Land. It is thus possible for everyone to send a short letter

to the Grand Master, to the address [fcf@oessh.va](mailto:fcf@oessh.va) or by post to the address of the Grand Magisterium (OESSH-00120 Vatican). "To communicate is to get involved, to dialogue is to get to know each other, to talk is to grow in mutual respect," concludes the cardinal. Various responses of the cardinal have already been published online, one regarding the Investiture ceremony, the other on interest in politics in the Holy Land and, one last, published in May, on the place of young people in the Order.



*The question of welcoming young people into the Order is addressed by the Grand Master in an article published in May 2020 on the official website of the Grand Magisterium (our photo: young pilgrims from the Lieutenancy of France in the Holy Land).*

### To be noted

**The Holy See has announced the postponement of the Budapest International Eucharistic Congress – initially scheduled for next September and in which many members of the Order wished to participate – in September 2021. Waiting for that date, let us remember in prayer the team that was tasked with preparing this ecclesial event.**

### A PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES FROM JUNE 17 TO 21, 2021

**D**uring the Autumn 2019 meeting of the Grand Magisterium, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien announced an international pilgrimage of the Order to Lourdes in June 2021. The new Grand Master has wished to support this project, which is being organized by Lieutenant General Agostino Borromeo together with a committee. Registrations will open next summer through a dedicated website that will be communicated to members once the pandemic has been consigned to memory. In the meantime, it is important to note the dates of this great pilgrimage on your agenda: from June 17 to 21, 2021. All members of the Order, their families and friends are invited to participate!



## The Order and the Holy Land

# THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE AND THE CUSTOS FACED WITH CLOSURE OF THE HOLY SITES

**D**ue to the health crisis, strict security measures were taken by the Israeli government which led to the closure of the holy sites in the Holy Land, in particular the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre which had remained open at the beginning of the pandemic. This event has caused profound distress among the people of God, especially since the doors of the Holy Sepulchre had not been closed since 1349, at the time of the black plague. On Palm Sunday, making a symbolic gesture of hope despite the sadness of the moment, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate, decided to bless the Holy City with a relic of the Cross, from Dominus

Flevit, a church located on the Mount of Olives that recalls the tears shed by Jesus while looking at Jerusalem. Msgr. Pizzaballa, Pro Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, was accompanied by the Custos of the Holy Land, Father Francesco Patton, a Franciscan and various religious leaders with whom they prayed that this blessing "ideally embrace the whole world". During Holy Week, when even access to the Upper Room for the celebration of Holy Thursday was forbidden, Msgr. Pizzaballa had beautiful and profound words on the consequences of this epidemic in our lives. "It would be an understatement to read this moment of limitations, this common battle only as an



*Blessing and prayer over the Holy City, during the Coronavirus pandemic.*





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*Archbishop Pizzaballa - Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate - states that "tomorrow will depend on the novelty of the relationships we are starting to build now." The relationship with others depends very much on what we establish with God.*

attempt to save our lives. This is a battle that we will lose sooner or later," he said. "We are rather called to commit ourselves to create a new world, which has its invincible beginning in the Risen One and its model in free and gratuitous love," he concluded, underlining how "tomorrow will depend on the novelty of the relationships that we begin to build now." In his homily for Easter, Msgr. Pizzaballa highlighted the fact that, having been forced by the epidemic to close the holy sites, prayer has become more intense and regular in

families. Sometimes, he made it clear, we forget that the Church is the living community of the faithful gathered in the name of Jesus: this crisis has reminded us strongly of this.

On behalf of the Latin Patriarchate, Archbishop Pizzaballa participated in a moment of interreligious prayer with representatives of the Jewish, Muslim and Druze communities on the terrace of the King David hotel in Jerusalem at the end of April. An unprecedented event according to the organizers, during which the leaders of the great religions present in the Holy City thus turned to the God of Abraham, each in his liturgical language: "You who nourished us and provided us with abundance in famine, that you have freed us from the plague and from serious and long-lasting diseases; help us." For Msgr. Pizzaballa, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Teophilos III, the two chief rabbis of Israel, Yitzhak Yosef and David Lau, the imams Gamal El-Ubra and Agel Al-Atrash and the Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif it was an occasion to send the world a message of unity and hope in the face of the pandemic.

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## AN UPDATE ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 FROM THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE

*Immediately before Easter, the Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Sami El-Yousef, shared an update about the situation that is faced by local communities in Palestine, Israel and Jordan. Palestine and Jordan had a relatively low number of cases but they have imposed high restrictions since the beginning of the pandemic. Israel joined later but is registering a higher number in cases and deaths because of Covid-19.*

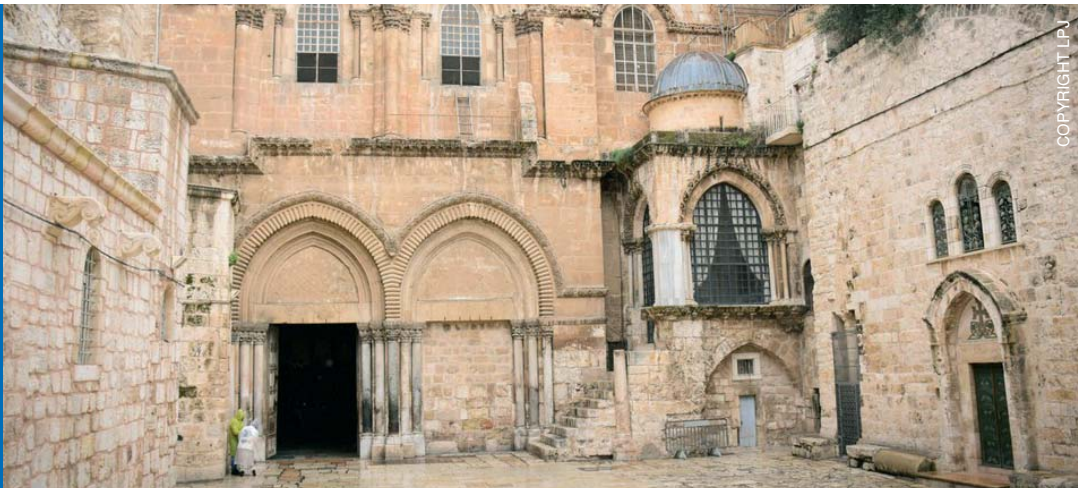
**T**he first Coronavirus cases in the area were discovered in a hotel in Bethlehem in early March. The Palestinian Authority declared a national emergency on 5 March 2020 for 30 days closing all schools, universities and places of worship. The national emergency was later renewed on 4 April 2020 for an additional thirty days despite the relatively low rate of spread. "Given that life came to a standstill, all businesses closed which affected

practically everyone. The Bethlehem region with its high reliance on the tourism related businesses is the hardest hit. In other areas the crisis took longer to be felt, especially areas from the northern part of the West Bank where day laborers working in Israel continued to be allowed to work temporarily thereafter, only to be sent back to the Palestinian Territories due to the Jewish holidays. Thus, all the day laborers in Israel have by now been stripped of their income without any protection. It is difficult to have accurate statistics about the unemployment rates now, but it could easily reach 50-70% for the time being," writes Sami El-Yousef on April 8. Luckily enough, only very few cases were registered in Gaza.

In Jordan all schools were closed on March 9. Around mid-March, the government declared a national emergency and imposed a lockdown on March 17. Before the pandemic, "unemployment in Jordan reached 19% with the youth suffering the most with rates reaching 49% for youth under 19 and 39% for youth between 20-24. These rates would have at least doubled in recent weeks," affirms the



*The Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre – which remained open at the beginning of the pandemic – was also finally closed, by order of the authorities, before Holy Week.*





*The streets of Jerusalem are deserted ... but the Holy City remains in the hearts of all Christians in the world who hope to be able to return on pilgrimage soon.*

CEO of the Latin Patriarchate.

In education, both in Palestine and Jordan the schools were able to teach online using the new platform adopted at the beginning of the year EduNation which lends itself to distance learning. In Jordan, since the lockdown started a bit later, teachers were able to attend training workshops about how to teach online, an opportunity that their Palestinian colleagues did not have. However – Sami El-Yousef explains – there are big challenges related to online education due to the lack of adequate technology and lack or weak internet access in many homes, as well as the fact that large families share one computer and many families do not have the educational level to assist their children.

In Israel schools were closed on March 16. There, "the Ministry of Education committed to pay the full subsidies to the

schools through the end of the school year which will enable the schools to pay salaries in full without any major financial difficulties," reports the CEO of the Latin Patriarchate.

A sad note concerns the Migrant Community in Israel that is suffering heavily since "many members are undocumented and working as day laborers. They were the first to be let go from work and they are not entitled to any of the safety net of the government support as they are not entitled to such benefits, nor do they have adequate health insurance," Sami El-Yousef comments.

As we have seen happening in many regions of the world, community to community and neighbor to neighbor support has been a vital means to survive and Archbishop Pizzaballa strongly encouraged it. "This worked perfectly for the past period as we have not seen such local generosity in a long time. Wealthier parishes are supporting the ones with less means," gladly shares Sami El-Yousef. "However – he concludes – as expected and as this situation is becoming prolonged and is expected to last for a very long time and also even when the emergency is over and we gradually return to a more normal pattern, unemployment will continue to be very high for the foreseeable future and families will need assistance."

## COVID-19 HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT APPEAL

**I**n agreement with the Latin Patriarchate, and following the suggestion of several Lieutenants, the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has decided to launch a special "Covid-19 Humanitarian Support Fund" specifically dedicated to the consequences of the pandemic. The virus is having a severe impact on the Holy Land, especially in Palestine and Jordan.

At the present time, it is urgent for the Christian families living there to be supported for their basic needs, especially for those people who lost their employment, due to the collapse of pilgrimages and tourism and the impossibility to daily commute to Israel for work. Financial aid support is equally necessary in order to provide the cash flow to keep operational the 38 LPJ schools in Palestine and Jordan with their over 15,000 students and over 1,300 teachers and staff employed. (This communiqué from the Grand Master is available online at: [www.oessh.va](http://www.oessh.va))





## BEIT SAHOUR AND PARISH LIFE DURING QUARANTINE

*The story of Father Issa Hijazeen, parish priest of the Beit Sahour church.*

"When we Christians in the Holy Land heard about the spread of Coronavirus in China, we could never have imagined that it would arrive here," begins Father Issa Hijazeen, who has been the parish priest of the Latin church of Beit Sahour (Field of the Shepherds) "Our Lady of Fatima" for less than a year.

"The story began on March 5, 2020 in Beit Jala, a village very close to ours, where four hotel workers tested positive for the virus. The news shocked us, especially in Beit Sahour, because two students from our parish school belong to the family of the infected people," says the parish priest. Fear spread among students and teachers but, thanks to the rapid measures taken, the crisis was contained and the school closed without further cases or episodes.

Similar to other regions of the world, the measures taken to stem the infections have been progressive. Father Issa recounts: "On 5 March a state of emergency was declared for the whole region of Bethlehem, and two weeks later for all of Palestine. The Catholic Church responded to the emergency, and took the necessary measures: Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa announced the instructions for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, first for the Bethlehem region, and then for the whole diocese of the Latin Patriarchate, asking that the Divine Liturgy be broadcast on TV and on social media. In addition, he also asked to encourage people to read Holy Scripture gathered with their family and to pray the Rosary. The Archbishop has left each parish the freedom to find their own ways to implement the instructions. The priests, in all the parishes, interacted quickly and positively with the

Archbishop's instructions."

The same was done in "Our Lady of Fatima" parish in Beit Sahour. Father Issa got in touch with the parishioners sending them invitations to pray together at specific times for all of those ill with the virus worldwide, in particular by responding to Pope Francis' requests, in strong solidarity with the Universal Church. With a small group of faithful, a novena to Palestinian saint Marie Alfonsine, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Rosary was organized. In addition, every Saturday Father Issa shared a spiritual reflection on the Sunday Gospel for parishioners. For young people



*Father Issa Hijazeen, parish priest of Beit Sahour, together with two children from his parish.*



and children, an activity was proposed every day through the Facebook page.

"Although our community has tried to follow the Holy Mass 'by electronic means', I have to say the truth: it is not enough", says the pastor after a few weeks of this quarantine. "Many have called me to express their distress at not being able to participate in the Mass and especially in the Body and Blood of the Lord".

During Holy Week, Msgr. Pizzaballa asked to transmit the celebrations from the Co-Cathedral of the Patriarchate everywhere, thus promoting a strong sense of communion between Christians in the various areas and parishes. Father Issa recounts how he accompanied the faithful in those days: "In our parish in Beit Sahour, in agreement with the civil authority, I was able to bring Communion to the faithful in their homes during Holy Week. I called each family over the phone to find out if they wished to receive Communion in conjunction with the celebrations broadcast at the Co-Cathedral. Most of the families

*The church of Beit Sahour, in Palestine, stands in the place where the shepherds heard the angels singing at the birth of Christ.*



*The parish community of Beit Sahour during a mass, before the ban on officiating celebrations due to the pandemic.*

(around 250) were able to receive Communion during those four days".

At the end of April, the tension began to ease and now – following the indications of the Apostolic Administrator – it is possible to celebrate mass outdoors, bring communion home to those who cannot go out, administer the sacrament of Reconciliation keeping due distances and with due precautions.

The creativity of priests and communities remains a fundamental resource and Father Issa shares what has been done in his parish: "I have adopted a method to prevent many people from coming together; those who want to attend Mass call me first by phone and are assigned a specific day and time."

Furthermore, in Beit Sahour, extended Christian families often live close together as one family, around the same square. The parish priest is therefore organizing to carry out "pastoral and spiritual actions with each group of families. I am preparing to celebrate Mass for each group out in the square and pray the Rosary together during the month of May".

Father Issa concludes with a request that we certainly all can grant: "In the meantime, pray for us; we too will continue to pray for you from the Holy Land".

**Elena Dini**



## HOW THE HEALTH CRISIS IS CREATING A PROBLEM TO SCHOOL FINANCES



*Father Jamal Khader coordinated the “online” activity of the schools in Palestine during the pandemic with dynamism and creativity: the educational path of the young people certainly could not stop.*

**D**uring the lockdown days in Palestine due to Covid-19, we reached out to Father Jamal Khader, director of the Latin Patriarchate Schools in Palestine and parish priest of the Holy Family church in Ramallah, to hear from him about the challenges schools have to face in this moment.

**Father Jamal Khader, in your capacity as director of the Latin Patriarchate schools in Palestine could you explain to us why the financial situation of these schools is particularly difficult in these times of health crisis?**

Schools remain the heart of the mission on the Latin Patriarchate. We are proud that our schools began more than 160 years ago. This year, we began new plans to develop the educational process, and we were planning our first Educational conference with all the administrative and academic staff at the end of March; a big event!

But since the first days of March, we were forced to close our schools to prevent the

spread of the Coronavirus. From the first moment the lockdown was declared, we began working on alternative plans to continue the education of our pupils. As we have a good school program, we were able, with the help of the principals of the schools, to contact our pupils, and organize an online program. The parents are grateful and appreciative of our work with their children.

At the same time, we were counting on the last three months to collect the school fees; but we fell short and couldn't go ahead with our plans. The main reason is that many parents lost their jobs and source of income. We are committed to paying the salaries of our staff; therefore, we will face a financial deficit at least for the next few months. We may begin to pay 50% to our teachers, but the other 50% remains a debt. The economic situation in the country is serious, but we care about the safety and the well-being of our students, including their academic and psychological well-being.

**How do you see the discreet support of the Order to the Latin Patriarchate Schools and, more broadly, to the whole diocese of Jerusalem? What message would you like to address to the Knights and Dames of the world on behalf of Palestinian Christians?**

In normal times, we rely on the help of our friends in the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, as the fees of the students do not cover all our schools' expenses. At the beginning of the academic year, we had planned to reduce the deficit of the schools, but the closure of the schools caused by the Coronavirus made it impossible to collect the fees.



In this situation, we will rely more on the help provided by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. We know that in difficult times, we can count on our friends, and the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre have never failed us in the past whenever we went through difficult times.

The Holy Land once again calls on our dear friends not to forget us in the midst of the difficult times. We need to continue to support our staff and the Christian families in their basic needs. This is our duty and our mission.

**You are deeply committed to interreligious dialogue as a source of peace. In what ways is dialogue practiced in your schools and, particularly, in your church in Ramallah where you are the parish priest?**

Our schools represent a model of interreligious dialogue. Although we have academic programs, we practice peaceful coexistence and collaboration in our schools among the students and the employees. The influence of this fruitful collaboration between Christians and Muslims is reflected on the relationships outside of the schools.

*Muslim-Christian dialogue, experienced in an exemplary way in Palestine thanks to education, is key to future peace in this region.*



*The director of the Palestinian schools thanks the Order for the help in this difficult period and appeals for such assistance to continue as long as necessary. "We must continue to support our staff and Christian families in their primary needs. This is our obligation and our mission," he explains.*

In Ramallah, as an example, Christians and Muslims live peacefully working side by side. The work done by our church institutions, mainly the schools, is appreciated by everyone. While writing these words, I was interrupted by a phone call from the ex-minister of Justice in the State of Palestine to wish me a blessed Easter. He chose our school in Ramallah to send his children, and he is proud of it.

As a Christian school, we live according to our Christian values that we do not hide in the schools. The Christian values of seeing in everyone a creature on the image of God, loved by God, justice, peace, reconciliation, accepting the diversity... are part of our daily life and education. Besides the high quality of education, we form young people in these values, and we realize with time how much this formation stays with them for life.

In a time when religious extremism is loud and harmful, we need to continue our mission to plant the seeds of peace and harmony. Our mission, with the support of our friends of the Order all over the world, is more needed in difficult times.

**Interview by François Vayne**



# The Life of the Lieutenancies

## THE LIFE OF THE ORDER DURING THE GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS

**T**his Spring, which has proven to be a time of great crisis provoked by the coronavirus, the Grand Magisterium has continued to pay the expected contributions to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, trying to respond to emergencies.

The Governor General Leonardo Visconti di Modrone guided the Lieutenants who wanted to intervene on a humanitarian level, insisting on the priorities established by the Latin Patriarchate which knows the local needs best.

In particular, the Patriarchate requires assistance with the school accounts as many families no longer have the means to contribute economically to their children's studies. The pandemic is spreading hand in hand with a serious economic crisis.

Within the Lieutenancies, members have mobilized themselves in solidarity initiatives, as underlined by the Vice Governor for Europe, Jean-Pierre de Glutz. "The attitude of the young people has been remarkable. They help people over 65, offering to do their

shopping" he noted. Even in the Asian and Pacific region, Vice Governor Paul Bartley tells of the closeness via an email or phone call to older members or those with health problems.

On a spiritual level, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master, supported the members with his meditations and reflections published on the Order's international website and widely reported in

the press. The Assessor of the Order, Msgr. Tommaso Caputo, animated the recitation of the Rosary live on Italian Catholic television during the Easter Octave.

Various moments of prayer were organized among the members, in particular through platforms that allow group meetings. The staff of the Grand Magisterium, for example, gathered for several weeks every day to recite the Angelus and then, after Easter, the Regina Caeli, led by Msgr. Fortunato Frezza, Master of Ceremonies of the Order. Some Lieutenancies have organized moments of prayer on their Facebook page, such as



The New Orleans Times-Picayune newspaper – well known nationally in the United States – mentioned the “flying blessing” given by the Grand Prior of the Southeastern US Lieutenancy during the toughest period of the pandemic.



Central Apennine Italy and others. The Facebook page of the Lieutenancy for Brazil - Rio de Janeiro indicates that more than 6000 people have been reached by the virtual Way of the Cross initiative, organized via social media on Good Friday with the texts proposed by the Grand Magisterium and the addition of a fifteenth station for the Resurrection.

The members of the Lieutenancy for Luxembourg met to pray together every day at 3 pm, the hour of Christ's death on the cross. In France, a daily mass was celebrated by the Lieutenancy with the specific prayer intention of our brothers and sisters of the Holy Land and the members participated intensely on Good Friday in the special display of the Holy Crown broadcast by the Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral by the

secular BFM TV channel.

An original initiative that we learned about was that of Msgr. Gregory Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans and Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for USA Southeastern: driving a small plane dating back to the Second World War, on Good Friday he flew over his diocese, blessing it with the water of the Jordan River and thus making a gesture of hope for people confined to their homes because of another "war", the one against coronavirus.

What emerges from the words of all those with whom we have spoken, is that this time of confinement is strengthening the bonds of communion within the Order and with the Latin Patriarchate in a historic momentum of fraternity and solidarity.

F. V.

## "Covid-19: Where's God?"

At the moment of maximum spread of the epidemic, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master of the Order, proposed a reflection on the crisis, a text that was carried widely in the press. You can re-read this meditation, in the light of Easter, on our official website: [www.oessh.va](http://www.oessh.va)



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## A NEW WEBSITE FOR THE ORDER FOR NORTH AMERICA

The North American Lieutenancies have recently launched a joint website - [www.eohsjnorthamerica.org](http://www.eohsjnorthamerica.org) - which we invite you to visit.

The individual sites of the North American Lieutenancies already online will continue to be active but, at the same time, this new dynamic and updated tool, will be able to serve more as a connection point for the approximately 15,000 members of the region by promoting communication among them and presenting themselves to the outside world through a common source of information for those potentially interested in joining the Order. Congratulations on your work!



## A DAME OF THE ORDER IN SOCIETY AND IN THE CHURCH

*Agnès Durand testifies to her commitment to United Nations women's projects within an international humanitarian association.*

"My name is Imelda Agnès Durand. I have been a Dame of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre since December 2018. I am French, and my country of origin is Burkina Faso. Coming from a Catholic family among the first Catholics in Burkina Faso, I was immersed from a young age in a regular and fervent practice of the Catholic faith.

The first baptism in my village took place in 1914 and my grandfather was baptized in 1915 during the celebration of Pentecost. Being among the first baptized meant this generation felt it was carrying the torch of religion before others and, for this reason, the duty to encourage the Catholic activities of all the children to set a good example. Therefore, my parents were all volunteer catechists: my mother was a member of the Passion Group, which organized prayers for bedridden patients, and my father animated the masses on Sundays.

I have been married for more than 25 years, and we have a son and daughter. We carry on a family life following the principles of Christian values. My husband is also a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

I see my belonging to the Order as a viaticum of hope and testimony of fundamental Christian values that our age so badly needs. Therefore, for me being part of the Order represents not only a continuation of self-giving and involvement in projects for the most vulnerable in which we see the Lord, but also an opportunity to be an active



*In her associative effort, Agnès Durand helped the Saint James Vicariate of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: it was a matter of providing the necessary medical care to the children of single migrant mothers in Israel, as well as of meeting the costs of a nutrition program for children of migrants and asylum seekers in the age group between 3 months and 13 years.*

protagonist in contributing to supporting the Christians in the Holy Land.

During the 50th anniversary of the *Populorum Progressio*, in which I participated on April 3 and 4, 2017, Pope Francis strongly recommended that Catholics be active protagonists in society so that the true human values that allow hope are saved. This exciting mission seems to me to correspond to the one entrusted to the Order and I became a Dame precisely to respond to this call.

As a concrete action in the context of this commitment assigned to each of us, I ensured the catechism during the 2016-2017 school year to the students of the French high school Chateaubriand in Rome. Subsequently, since 2016 I have been a member of the group of volunteers from the San Marcellino and Pietro parish. In that context, and once a month, I assist the poor of the Caritas of Colle Oppio. This



opportunity has been extremely enriching from every point of view: it made me aware of our good fortune and our duty to help those whose circumstances in life have put in precarious conditions.

In addition, my numerous stays in different countries of the world have given me the opportunity to learn a lot in contact with the people I have met in the school of life and to develop a particular interest in mutual help. I also had the opportunity to acquire skills in leadership, organization and management, matured and enriched in different fields, which opened up a wider horizon for me.

These are some of the tools that I strive to make available in my work as a Project Manager for the "United Nations Women's Guild" (UNWG). The UNWG is an international non-profit association that brings together people connected professionally or by family ties with United Nations agencies. It is an association that fosters intercultural tolerance and friendship by organizing social, cultural and educational programs for its members. The members of the association, in fact, come from all continents and actively engage as volunteers to raise funds to finance projects in all fields such as health, access to drinking water, education, infrastructure, and various micro projects designed to help women, children, and vulnerable communities in various countries around the world.

The funds used to finance the projects come from various sources: from donations, from the UNWG shop in the FAO building that sells various recycled materials donated by our members and from the United Nations, from the annual Bazaar which is the largest fundraising event, during which UNWG members sell international food, books, crafts, decoration items and works of art. As a member of the UNWG since 2014, I was Vice President for two years and for the past three years I have been responsible for project management. In this context, we



*Membership of the Order is a support for Agnès Durand in the concrete testimony she gives through serving others.*

had the opportunity with the UNWG to support two small projects in favor of the Saint James Vicariate of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which I encountered through the activities of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. The first project targets 25 children of migrant mothers in Israel to provide them with the necessary medical care (vaccines, dental and pediatric care) while the second contributes to the expenses of the nutrition program of the St. Rachel Center in Jerusalem where the children of migrants and asylum seekers from 3 months to 13 years of age are welcomed and fed during the day.

The UNWG is an association without political and religious affiliations that offers me the opportunity to commit myself to being an active protagonist in society and to help restore hope to those who need our small actions. Aware of all that the Lord has given me, I try to do good around me out of gratitude. The Lord also allowed me to be welcomed as a Dame of the Order to grow in faith with the help of fellow members.

In conclusion, I would like to remember that small actions done with love are great in the eyes of those who receive them."

**Agnès Durand**

