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## **Press Conference to present the Consulta of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem**

At 12.30 today, in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference took place to present the next Consulta of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The five-year Assembly of this Pontifical Institution, devoted to the support of the Church in the Holy Land and in which all the international leaders of the Order participate, along with the representatives of the Secretariat of State and the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, will take place at the Crowne Plaza St. Peter's Hotel in Rome from 13 to 16 November 2018.

The speakers at the press conference were His Eminence Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem; His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches; and Dr. Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger, Lieutenant of the Order for Switzerland.

After the conference, Professor Agostino Borromeo, Lieutenant General of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, and Dr. Donata Maria Krethlow-Benziger, Lieutenant of the Order for Switzerland, will be available for interview.

The following are the interventions by Cardinal Edwin O'Brien and Cardinal Leonardo Sandri:

### **Intervention of Cardinal Edwin O'Brien**

I am Cardinal Edwin O'Brien and I have served as Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre since my appointment by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011. We are headquartered here in Rome.

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, under the guidance of the Holy See, conducts its general assembly in Rome, called a Consulta, every 5 years. From November 13th to the 16th next week, this Consulta will discuss the role of our 64 local lieutenants in 40 countries who are responsible for coordinating the activities of their members. Our nearly 30,000 members are active in Europe, the Pacific, South Africa and the Americas.

Each lieutenant works closely with a Grand Prior of the local hierarchy.

The generosity of our knights and ladies supports most of the pastoral, educational and humanitarian program of the Latin Patriarchate in Israel, Jordan and Palestine. Each member is pledged to pray for the Church in the Holy Land and to make a pilgrimage there to show their solidarity with our fellow Christians there.

Ours is a Pontifical lay order of men and women with bishop and priest members for spiritual support. Indeed the first purpose of our Order is to develop the spiritual life of each of our members. This will be a central topic in our discussion next week as we pray for the intercession of Blessed Bartolo Longo, the only lay member of the Order who has been beatified.

The Mother Church of Jerusalem seeks to serve as a bridge among the major religious communities throughout the Holy Land. Our Order seeks to promote that goal as we work in close support of the Congregation for Oriental Churches and its Prefect, His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri whose presence here we appreciate.

### **Intervention of Cardinal Edwin O'Brien**

Most Reverend Cardinal Leonardo Sandri,  
Your Excellency, Ambassador Visconti di Modrone,

1. To those who, like many of you, walk along Via della Conciliazione to go to the Press Office, you can stop to look at two buildings, one almost in front of the other: Palazzo della Rovere, whose windows are adorned with the motto "*Soli Deo Gloria*", and above the flag of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre; and Palazzo Bramante – whose façade has recently been restored thanks to the work of the APSA – which is the seat of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Due to its prestige and history, having hosted the artist Raphael Sanzio for a while, it was "moved" to its present-day location during the construction of the current road network. We could enter into historical details, because palaces of papal nobility, made by great artists, rather than the distant and unknown East or a chivalric order seem to be something of the past.

2. The upcoming beginning of the *Consulta* of the OESSH instead provides us with a lively image of people representing various nations throughout the world, gathered together to reflect on the identity and the mission of the Order, starting from that spirituality that in the everyday life of each Knight and Dame implement the *solī Deo Gloria* that we see on the windows of the Palace. Saint Irenaeus of Lyon, the eastern Father "loaned" to the Gallie primatial seat – today's France – reminds us, however, in his famous inscription that *Gloria Dei est homo vivens .. vitam autem hominis est visio Dei*. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches on the one hand, and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre on the other, have not been created throughout history to preserve something archaeological or ancient, but rather the concrete life of our Christian brothers and sisters in the lands visited by the presence of the Saviour, from whom the precious treasure of the Gospel and the sparks of Pentecostal fire have come to us. The sad events of recent years, especially in Syria and in Iraq, as well as Egypt, a recent martyrdom and the continuing tension regarding the future between Israel and Palestine, have made the whole world aware that in those lands there are still those who have always lived there by belonging to Christ, and various efforts have been made so that they can continue to live in peace and finally with full status as citizens and not only as *dhimmi* or "minority". The Special Synod for the Middle East of 2010 was not enough to reawaken our consciences: nevertheless, in the serenity as well as in painful episodes there is the life of the Church, there is the joy of children born again in Christ, the mutual gift of the "love of spouses" even in the ruins of Maaloula or other cities destroyed in Syria, there is the taking care of the disabled, the elderly, the training of young people through schools and universities. There is therefore the life of real, Christian people like us: we in the wellbeing of the West are asked to live the faith in fullness, with that awakening of the joy of the Gospel to which Pope Francis continues to call us. For them there is a need for faith to be internalized and not just a matter of family tradition or of the clan or village. The Glory of God is the living man, the (authentic) life of man is indeed the vision of God.

3. This is to make you aware – as we often suggest in pilgrimages or writing the Letter for Good Friday Collection – of going to the Holy Land not only to see the stones of the shrines and the remains of the biblical testimonies, but to meet the Christian communities, with their life, their challenges and sufferings, their daily charity. I can say with great joy that the union of intentions – with respect to the different competences – between the Congregation I preside over and the Order manifests itself on several levels, from institutional to more operative. I am thinking above all of the presence of Cardinal O'Brien among the members of the Dicastery, as well as the fact that OESSH is a member of ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches), with the presence at the plenary table in the month of June of the Governor General Ambassador Visconti di Modrone as well as his predecessor Professor Agostino Borromeo, and annually the Order guarantees the financing of various development projects, assistance to pastoral situations and more generally to the life of the Eastern Churches. I would like this not to be overlooked, because at first glance it could appear the only stable link that the Order maintains to support the life of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, especially since its reconstitution in 1847 with Blessed Pius IX's Bull *Nulla celebrior*: most of the competences previously reserved for the Custody of the Holy Land with regard to the Order passed to the new ecclesiastical circumscription. Without forgetting what was achieved by the Patriarch Barlassina (1920-1947), to whose merits there may be ascribed the revitalization of the activities of the Knights, enabling their way of supporting the life of the Church in the Holy Land to be more organic and up to date, as documented in some articles and publications by Professor Paolo Pieraccini.

4. Special and due recognition should be accorded to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for the extraordinary effort made – in collaboration with other entities of the Holy See, starting from the Secretariat of State with the establishment of the Saint John the Baptist Vatican Foundation – to contribute to the work of reorganization not only of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, bringing some offices to the level of international standards through the work of some specialized professionals, as well as the decisive contribution we hope will continue to enable the full sustainability of the University of Madaba, in Jordan. That possibly too ambitious dream has clashed on one side with the evolution of regional conflicts, jeopardizing the initiative sponsored by the Patriarch Emeritus His Beatitude Fouad Twal, and on the other with difficulties in administration. I am sure that the Order will continue to support the valuable work of the apostolic administrator, H.E. Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who is also the Pro Grand Priore, and accepted the task entrusted to him by the Holy Father because of the knowledge gained over his twelve years as Custos of the Holy Land, including possible different provisions.

5. I would like to say one last thank you, with reference to a living reality of the Holy Land, the *Effatà* Centre for deaf and mute children that I will be pleased to visit in a few weeks' time, also remembering Saint Paul VI, who tenaciously favoured it following his trip to the Holy Land in 1964. I conclude with the words that the Holy Pontiff addressed on 30 May of the same year to the Members of the Order who had come from the Successor of Peter: *"And with the wish that prayer, which responds no less to your Statutes, that to our solicitude for that blessed land, where the Holy Sepulchre is located, and where We ourselves have had the great fortune to accomplish, as you know, a humble, but moving and celebrated pilgrimage: continue to love those Holy Places, with an ever more intense and pious predilection; keep seeking and honouring the land sanctified by the steps of the Son of God made Son of man; continue to promote the works of religion, education, and charity there which attest to the tenacious and loving presence of the Catholic Church; increase, as you can, your efforts of spiritual and corporal charity for those peoples, as our encounter with them, so lively and cordial on their part, has made them even more dear to us; and let them see that your Crusade is intended to be that of charity, of harmony, of peace; that of the Gospel of Christ, which in the service of the Catholic Church and her most faithful and industrious children, wants nothing other than the true salvation of all"*. Thank you.

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