

THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM



WHAT IS THE EOHSJ?

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is, together with the sovereign Order of Malta, the oldest Order of Chivalry. The Order has been in existence for over 900 years. These two Orders served as models for the creation of the other great Orders of Chivalry in the western world and are today the only ones recognized by the Holy See as independent Catholic Orders of Knighthood.

HISTORY:

When Godfrey de Bouillon and his knights of the First Crusade captured Jerusalem from the Moslems in the year 1099, he found the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary in the keeping of a handful of Canons Regular of the Order of St. Augustine, governed by their Patriarch, the Bishop of Jerusalem. He at once installed, in the remains of the original Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, a selected number of his knights to assist the Canons in guardianship of the Holy Places. These were the first Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. The Foundation of the Order received the approval of Pope Paschal II in 1113 and Pope Callistus II in 1122.

After the destruction of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Knights from the Holy Land at the end of the 13th century, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre was kept, in a number of countries in Europe, as a religious military Order. When the Latin Patriarchate was abolished, it was given to the Franciscan Custodian of the Holy Land to choose new Knights, to be created from among the fervent Christians devoutly going to the Holy Sepulchre to receive Investiture according to the ancient ceremony of Christian Knighthood still in use within the Order. The religious and charitable work of the Order throughout the centuries brought repeated and

fervent praises from Popes, Kings, Bishops and Princes, after being specially commended and favoured by the Supreme Pontiffs, Alexander VI, Julius II, Leo X and Clement XII. Benedict XIV gave the Order a new Constitution in 1746.

In 1847 a further stage in the Order's history was marked by the restoration of the Latin Patriarchate by Pius IX. He bestowed on the Patriarch the responsibility of ruling and administering the Order. At this time the Knights were given the specific task of the support of the Patriarch's work for the maintenance and advancement of Christianity in the Holy Land. In 1888, Pope Leo XIII approved the entry of women into the Order as Dames of the Holy Sepulchre. In 1907 St. Pius X assumed the title of Grand Master. Pius XI reappointed the Latin Patriarch as Regent of the Order. Pope Pius XII transferred the direction of the Order from Jerusalem to Rome and in a new constitution decreed that the Order should be governed by a Cardinal appointed by the Holy Father to be Grand Master, and that the Latin Patriarch should be Grand Prior of the Order. The Cardinal Grand Master is supported by a governing body known as The Grand Magisterium, and by National Lieutenancy's of the Order.

The Motto of the Order "DEUS LO VULT" - **GODWILLS IT.**

CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLYLAND

The majority of Christians in the Holy Land are Arab people. The Arab Christians have always been Christian. They are not converts from Islam. Christianity lost many through the ages due to conversion to Islam. The Christians were a majority of the population from the 4th to the 7th Century until Islam conquered Palestine. Since then the process of Islamization and de-Christianization started and continues until the present time. Today, the local Arab Christians are identified with the Western culture and power resulting in discrimination against them by their Moslem neighbours.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Palestinian Christians were 13% of the population in Palestine and were a majority in many cities like Bethlehem, the Old City of Jerusalem, Rammalah and Nazareth. Today, the Christians living in Palestine and Israel are less than 2% (170,000 approx.) of the total population.

MISSION OF THE ORDER:

The mission of the Order is to strengthen in its members the practice of Christian life; to sustain and aid the charitable, cultural and social works and institutions of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, particularly those of and in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; to support the preservation and propagation of the Faith in the Holy Land; and to sustain the rights of the Catholic

Church in the Holy Land.

WHAT DOES THE ORDER DO?

Today, as in the days of the Apostles, the Church in the Holy Land is poor, even under-developed. The lack of security of the native Christian population, primarily composed of Arabs, is such that it is severely menaced by emigration. This emigration affects mostly the elite who should be at the heart of social and spiritual developments.

Eighty per cent of the expenditure of the Patriarchate is funded by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Approximately US\$8 million was subscribed by the Order in 2002. The restoration of the Dome of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre was funded by an American couple, Knight Grand Cross, George Doty and his wife, who personally donated US\$5million.

EDUCATION:

The educational role of Christians in the Holy Land is important, as the Christian more than other faiths in the area believes in forgiveness – that to achieve peace, justice is necessary; to achieve justice, forgiveness is necessary. Reconciliation and love is an essential part of forgiveness. Christian education in the context of the Gospels helps form leaders with vision and compassion.

There is the need for considerable improvement in education. The Church has entrusted the Order of The Holy Sepulchre with the maintenance and development of Catholic schools in the Holy Land.

The Order contributes substantially to the maintenance of 43 parish schools of the Latin Patriarchate, which are attended by 19 thousand children, both Christian (Latin and Catholics of the Oriental Rite, Orthodox and Protestants) and Moslems. It also contributes to the maintenance of the Patriarchal Seminary (80 students) and the Diocesan clergy. It looks after dozens of dispensaries in the Holy Land, supports relief and welfare institutions, orphanages, homes for the elderly and many houses for the handicapped and less privileged.

In addition to these ongoing commitments, the Lieutenancy's undertake specific action agreed upon with the Grand Magisterium on the recommendation of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The Order has played a significant role in the creation and development of the University of Bethlehem.

From 1971 through 1990, thanks to the Order's support, new churches and chapels arose at Zabadeh, Bir-Zeit, Jaff-Nazareth, Jenin, Burqin, Gaza, Tilaa-

el-Ali, Marj-et-Hanan, Eremine, Fouheis-Centre, Mainrabba and Gifhah.

New residences for the Rosary Sisters were built up at Jaffa-Nazareth, Rafidia, Ajloun, Rameh, Jenin, Gifnah, Taybeh, Gaza, Eremine, Salt, Foureis-Centre, Naour, Madaba and Khirbeh.

Also, new presbyteries at Rameh, Zabadeh, Nablus, Gilnah, Sweifeieh, Rousaifa, Ermemine, Foureis-Alali were provided, as well as the home for retired Priests in Betania and the home for the aged people at Nablus.

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE TODAY?

The Grand Master, His Eminence Edwin Cardinal O'Brien, appointed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2013, is in charge of the Order. His coadjutors are the Governor General, His Excellency Agostino Borromeo and the Grand Magisterium. The latter consists of 12 Confreres chosen among members of various countries. The Vice-Governor General for North America is His Excellency Patrick Powers.

The Order currently has 56 Lieutenancies and 6 Magistral delegations (Lieutenancies in the process of formations). These are generally divided into Sections.

Twenty-two such bodies operate in Europe, 15 in North and Central America, five in South America and five in the Far East. There are about 29,000 Knights and Ladies all over the world.

The Grand Prior of the Order is His Beatitude, Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, who is an Arab Palestinian.

The Order has its legal seat in the Vatican City State and the seat of its spiritual activities at the Convent, located near the Church of San Onofrio on the Janiculum, as set out in the Moto Proprio of His Holiness Pope Pius XII - (1945). The Headquarters of the Order, until recently was housed in the ancient 15th century palace of Guilliano Cardinal della Rovere, later, Pope Julius II, known as Palazzo Dei Penitenzieri. A part of this building is set aside a hotel - Hotel Columbus, to earn income for the Order. The offices, Chancellery and Residence of the Grand Master, were located there. It is situated on the Via Della Conciliazione, directly on the left as one prepares to enter St. Peter's Square. The administrative offices of the Grand Magisterium are now located at Vatican City.

Women are welcomed on an equal basis in the Order and are addressed by the title Dame. The first female member was Contessa Francesca di Tomas, who received the rank of Grand Cross in 1871, predating the official welcome of female members by 17 years (1888). The former Lieutenant in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was Dame Teresa Antonia Veiga Frering.

SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES:

The spiritual privileges accorded Knights and Ladies are Plenary Indulgence, under the usual conditions, on the day of Investiture and on the four feast days especially assigned to the Order:

- The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine: Last Sunday in October
- The Triumph of the Holy Cross: September 14th
- Pope St. Pius X (former Grand Master): August 21st
- St. Helen: August 18th

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MEMBER OF THE ORDER?

- 1) To devote their lives to strong Catholic Christian principles in the practice of their religion.
- 2) To contribute each year to the support and sustenance of charitable and cultural works and institutions of the Holy Land, particularly those of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.
- 3) To make known to people the needs of the Church in the Holy Land and to promote support for the Church there.
- 4) To participate in the annual Investiture Ceremony, and to attend the annual meeting.
- 5) To propose qualified candidates for the Order.
- 6) To make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at least once in their lifetime.

Subscription and fees are essentially voluntary – a minimum suggested Annual Contribution (AC) is requested of each member. Some members contribute substantially more as their circumstances allow.

Personal annual contributions are confidential.

HOW IS ADMISSION TO THE ORDER FACILITATED?

Membership is by invitation only, on recommendation of the Lieutenant and the Council of the Lieutenancy, and *final approval must come from Rome*.

- 1) In the highest interest of the institution, members of the Order must be pre-selected from those who, endowed with experience and seriousness of intent, have already given proof of an exemplary life and maturity in other sectors of activity. To be admitted into the Order, a candidate must be at least 25 years of age.

2) Requests for admission must be accompanied by the following documents:**BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE.****MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE OF RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE.****CURRICULUM VITAE (Resume) - with specific date concerning residence, Church and community related activities.****LETTER FROM CANDIDATES'S PARISH PRIEST.LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT from their Ordinary, for those living outside the Vancouver Archdiocese.**

It is extremely important that a person being proposed for admission to the Order by a member, be well known to that member, in order to avoid any embarrassment or ill will that might ensue, if the candidate upon subsequent investigation did not meet all the criteria, and did not qualify for membership.

A FINALWORD

All Christian Churches, almost 2 Billion Christians worldwide, derive their heritage from the Holy Land, but still our Christian faithful are threatened and in need of support at home in Jerusalem. This generation of Catholic leaders, both lay and ecclesiastical, cannot standby and do nothing. The plight of the Christian Community in the Holy Land is a crisis so severe, that it needs to be addressed by the whole Church.

Jerusalem is our Spiritual Hometown.

Compiled by The Membership Committee in 1997. Updated in 2006 and revised in 2014.