



CONSULTA

2008

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The Consulta of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem is the largest consultative assembly of the Order. Under the chairmanship of the Cardinal Grand Master, participants include the whole of the Order's leadership, Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates, a representative of the Secretary of State of the Vatican and one from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

As set out in Article 28 of the Order's Constitution, the Consulta must review the program and activities of the Grand Magisterium as well as those of the individual Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations. "It expresses opinion on the organization and fulfillment of activities of the Order, on the Works in the Holy Land, and also on every question which is placed before it." The Consulta must be convened at least once every 5 years.

This great event in the life of the Order took place at the Villa Aurelia, Rome, from 1st to 5th December 2008. The high point was the Audience granted to the participants by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on the last day in the Vatican's Sala Clementina.

The official statements and addresses must also be made available to all members of the Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations. That is the purpose of these present documents.

By way of introduction, we include the Holy Father's words at the Audience, followed by the closing document by the Cardinal Grand Master John P. Foley, which sums up the proceedings. All the other contributions are given in their chronological order.

ON FRIDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2008

HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE
HOLY SEPULCHER OF JERUSALEM WHO HAD
GATHERED IN ROME FOR A “WORLD CONSULTATION”.

**The following is a translation of the Papal Address,
which was given in Italian.**

*“Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Members of the Grand Magisterium and Lieutenants,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am pleased to greet and give my cordial welcome to the Knights, to the Ladies and to the Ecclesiastics who represent the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. In particular I greet Cardinal John Patrick Foley, Grand Master of the Order, and I thank him for the kind words that, also in the name of all of you, he has just addressed to me. I also greet the Grand Prior, His Beatitude Fouad Twal, Patriarch of Jerusalem for Latins. Through each one of you I wish, moreover, that the expression of my esteem and recognition arrives to all who comprise your worthy Sodality, spread in many parts of the world.

The reason you have gathered here in Rome is the ‘world consultation,’ which every five years provides for the meeting of the Lieutenants, the magisterial delegates and the members of the Grand Magisterium to evaluate the situation of the Catholic community in the Holy Land, the activity underway by the Order and to establish directives for the future. In thanking you for your visit I wish to manifest my lively appreciation especially for the initiatives of fraternal solidarity that the Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem for many years continues to promote in favor of the Holy Places. Thus the ‘Honor Guard’ came into being for the custody of the Holy Sepulcher of Our Lord. Your Equestrian Order has enjoyed a singular attention on the part of the Roman Pontiffs, who have given it the spiritual and juridical instruments necessary to fulfill your own specific service. Bl. Pius ix in 1847 re-established it to favor the recomposition of a Catholic faith community in the Holy Land, no longer entrusting the custody on Christ’s Tomb to the force of arms, but to the authority of a constant witness of faith and charity toward Christians resident in those lands.

More recently, the Servant of God Pius xii, of happy memory, conferred to your Sodality juridical personhood, thus making its presence and work, within the Church and in regard to nations, more official and solid.

Dear brothers and sisters, an ancient and glorious bond links your knightly Sodality to the Holy Sepulcher of Christ, where in a completely singular way the glory of his death and Resurrection is celebrated. Precisely this constitutes the pivotal centre of your spirituality. Jesus Christ crucified and Risen is therefore the centre of your existence and of your every project and program, personal or collective. Let yourselves be guided and sustained by his redeeming power to live deeply the mission that you are called to carry out, to offer an eloquent Gospel witness, to be builders, in our time, of a solid hope founded on the Risen Lord's presence, who, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, guides and sustains the efforts of those who dedicate themselves to the edification of a new humanity inspired by the Gospel values of justice, love and peace.

What need the Land of Jesus has for justice and peace! Continue to work for this and do not tire in asking, with the Prayer of the Knights and the Ladies of the Holy Sepulcher, that as soon as possible these aspirations may come to completion. Ask the Lord to make you 'convinced and sincere ambassadors of peace and love among your brethren,' ask him to make fruitful, with the power of his love, your constant work to support the ardent desire for peace in those communities weighed down by a climate of uncertainty and danger in the last years. To that dear Christian population, who continue to suffer due to the political, economic and social crisis in the Middle East, made even worse with the escalating world situation, I address an affectionate thought, bearing a special testimony of my spiritual closeness to so many of our brothers in the faith who are forced to emigrate. How can one fail to share the sorrow of that sorely tried community? How can one not thank, at the same time, you who have worked so generously to come to their aid? In these days of Advent, while we prepare for the Christmas festivities, the gaze of our faith is directed toward Bethlehem, where the Son of God is born in a poor grotto. Next the heart's eye is directed to all the other places sanctified by our Redeemer's passing. We ask Mary, who has given the world the Savior, to make her maternal protection felt by our brothers and sisters who live there and who daily face many difficulties. We also ask her to encourage you and those, who with God's help, want to and can contribute to build up a world of justice and peace.

Dear Knights and dear Ladies, nurture within yourselves the atmosphere of Advent, keeping your hearts alert in waiting for the Lord who comes, so that you can encounter him in the events of each day and recognize and serve him especially in the poor and suffering. May the Virgin of Nazareth, who in a few days time we will invoke with the title of the Immaculate Conception, assist you in your mission of watching over with love upon the places that saw the Divine Redeemer pass 'doing good works and healing all who were in the grip of the devil, for God was with him' (Acts 10:38). With these sentiments I gladly impart to all my Blessing."

SUMMARY REFLECTION OF THE CONSULTA

INTRODUCTION

T*his Report on the Consulta of The Equestrian Order of The Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem has been drawn up following the meeting in Rome from 1 to 5 December 2008. It is a reflection of the main issues considered by the Lieutenants in conversation with members of The Grand Magisterium. It offers advice to The Grand Master, Cardinal John P Foley and to The Governor General of the Order.*

This report also offers the texts of several presentations made at the Consulta, offering these as statements worthy of further reflection by those who read this report. This is not an exhaustive or comprehensive statement of all that transpired at the Consulta. It is intended, however to raise some issues that currently face the Order and which were discussed and debated in Rome.

The Consulta was stimulated by an “Instrumentum Laboris” which provided a rich source of comment and issues and which raised many significant matters for the Consulta.

This report therefore is intended to be a document which will allow Lieutenancies and members of the Order to reflect on matters of current and continuing significance to the running of the Order. It raises some points of action, and provides the texts of certain significant prepared contributions to the Consulta. As with the spirit of the Consulta, therefore, this report is intended to be “an active document” promoting conversations and discussions rather than purporting to be exhaustive and complete. Hopefully it does point ways ahead for the Order and provides members with the assurance that the Order is committed to very important work in The Holy Land and at home.

I wish to thank those who work so assiduously in this noble work for the greater glory of God, and who contribute in so many ways to promote the actions of the Order in the land where Our Saviour was born, died and from where He rose for our eternal salvation.

John Cardinal Foley

EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

REPORT FROM CONSULTA 2008

GENERAL REMARKS

The Consulta of the Equestrian Order of The Holy Sepulchre in 2008 marked a turning point for the work of The Order. There was a clear understanding that the Order is an agency of the Catholic Church and has developed as an international organisation within the Church. The growing strength of the Order comes in part from the increasing participation of members in good works and spiritual engagement, and partly from the widened distribution of the membership.

The essential work and influence of the Order is not to be judged by numbers or by volume, but by the impact that it has on the Christians who live in The Holy Land. It is to be assessed by the extent to which it has filled the years of strife and anxiety in The Holy Land with material and spiritual comfort, and with hope. It derives its strength from the graces of the work of its members throughout the world. This is illuminated and enhanced by the spirituality and actions of generosity by its members both in their own land and in serving The Holy Land. It is essential to maintain this duality of engagement - at home and in the Holy Land. It is in the various ways in which the members of the Order live their lives in harmony with the mission on a daily basis that forms an Order of high spiritual commitment and significant commitment to the Holy Land.

The Consulta recognised that the Order will thrive where there is a dynamic interaction between The Holy Land and other parts of the world. This is to see the Order being the source and conduit for prayer, for good works and for human interaction to avoid isolation and undue suffering in The Holy Land.

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

The Consulta considered the priorities for its future work of the Order. It expressed appreciation for the work which has taken place in recent years for advancing systems of finance in the Order. It also saw the need for an agenda for change which recognises of the volatility of finance in the contemporary world, and the urge for members of the Order to be more fully engaged in the efforts for justice and peace, especially in the Middle East.

This requires greater dynamism in engaging members in the work of the Order. While the Order should not be engaged in local politics or politics of factions or single states, there was a need to be fully engaged with the modern world. The Order is committed to be effective in promoting the Christian values and this should be done with conviction and confidence in the power of the Christian message. There should be no temerity with truth and with the message of the Gospel. There does need to be sensitivity in acting on how the Christian message is lived in different cultures and societies, and to ensure that cultural norms from one part of the world are not imposed on other cultures.

Discussions at the "Consulta" took place mainly in the following areas:

Spirituality

Service to The Holy Land

Financial Support

Administration of The Order

SPIRITUALITY OF THE ORDER

The Consulta reflected with care on the spirituality of the Order which is based on the Risen Christ leaving the tomb empty. This understanding of Christ on earth, truly man, departing to be with His Father lies at the heart of the spirituality of The Order. It requires us to try to understand and reflect on two intrinsically related aspects of the world... the struggle of daily living in the world today and especially of The Holy Land, and the joy of the Resurrection, with the hope of a world of justice and peace.

The spirituality of the Order is based on the whole person, emphasizing the relationship to God in daily life. This understanding reflects on all aspects of human flourishing, body, mind and spirit. It enables members of the Order to appreciate the greatness of creation and God's works in forming a world of faith, hope and love. It is through attention to those values and ideals that members of the Order work towards

"the Common Good." That is always the goal and the purpose of the works of the Order.

The Order is organised with roots in the traditions of chivalry. Pilgrimages to The Holy Land remain a central part of the fulfilment of the spiritual journey for members of the Order. There is continuing encouragement to be part of this tradition, which is not only intended as a point of spiritual growth for the member, but is also of vital importance in demonstrating solidarity with the Christian communities in The Holy Land.

For members of the Order spiritual growth has to be practised in daily living as well as manifest in The Holy Land, The spirituality of the Order derives from good works and a full prayer life. Good works on their own are not enough. Many organisations are engaged in such activities, but it is essential for the Order to balance both prayer and good works, one nourishing the other.

The spirituality of the Order is oriented to all the people of God, and finds particular practical expression in focussing on supporting the works of the Latin Patriarchate. This support will be financial and may also be putting the personal and professional talents and expertise of members of the Order at the disposal of the Latin Patriarch or others who support the Christian communities of The Holy Land.

The spirituality of members needs to be nourished by Priors and they need time to develop this.

SERVICE TO THE HOLY LAND

The Order serves the Christian communities of The Holy Land. This is a principal and continuing commitment which remains undiminished by time or place. The Consulta also reiterated its commitment to serve the Latin Patriarchate as the principal focus of its work. This is following the principle of subsidiarity, in which the work of the Church is undertaken through local diocesan structures and personnel.

In a world of rapid change and innovation this requires strong and confident links between Lieutenancies and the Grand Magisterium if local needs in The Holy Land are to be addressed. This would enable discussion and assessment of the key priorities for The Holy Land which the Order could address. The service is unreservedly to the Christians in the Holy Land, set in their unique and demanding social, political and religious context.

The areas of education and humanitarian aid remain the focal points of activity of the Order. The Consulta highlighted the need to see peace and justice arise from

prayer and spiritual works, as well as from an educated populace. It would be irresponsible to deviate from the focus on education, since this opens the hearts and minds of people to the love of God in daily life. It is through this process of education inspired by Christian values that the prospect of peace is brought nearer. The Consulta emphasized that education in its various forms should remain at the heart of the work of The Order. This education should be clearly characterised as having the values and ideals of Christian education. This was an issue of quality that had to be kept at the forefront of consideration by the Patriarchate and by the Grand Magisterium.

In addition to supporting schools the Order has a role in offering opportunities for higher education including education and technical training – through Bethlehem University and specialised programs. This was a key area for support, acknowledging the importance of offering education at the highest levels. In addition this also promoted research and scholarship in The Holy Land.

Much attention was given to considering the ways in which the Christian communities could benefit from enterprise and business opportunities. It was considered vital that this should be seen as one very significant dimension of educational provision. However it was not for the Order itself to promote any specific business or industrial activity. It may consider infrastructural support for such activities, but need not become actively engaged in specific projects in this field. In the longer term some attention should be given to considering facilitating employment opportunities in The Holy Land.

The Order supports The Latin Patriarch in the education and formation of priests and clergy. This is done through the vital work of the seminary at Beit Jala. The Order also has to support the administration of the Patriarchate as necessary to ensure the efficient work of the Church in the Holy Land.

The Grand Magisterium should consider the works to be done beyond the Patriarchate and to do so with the knowledge of The Patriarch. The Order has a mandate from The Holy Father to support and enhance the Christian communities in The Holy Land. The Grand Magisterium should keep under review how it does this.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

A central aspect of the work of The Order is to collect funds for The Holy Land. The Consulta emphasized that this was a means to an end and not the end in itself. The purpose was always to support the lives of Christians in The Holy Land. In doing so the Order was engaged in promoting and enriching the spiritual life of its members. Finance helps and supports these objectives.

In ensuring that the funds contributed by members of The Order are being directed to the communities most in need it is necessary to identify the real and pressing priorities. This requires close communication with The Patriarchate and an ability to scan the social environment in ways that identify which projects most need to be funded. This is being undertaken by The Holy Land Commission, and this also allows a system of keeping up to date with the most urgent needs of the Christian communities in The Holy Land.

On the issue of donations the Consulta concluded that there needs to be a system of gathering contributions which reflects an equitable ability to pay. Current arrangements tend to be generalised and this can be challenging for those least able to make contributions and create a lack of engagement for those who are not challenged by what is asked of their contributions. A strategy addressing this issue should be considered by the Grand Magisterium.

Attention should be given to ways in which a program with some more differentiated system of seeking contributions coming from members could be discussed with Lieutenants on an annual basis. There should be a dynamic relationship between The Governor General and Lieutenants to set financial targets that are realistic and challenging. Within the parameters set at such meetings Lieutenants should take responsibilities for developing detailed strategies for collecting revenue. The Consulta was aware of the different ways in which Lieutenancies gathered finances, and this was largely a matter to be left to local arrangements.

The global economic situation should be considered carefully when seeking funding from lieutenancies. This will affect the ability to contribute from some members of the Order. Where this is the case this should not be a source of either embarrassment or pressure. It is to acknowledge that contributions may be increasingly difficult to sustain by some members. This may be especially true of those members who no longer have a regular income.

It was recommended that The Order have financial reporting systems using modern accounting systems and standards. Much has been achieved in this regard, however international standards are constantly changing and the Order has to keep up to date with these. It is recommended that the targets and financial details of the Order should be maintained in local currencies, and reported on consistently in US dollars.

ADMINISTRATION

In a thriving and developing international organisation there is a need to ensure that effective administrative structures and supports are in place. The Order has

established office arrangements that have been able to promote the work of the Order. However, for greater interaction between the headquarters and lieutenancies, improved systems of communication will be required. This will require attention to information technology systems including the capacity for interactive engagement between lieutenancies and headquarters. This communication should also be directly connected to The Holy Land through the Patriarchate. This will allow an immediacy of communication and a sense of proximity to those projects which the Order is supporting.

A communications strategy and action deriving from it is essential. The Consulta recognised that an effective annual publication would be an asset to the Order. This should be published along with the regular newsletter which was considered to be an extremely valuable channel of communication. It was recommended that members be encouraged to have access to electronic mail and that Lieutenants use this as an essential part of communication with members.

The annual publication should be an instrument for reflection and information for members of the Order. In particular it should consider matters of justice and peace, and be a persistent means of advocating human rights in The Holy Land.

The Consulta recognized that in a global world of increased communication and interaction there was much to be gained by the Order acting in collaboration with other agencies. These may be from other Christian organizations, or indeed other faith groups or secular agencies. The Grand Magisterium should look for opportunities to collaborate with other organizations to further the mission of the Order.

The Consulta acknowledged and appreciated the vital role that Lieutenants have to play within the Order. There was a need to have a revised code of practice for new Lieutenants. This should be prepared by the Grand Magisterium. In addition, there should be an induction program for new Lieutenants – concerning at least aspects of spirituality, canon law, and civil law. In an increasingly litigious world there needs to be a clear understanding of the work of a Lieutenancy, and how this interacts with civil law. This is especially true in relation to matters of finance, property and protocol. The Grand Magisterium should give consideration to mentoring Lieutenants, and to supporting them in developing the work of Lieutenancies. This may be especially important in the first two years of being a Lieutenant, although it should not be limited to that period.

The Order has a responsibility for formation of its members. This formation is a central part of the work of The Order. It will include consideration of the spiritual lives of members, as well as an understanding of the work of the Order in The Holy Land. It should emphasize these aspects alongside a mode of thought inspired by the chivalric virtues of charity, loyalty, generosity, gentility, and courtesy.

The purposes of the Order are primarily those of service to The Holy Land and matters dealing with military decoration are of secondary significance. Decorating members is a sign of the significance of the contribution a member makes to The Holy Land and more widely to the mission and purposes of the Order. Where members are promoted there is a need to ensure this is done not because of length of service, but because of meritorious contribution to the work of the Order. The Grand Magisterium should consider offering notes of guidance on this matter.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

At a time of considerable unrest in The Holy land, and most noticeably in Gaza, there is a need for members of the Order to be informed of what the circumstances of life are for the Christian communities of The Holy Land. There is a need to look at how the Order is engaged in matters of awareness raising and advocacy in its work in different countries. While the order would not become engaged in political action that is factional or based on individual parties, it is constraining if there is no permission to promote the values of the Gospel in practice. Where there is action in relation to justice this may touch on politics in the modern world. Members of the Order may wish to become active in informing national governments about the issues of the Holy Land, and in particular about the perilous state of Christian communities there.

The Consulta recognised there was a need to give guidance to Lieutenants on matters such as members with particular needs which require attention, such as non-active and divorced members. While always sympathetic to the needs of individual members of the Order, there remains a need to have membership that is held to be in good standing with the Church.

FINAL THOUGHT

In its conversations about the work of the Order the Consulta discerned that the Order is invigorated and inspired to serve The Holy Land through the passionate work of so many members. It saw this grace of the Church characterised by

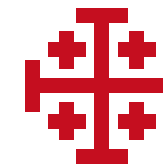
- *The courage of the Knights and Ladies of the Order*
- *Being dedicated to a world of justice, especially in The Holy Land, and*
- *Undertaken with humility and with hope, putting trust in the hand of God*

ACTION POINTS - FOR THE GRAND MAGISTERIUM

1. Offering continuing reflections, advice and examples of how the spirituality of the Order is developed.
2. There should be a clear strategy for funding all Christian communities in The Holy Land, while having a special relationship with the Patriarch and works of the Patriarchate.
3. Education will remain as a continuing priority for the Order. The nature of education that is sponsored by the Order should be clearly characterised as having the values and ideals of Christian education. The Grand Magisterium should establish a means of supporting the schools to enable this to continue.
4. There should be a clear and direct means of communication with Bethlehem University to support it in all its development in serving the Christians in The Holy Land.
5. There needs to be a system of gathering contributions which reflects an equitable ability of Lieutenancies to pay the recommended contributions.
6. The Grand Magisterium should establish a financial protocol that takes account of local circumstances, as well as consistency in reporting (in US dollars)
7. A policy and recommendations for related practices should be drawn up in relation to communications and publications.
8. The Grand Magisterium should look for opportunities to collaborate with other organizations to further the mission of the Order.
9. There should be drawn up a revised code of practice for Lieutenants.
10. The Grand Magisterium should give consideration to mentoring Lieutenants.
11. Where members are promoted there is a need to ensure this is done not because of length of service, but because of meritorious contribution to the work of the Order. The Grand Magisterium should consider offering notes of guidance on this matter.
12. The Grand Magisterium should offer guidance to Lieutenants on matters such as members with particular needs which require attention, such as non-active and divorced members.

ACTION POINTS - FOR LIEUTENANCIES

1. A strategy for funding and making contributions within each Lieutenancy should be drawn up and submitted to the Governor General. This will be a matter for individual lieutenancies and will take account of experience, size, fiscal arrangements within the Lieutenancy, ability to pay, and other matters. This should be discussed annually with the governor General.
2. The Spirituality of members should be a primary concern for Lieutenancies, and should be considered a priority for Lieutenancies.
3. Systems of reporting to the Grand Magisterium should be made consistent through effective accountancy processes and practices.
4. Systems of communications among members of a Lieutenancy should be as efficient and effective as possible, and would be expected to be organised electronically for each member.



HOMILY BY
**HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL
JOHN PATRICK FOLEY**
GRAND MASTER OF THE
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM
AT THE OPENING MASS OF THE CONSULTA
VILLA AURELIA
ROME, DECEMBER 1, 2008

My brothers and sisters in Christ:

First, welcome to Rome and to the Consulta of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. This Mass is being offered for your intentions and for the intentions of our Order and its work in the Holy Land.

The readings in today's Mass seem to have been especially chosen for us.

In the first reading, Isaiah has the nations saying: "Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may instruct us in His ways, and we may walk in His paths." Isaiah then continues: "For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again."

Is not our work in the Order of the Holy Sepulchre a work for peace?

First, we seek to help the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem to make more widely known the message of truth and love in the Gospel of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Second, we concentrate on assistance to schools and charitable institutions which are open to all people, so that an atmosphere of mutual understanding and mutual respect might be fostered in Israel, Palestine and Jordan - an understanding and respect which, we hope, will lead to a lasting peace.

Third, we pray for peace - especially in the Holy Land, but also throughout the world. We pray that swords may truly be transformed into plowshares, into instruments of peace.

In the Gospel, we heard the centurion beg Our Lord to heal his servant, but to say, when the Lord offers to come to his home, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed."

Are not these almost exactly the words which we say together with the priest before Communion?

Can we, who have been pilgrims to the Holy Land, not view in our mind's eye Mt. Zion and the wall of the ancient Temple? Can we not visualize Capernaum by the shores of the Sea of Galilee?

Thus, we have part of the formula for peace in the Holy Land - from the Book of Isaiah. We have a formula for our own sanctification in the humble words of the centurion - a confession of our own unworthiness and an openness to the work of divine grace within us.

The garments which we wear - with the Jerusalem Cross symbolizing the five wounds of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - are designed not to set us apart as special people, which we are not, but to remind ourselves and others of our special obligation to be identified with the Passion of Christ and to assist the Christians who live in the land made holy by Him.

Thus, we can conclude now with that prayer which is so memorable from the investiture ceremony and from so many ceremonies of the Way of the Cross in our parishes and schools: "We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world!"

ADDRESS BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL JOHN PATRICK FOLEY

GRAND MASTER OF THE
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM
AT THE OPENING OF THE CONSULTA
VILLA AURELIA
ROME, DECEMBER 1, 2008

My brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is a pleasure and an honor for me to welcome you to the Consulta of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre - my first and, I am sure, the first for many of you. The purpose of the Consulta, as you know, is not only to assess what has happened during the past five years but also and especially to plan prayerfully and carefully for the next five years.

As you also know, I am very new to this work. While I have been a member of the Order since 1991, invested *motu proprio* by Giuseppe Cardinal Caprio, and have been faithful in paying my dues to the Eastern Lieutenancy in the United States, I discovered only last week that I had been enrolled by Cardinal Caprio as a member of the Lieutenancy of Central Italy. I apologize to the Central Italian Lieutenancy for any unintended failure on my part to be more active with them - even though my first investiture of new Knights and Ladies was very happily in Rome with them and for them.

In spite of my obvious lack of experience, however, our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI appointed me in June 2007 as Grand Master of our Order, and I am truly honored to be with you in reflecting on how we can help more effectively and more extensively our fellow Christians in the Holy Land and on how we can thus deepen our spiritual lives in union with Jesus Christ whose life, death and resurrection, in the land we seek to serve, made it truly holy.

I am very grateful to my eminent predecessor, Cardinal Carlo Furno, for his kindness and encouragement, and to the officials and staff of the Grand Magisterium for their gracious reception and cooperation. Obviously, I have worked most closely with our Governor General, Pier Luigi Parola, our Vice Governor General, Adolfo Rinaldi, our Chancellor, Msgr. Juan Dorronsoro, our master of ceremonies, Msgr. Francis Kelly, and our new Vice Chancellor, Father Hans Brouwers, an old friend and a former student of mine, whom Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia has been kind

enough to assign to the service of our Order in Rome. I am happy to announce that we have a new Assessor, Archbishop Joseph DeAndrea, former Nuncio in Kuwait. Archbishop DeAndrea, while a native of the Diocese of Ivrea in northern Italy, the same home diocese as Cardinal Furno, was a priest of the Diocese of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, my own home state, so he is well equipped to serve many people and many cultures. Welcome, Archbishop DeAndrea!

I am also grateful to so many of you who have received me so kindly for investiture ceremonies. I am attempting to get to as many lieutenancies as possible not only for the ceremonies but also to observe what is being done for the vitality of the Order and on behalf of our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. As those of you who are lieutenants know, I have already had the pleasure of being in all of the Italian lieutenancies except Sicily, and in Switzerland, France, Spain, Germany, The Netherlands, Ireland and the northeastern and eastern lieutenancies in the United States. Just last weekend, I was in Liverpool, England. Governor General Parola and I also met last summer in Toronto with the lieutenants of North America. I have been very favorably impressed, and I thank you not only for your kindness to me but also and especially for what you have been doing for the Holy Land.

My own appointment as Grand Master practically coincided with a change in the leadership of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which we are pledged to assist and serve.

I have been privileged to visit the Holy Land twice this year, once in January when Patriarch Michel Sabbah was still in office and once in June for the ceremonies of succession of our new Patriarch Fouad Twal. As you know, the Latin Patriarch is by statute the Grand Prior of our Order, and I am delighted that Patriarch Twal will be able to be with us during this entire week. I want to thank Patriarch Twal and his predecessor, Patriarch Emeritus Sabbah, for their great kindness to me on the occasion of my two visits to the Holy Land this year. They enabled me to see at first hand the difference which our Order makes in the Holy Land in the number and quality of the schools, parishes and charitable institutions which we help to support.

As you know, both Patriarch Emeritus Sabbah and Patriarch Twal are natives of the Holy Land; Patriarch Emeritus Sabbah comes from Nazareth in Galilee and Patriarch Twal from Madabah in Jordan. Both are alumni of the excellent seminary in Beit Jala, which receives a great deal of support from our Order and which needs and deserves far more from us. I was very favorably impressed not only by the quality of the clergy of the Latin Patriarchate but also by the quality and spirituality of the seminarians, many of whom make great sacrifices to continue their priestly studies, especially since many of them are unable to return home during holiday periods, because of restrictions on their mobility imposed by Israeli authorities.

Before I became Grand Master of this Order, I had visited the Holy Land five times - the first time in 1965, before the Six-Day War, and the last time in 1977, before the Intifadah. I was a journalist, so I had been trained to observe and to ask probing and sometimes uncomfortable questions, especially of civil authorities. I can only say

that the situation of our fellow Christians has become ever more stressful. Especially in the Palestinian Territories, their opportunities for housing, for employment, for travel, and even for access to their land have become increasingly more difficult.

It would be presumptuous of me to announce any new program or new initiatives at this time when I should be profiting from your experience and your wisdom, and I look forward to hearing your ideas.

It is my intention to be with you every morning during the first session, and I will try to go from language group to language group. I also hope to be present for each of the evening general sessions. During the rest of the day, however, it is my hope to meet with each one of you privately, to get to know you and to hear your concerns, your hopes and your plans.

During the week, we shall be privileged to hear from Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, the prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, under whose jurisdiction the Latin Patriarchate falls. Cardinal Sandri has even kindly postponed a major trip he has to make to be with us. We shall also hear from Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, the president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, who is well known for his scriptural expertise and for his television ministry here in Italy, and from Msgr. Robert Stern, the president of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association and the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, who is a devoted member of our Order and who just observed the golden anniversary of his priestly ordination.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Secretary of State, will also honor us with an address based upon the policy of the Holy See regarding the Holy Land and upon his vision of our work for the Church.

Finally, we will be honored on Friday by an address by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, who will kindly receive us in audience at the Vatican and who will inform us of his hopes for our Order.

You can see that our week will be quite full and challenging, but I am sure that it will be fruitful and satisfying. We have deliberately chosen a place for our meeting which has a beautiful chapel and a well equipped meeting room, even though our personal quarters may be somewhat more austere than those to which you may have been accustomed. We deliberately wanted to save money, so that we could have more resources available to help our fellow Christians in the Holy Land.

Your response to the preparations for this meeting has been most edifying, and I hope that you may be able to return to your Lieutenancies with a renewed sense of dedication and with the information and personal experiences necessary to inspire your present members and to recruit new Knights and Ladies dedicated to helping the descendants of the original Christians in the land made holy by the presence of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you and may God bless our reflections and our work!

ADDRESS BY
**HIS BEATITUDE
FOUAD TWAL**
LATIN PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM
GRAND PRIOR
ROME, DECEMBER 1, 2008

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, dear Lieutenants and friends,

I am very glad to be gathered with you in these days for the Consulta. This is my first such meeting since my enthronement as the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. With me, I bring affection and greetings from the Holy Land and from the community of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is, after all, the very ‘raison d’être’ for the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre. The existence of this humble yet crucial community is indeed the Alpha and Omega of your free and conscious commitment, as well as your praiseworthy solidarity and generous contributions to the Christian community of the Holy Land. I consider this meeting to be an opportunity for a new beginning in which we renew our commitments, create a vision which meets the existing needs and most importantly, embrace our faith in the Lord.

In this Pauline year, we are reminded of the words that Our Lord addressed to Saul, on the way to Damascus: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting”. It was a great revelation of the meaning of the Body of Christ, of how Christ is truly present in his believers of the Holy Land suffering under the persecutions in which St. Paul took such a zealous part.

By His grace, when the Lord speaks to us here at this meeting, whatever admonitions He may well have for us, yet I believe His words will be quite different than what St. Paul heard. To you, our dear Lieutenants and friends, the Lord is here present among you, among us, and He is saying, “I am the Lord Jesus whom you are helping, whom you love in the persons of the Christians of the Holy Land.” And it is from Him and for Him, the Redeemer and Prince of Peace, that you have your faith and your solidarity.

Indeed, only those who actually love the Holy Land and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem have the right and the moral obligation to adhere to the Order. And this is because someone who does not love the Holy Land is not really in a position to be of service to this Land. Love, the will to serve and the desire to give go together. Anyone who does not love, and has not the will to serve and give, even to the point of

accepting real sacrifice, has not a true place among us. We again gladly bring to mind the words of St. Paul, the Apostle to the gentiles when he says in the famous chapter 13 of his first letter to the Corinthians, *“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.”* In this spirit, then we find ourselves a long way away from the will to command, to control or to put ourselves forward.

It is precisely this spiritual dimension, the dimension of faith by which we recognize the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is our very strength and, I hope, it is this spirit that will guide us during this Advisory Council meeting. I stand here today thanking God for all the good things that I find in front of me among you: your faith, your love, your sense of solidarity and your friendship. Yes, I am indeed full of thankfulness and appreciation, for it is those things, particularly the faith and friendship that I count on so very much.

I am thankful that, even in the face of huge challenges, our local clergy and laity have become mature and competent in their work and they have learned to take confident roles of leadership in the community. This is real fruit from the real commitment and sacrifices that the Order has made for the Patriarchate. We work together and our aim remains clear and supreme as we remain faithful to our cause. You have come a long way in the great and inspiring work that you do and your efforts never ceased to expand and prosper in the past years and hence your hard work ought to be acknowledged. It is indeed a very positive launching point for me now to begin to address the challenges calling for a response.

As the ninth Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, I stand before you here today to reflect on the facts that have been present for more than 150 years since the Patriarchate was re-established. Many questions and problematic issues will be addressed during the coming few days and so I hope that we will all try to listen to the voice of Christ who is present among us and try to discover what is it that He is trying to tell us. We have many ideas and suggestions, which are good, but we need to begin with asking and listening and be faithful to our commitment. And thus it is with this sense of excitement and freshness that I address you here today.

The work of the Latin Patriarchate, in one sentence, is **to encourage the growth, in faith and numbers, of the Church.** Whereas among our very chief concerns is the emigration of Christians from the Holy Land, yet our desire, in the first place, is not only to try and eliminate the difficulties that push them to leave, for we do not have power over many situations. Rather, it is to help them receive and live out their mission of faith, strengthened by the solidarity that they experience through your support. If this mission becomes adopted then the question of emigration recedes, for the sacrifices become simply a condition for communicating Christ and living out our vocation in the Holy Land.

The first issue that I would like to draw your attention to is the **Institutional Fund**, through which the Latin Patriarchate must cover all the basic expenses related to the everyday institutional needs. I have started with this issue since it is a vital matter that should be addressed in depth. This fund is dedicated to the maintenance of our diocese in the three States: Palestine, Israel, and Jordan besides Cyprus. It is intended to cover the stipends of clergymen and religious sisters, medical expenses and daily needs, salaries for the “institutional” employees and the expenses generated by the Latin Patriarchate House together with the two vicariates in Jordan and Israel. We are very grateful for the permanent support the Order is providing on a monthly basis, but I am obliged to point out that the **amount of this money is never enough.** If you can imagine the Patriarchate as a family that has more than 300 children and about 150 buildings to maintain, then you will be able to comprehend the enormous amount of money needed to do that.

Please note that we have already asked for an increase in the salaries of the clergy but we have not yet received any response. We have prepared a paper proposing a different institutional budget for the coming 4 years. I would be very appreciative if you could support us with a more substantial fund. Also I have had prepared the budget of the Latin Patriarchate House in Jerusalem as a separate item, just in case it is necessary to maintain it as a separate entity.

The second fundamental issue that I would like to discuss is the Patriarchate’s work of **Education** that is carried out through our schools. Our schools continue to be a crucial expression of the mission of the Church. First of all I would like to express my deep gratitude for the prompt and concrete response to our request for an increase in and modification of teacher salaries. I really thank you for the enormous efforts that you are making in this field. The schools are among our principal means for helping our families form faithful and capable new generations, proud of their faith and their heritage. We educate them to be capable of contributing to the creation of a society where all people, including minorities, can participate in the building up of the common good. We give young Muslim and Christian students a chance to work and grow together in a way that guides them to trusting relationships that can open up unexpected paths in the future. I would like to highlight the fact that all the **vocations to priesthood** come entirely from students in our schools, and therefore the schools deserve our complete attention and sacrifice.

Our particular challenge in these years has been and continues to be helping these schools develop to remain pedagogically relevant in social environments undergoing rapid change. Thus, besides the challenges of basic upkeep in areas where the tuitions and fees cannot cover the running costs, there is also the need to expand curriculum .We have therefore elaborated a **4-year plan** for our schools aiming at enhancing our role as educators in the three areas of Jordan, Palestine and Israel. Our first and foremost priority is to upgrade and rehabilitate the school buildings. This is a critical need for Jordan where we own and operate 22 schools. Our work in Jordan

for the coming 4 years will include the upgrading and reconstruction of plants, rehabilitation of the school buildings, upgrading of libraries, laboratories and furniture, as well as the installation of new external facilities, such as playgrounds and multipurpose auditoriums.

As for our schools in the Palestinian territories, due to the low level of teaching, we intend to direct our investment towards **teacher training**. The situation in our schools in Israel is relatively good, since we are receiving subsidies from the Israeli Government and in these days we are developing all of our school systems in order to meet the expectations of international standards. For this reason, we feel able to expand by building two more schools, one in Jaffa of Nazareth and the other in Rameh. However, priority is given to Jaffa of Nazareth, due to the possession of 80% of the land needed and to the relatively larger population of Christians in that area.

My third concern is the **seminary**, the heart of the Patriarchate, the source of our priests and the future of our Diocese in the Holy Land. Our Seminary is receiving many vocations especially from Jordan, but unfortunately we are forced to postpone some, due to the shortage of space. The other unfortunate fact about the Seminary is the running costs, which are constantly increasing and therefore every year we find ourselves trapped in deficit. This indispensable part of the Latin Patriarchate contributes in educating, teaching and raising clergymen, well trained and aware of their spiritual and pastoral mission, who serve the Christian community. Hence this sector of our mission deserves more care.

I would like to propose adopting this seminary as a school and trying to cover the full expenses on a yearly basis.

Another aspect which is directly related to our commitment to sustaining the mission of the faithful is the **Humanitarian Aid** which enhances the social and familial life of the Church. Since the second uprising the need for Humanitarian Aid has increased. Just with your help in this field alone, thousands of Christian families have found relief and their lives have been eased. Still, the demand is always increasing.

During the last visit of his Eminence Cardinal Folly the Grand Master he met with the majority of our Priests in Jordan, Palestine and Israel. In these meetings a new dimension of pastoral need emerged, which includes summer camps for youth, regular meetings and activities during the year, Catechism for Christians attending governmental schools, especially in Jordan. His Eminence asked us to prepare a concept paper regarding this issue, and so we did and it will be presented to you along with a budget.

SOME PROPOSALS

We are looking for ways to cooperate and increase the good work of the Order. To this end we are considering some initiatives. Can we together discuss the following issues? :

- The creation of new foundations and finding new resources.
- The establishment of a permanent fund for eventual and occasional situations especially Endowments.
- The consideration of an investment fund handled by LPJ and the Grand Magisterium, or through expert Knights we have. Many of you are very qualified business men.
- The establishment of a Lieutenancy in the Holy Land (Jordan, Palestine and Israel). We have already 12 Knights and Dames very devoted and we can have more, always in **absolute** coordination with the Grand Magisterium .

Thank you for your kind attention. God bless and reward you and your families.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SPIRITUALITY
OF THE ORDER BY
**ARCHBISHOP
GIANFRANCO RAVASI,**
PRESIDENT OF THE
PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE
ROME, DECEMBER 1, 2008

THE SPIRITUALITY
OF THE
EQUESTRIAN ORDER

The core theme of this presentation will be the spirituality of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Insofar as this is a rather general subject, we will strive in the most straightforward and essential way possible to avail ourselves of three symbols readily visible within ecclesial tradition and mentioned explicitly in the Order's Statutes.

THE THREE STONES OF JERUSALEM

Let us begin with the first symbol, the fundamental symbol, which is the Holy Sepulchre. This supposes a material sign in the form of a stone; a sign which, among other things, unites all three monotheistic religions in Jerusalem. That is where the ideal sign of the Jewish people consists of the stones of the western Wall, the Wall of the Temple of Zion. This is in memory of the great tradition of faith in the presence of God in the space and history of Israel. Even though standing are only some ruins of the Temple, the symbol of the stone remains constituent in nature, and today as well Jews pray as they face this Wall, known by all as the Wailing Wall - *kotel* in Hebrew -, considering it their spiritual wellspring.

The second stone, this one constituent for Christianity, is the one rolled away from the Holy Sepulchre, a symbolic sign for us of a transcendent reality, the life of Christ forever, His resurrection. Insofar as an open sepulchre, the Holy Sepulchre constitutes the heart of our creed and the dimension of hope enshrined in the Christian faith itself. And this sepulchre – as the Churches of the East put it so eloquently – is the sign of *anástasis*, resurrection. Not a tomb of death, not a definitive seal, but a sign of an existence. It represents a beginning; the beginning of the grand epiphany of salvation. And not by chance do the Arabs themselves call the Holy Sepulchre '*Qijama*', which means 'rising', 'rising upwards' and hence towards heaven.

As all pilgrims know so well, the third stone is connected with the "Dome of the Rock", *Qubbet as-Sakhra* in Arabic. Even if the definition is erroneous, this is the so-called Mosque of Omar, which, under the splendor of its architecture, has on one side of its center the rock of Abraham's ideal sacrifice (Mount Moriah), and on the other side the rock of the ascension into heaven of the prophet Mohammed. Hence, it too constitutes a sign of hope for Islam.

In Jerusalem, therefore, we have three stones that represent a symbolic foundation of the three monotheistic religions, which can elect this city as their ideal place of encounter. Unfortunately, as we see all too often even nowadays, down through history the holy city has become a place of conflict, a milieu rampant with opposition, while by virtue of its nature it should be the place where the three religions never cease to discover anew their roots and their substance. In this regard – precisely in order to sustain the commitment fielded by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre to protect these stones and safeguard these holy places – I would like to recall two excerpts from the Bible, which in ideal terms could serve as both epigraph and motto also for the intensive activities undertaken by confreres in the painstaking care and attention reserved to monuments and memorials in the Holy Land, and especially Christian ones.

The first of these excerpts is to be found in Psalm 102, verse 15, where the psalmist proclaims, "your servants prize the stones of Zion". The verb used in Hebrew is *ratsû*, which means 'to experience pleasure, love'. When one person loves another person that love is not just spiritual in nature, but visceral, or what I would call 'material'. This dimension of eros, of authentic love, is a deeply interwoven component that is sanctified and blessed. By way of example let's take the Canticle of Canticles, where eros and love come together and merge with one another in such a perfectly harmonious way. Basically speaking, the psalmist is saying this: for these stones – the stones of Zion evoking our history – we Jews have close to a nuptial love, a complete and full love, not just metaphoric love. This can and must be shared also by Christians.

At this juncture I would also like to recall words of Jesus which may well not be cited that often. In the narration of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem in chapter 19 of the Gospel according to Luke, verses 38-40 recall how all Christ's disciples cried out: "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens". The Scribes and Pharisees

present, however, told Jesus to have his disciples stop making all that boisterous and disturbing noise. What the disciples were singing, in fact, was a messianic exaltation of Christ that those Scribes and Pharisees were not able to grasp. And Jesus said to them: "I tell you, if these keep silence the stones will cry out". We who love the Holy Land and have visited it an infinite number of times are able to understand the full sense of the words, "the stones cry out", the stones speak! Therefore, the pilgrim who goes to visit the Holy Sepulchre or one of the many sites that conserve biblical or Christian memories finds a message "carved": the message of those living stones that evoke a human and salvific memory, and are not just lifeless archeological finds destined to represent an inanimate and remote past.

Therefore, one first important commitment: see to it that through the efforts deployed by the Order, and by way of the voices of the Franciscans, the voices of all the guides, all the visitors and pilgrims, these stones may continue to cry out, speak up, vouch for and narrate our history of faith, our profound hope linked to a religion that is historical and incarnate. Christianity, in fact, is not a religion that propels people to abandon reality in order to fly aloft in the direction of mythical and mystical heavens, but is a religion down to earth – I'd venture to call it a religion with its feet on the ground – a religion of the flesh, of history. Sign and eloquent symbol of it in the strict sense are the stones.

THE SIGN OF THE PILGRIMAGE

The second image I would like to bring to your attention is taken from the Order's Statutes and is the pilgrimage, a theme to be proposed anew from a material point of view, and especially from the spiritual point of view. There is a beautiful Arab aphorism that distinguishes three types of travelers. First there are those who travel with their feet, and these are traders or merchants interested only in a concrete place, no matter where it may actually be, and not its history. If they go to Paris, for example, they don't go to the Louvre, but are only interested in making good deals. Merchants travel only in a material sense, that is to say with their feet. This proverb continues with the example of those who travel with their eyes: these are the scholars who love cultural journeys and hence could be likened to upper crust tourists and not the masses. In their travels they strive to discover the beauty of other countries, other cultures, and other places yet unknown to them.

This Arab proverb then recalls those who travel with their heart, and these are pilgrims. Certainly, pilgrims do use their feet as they travel, do need assistance, must have eyes in order to look upon and know history, but above all they travel in a holy place with their heart and for the conversion of their heart. This is the fundamental difference distinguishing them from all other travelers in the world. Hence the importance of the pilgrimage, but not necessarily in terms of a given geographical space since it is also possible to go on an interior pilgrimage.

If we take a close look at the Bible we realize that the Word of God as a whole is constantly marked by a journey, a pilgrimage. Suffice it to consider Abraham, who, without knowing the goal, embarked towards the unknown with the sole assurance of the Word of God, that God who had called him. Everything begins with that call: "Abraham, leave your country" (Gn 12:1). And Abraham leaves, with nary an objection, thereby leading some scholars to assert that Abraham's vocation is based on a military model: an order is given and promptly carried out. Abraham, however, is aware that God's grace will guide him. There is no 'unknown', no risk wherever God is present.

Let us also consider another great pilgrimage in the Bible, the Exodus of the people of Israel. Grandiose indeed was the itinerary traveled by an entire nation across the striking yet mysterious reaches of desert lands in an atmosphere of silence and solitude. During days spent in the deeps of the desert it becomes possible to grasp the richness of this place, this territory so arid, so empty and always the same in the eyes of a superficial observer. The reality of the desert, however, is quite different for someone who sees things with a more attentive eye. For example, the voice of the desert wind is already something different compared with the wind we experience in the cities where we live. Truly discovered in the desert – and this is what Israel was to experience – is the true meaning of what is essential in life in the face of the countless, often useless and harmful superstructures of our sedentary societies, our huge cities and consumerism in general. A person in the desert thinks only about indispensable things like water and food. All the rest is secondary. Hence, Israel is tempted in the desert; the forces of evil cause it to feel discouraged and throw it into a state of despair.

Also to be found in the desert, however, is mystical intimacy. It is in the Sinai that the Word of God descends from the mountain top. The prophet Hosea, yearning to establish anew the bond of love with his wife who had left him, wishes to repeat the betrothal and honeymoon right in the desert: "There will I speak to her heart", we read in the Hebrew text.; in other words tenderly embracing one another in solitude and silence. The desert as such therefore becomes a parable reminding us of the need for a pause in the oasis, in silence. Paschal once said that the majority of the serious mishaps of his time (and all the more so of our time) were due to the fact that people were not able to spend an hour in the silence of their own room. Just five minutes of silence and reflection would suffice today. In this do we realize the value and eloquence of the desert for our time.

We should also recall another pilgrimage presented in the Bible, and that is the strictly spiritual pilgrimage to Zion. As we know, present in the Book of Psalms are the fifteen psalms of the "songs of ascents" (Psalms 120-134). This is the handbook of the ideal pilgrim going up to the Temple and thereby ascending, because Jerusalem stands at 800 meters above sea level. However, it is not just a material or physical ascent, but rather a spiritual one. In fact, arrival at the Temple means entering into communion with God. This is why the Jews call the temple *'ohel mo'ed*, which in

Hebrew means "tent of the encounter", "tent of the gathering", because the Jews meet with one another in the Temple of Zion, but they also encounter their Lord, who says "My name is there". Now, in the biblical world the "name" is the person himself. God, eternal and infinite, compresses Himself, and even shortens and imprisons Himself within our reality, which is limited space. There, however, is where He encounters His faithful.

Important, therefore, is the moment of communion, the moment of the mysticism of the temple. In moments of liturgy, and especially when underway is the pilgrimage to Zion, Israel feels the fullness of its intimacy with the Lord and projects that experience with images as primordial and radical as thirst: "My soul thirsts for God, the God of life; when shall I go to see the face of God" (Ps 42:3). It is likewise interesting to note that the Hebrew word *nefesh* means both "throat" and "soul". Hence, it is a matter of a physical thirst that becomes the symbol of interior thirsting in a complete oneness of body and spirit: my throat thirsts for you, oh God, and it is my soul, my entire being, also my body, that needs You.

Then appearing, as in psalm 84, is the wistfulness of the pilgrim, who has to return home after having been in Zion. In such a person's eyes, says the psalmist, more fortunate are the swallows whose nests are just under the temple's eaves and hence can always be with the Lord. This, therefore, is intimacy in the truest sense of the word. The aim or objective of the pilgrimage to Zion is profound, complete, loving and joyful communion with our God. Then again, the terminal point of the entire Bible is the heavenly Jerusalem located beyond both time and space. Our pilgrimage, the pilgrimage of life itself, therefore has a transcendent goal, and our hope is the dawn of Easter, the glory of communion with God beyond the frontier of death. The great poet Rylke said that death is the face of life other than the one facing us. With death we see that on the other side there is another life with a profile and a countenance we cannot see here and now, but which will be shown to us at the end of our pilgrimage.

It would be meaningful to recall words taken from a book with which many of you are familiar, the work of an anonymous Russian pilgrim narrating Christian life on the basis of a pilgrimage. The book begins with words that could somehow offer us the portrait of a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre: "By the grace of God I am a man and a Christian; through my own deeds I am a great sinner; my condition is that of a homeless pilgrim of humble species, who wanders about walking from place to place with nothing but a piece of bread and with the Bible under his cloak". Therefore, a Christian with grace, but also with his sinfulness; he is above all journeying towards the ultimate eschatological goal. We and people in general travel quite frequently nowadays, and yet, rather paradoxically, we often feel as if we were at a standstill, all on our own, static, tired and dissatisfied, as if nothing at all had been visited, seen and known. The reason for this can be seen in the fact that people today are no longer on a pilgrimage in the quest for noble and eternal goals. Famous are the words Plato placed on the lips of Socrates: "A life without searching doesn't deserve to be lived".

THE CROSS OF CHRIST, THE SUPREME SYMBOL

Let us conclude with a final image, which is the supreme sign of the spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre: the symbol of the cross, the center of the Christian faith, and, as we are reminded by John the evangelist, the throne of Christ's glory. Two are the elements brought to our attention through the cross. First of all, the cross was planted in the Holy Land, and the Holy Land is in the safekeeping of the Franciscans, of all the Christians living there and who, unfortunately, are fast becoming an increasingly smaller group. I went to the Holy Land for the first time in 1965, more than forty years ago, and have returned quite often. Down through these four decades or so I have witnessed the relentless reduction in the size of the Christian community. Yes, the Christian 'signs' are still there, but they seem not really extraneous, but, due to urban development, new cities and a new way of life, somewhat deprived of the force and impact that distinguished them in the past.

The Order's Statutes set forth the need to assist the works and the cultural, charitable and social institutions of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land. This is a way to make sure the cross of Christ continues to shine, that the cross of our brothers and sisters living there amidst difficulties and sufferings may continue to be the cross of life in the Holy Land and not just the cross of monuments, churches, liturgical celebrations and Christian culture. As they have done in the past and are now doing again, complicated and well known political and social problems are staining those beloved stones of the Holy Land with more and more blood.

The second and final element I would like to recall is the cross of Christ as the symbolic sign of the suffering of humanity at large. In this sense I feel that the Knights, loving the Cross of Christ, should always be sensitive to the sufferings of all the peoples in the Holy Land, including the Palestinian Muslims (consider the dramatic situation in the Gaza Strip) without any distinctions whatsoever: victims of terrorism or other phenomena, peoples who cause pain and sorrow to other peoples and at the same time experience such pain and sorrow in a personal manner. The cross of Christ is therefore the great sign of hope above and beyond pain, and being able to sow seeds of hope in the distress of all peoples is a great act of love. In fact, St Paul reminds us that with Christianity "there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all are one in Christ Jesus" (Ga 3:28). The cross of Christ draws all towards itself - "When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself", says the Lord in the Gospel of John (12:32) - and also draws all the pain and sorrow of humanity. The Knights of the Holy Sepulchre hasten along the roads of the world to bring a word of love, and at the same time a word of hope and consolation.

STATEMENT BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL
JEAN-LOUIS TAURAN,

PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOG
ROME, DECEMBER 1, 2008

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE –
A RISK OR
AN OPPORTUNITY?

We develop in multi-cultural and multi-religious societies. To say this is to state the obvious. There is no religiously homogenous society. In Europe, from kindergarten onwards, young children rub shoulders with companions of all origins and different religious affiliations. There is nothing surprising about this if one thinks of what Paul Tillich wrote: “Religion is the substance of culture” (in *Théologie de la culture*, éd. Placet 1978 p. 92; [Theology of Culture, 1959]). History knows no non-religious cultures!

Nevertheless in Europe from the eighteenth century onwards a conviction began to appear that faith is incompatible with reason. Although he was a believer, Descartes was to apply his methodical doubt to matters of faith. This current of thought was to give birth to the philosophy of the Enlightenment: reason has access to truth on its own. Natural moral standards, tolerance, deism or even, for some, atheism led to the belief that man is self-sufficient. After the considerable progress of the sciences (Newton died in 1727), the development of travel (and missions) and unresolved social crises, it seemed to many that Christianity, with its dogmas and moral teaching, did not serve progress. All people were thus considered to belong to a common humanity and, endowed with reason, easily discovered that a natural religion exists, without dogma and without fanaticism. The individual sufficed unto himself. There was no need to look to religion to explain man’s origin, nor to await a happiness

beyond this earth. Thus man is placed at the centre of the world and the supernatural is eliminated. At the level of ideas, this vision of things was to lead to Scientism (all that human reason does not justify does not exist) and at the level of achievements, to the French Revolution (to organize society without God), culminating in the twentieth century with the two forms of totalitarianism (Marxism-Leninism and the Nazi ideologies).

It is very obvious that the Church contested this vision of things and maintained that to exclude the religious from reason was to amputate man, created in the image of God. Pope John Paul II's Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* expresses it well: "In God there lies the origin of all things, in him is found the fullness of the mystery, and in this his glory consists; to men and women there falls the task of exploring truth with their reason, and in this their nobility consists" (no. 17).

But this God whom we dismissed in the past is reappearing in public discourse today. News stands are full of books and magazines on religious subjects, esotericism and the new religions. "The revenge of God" (Gilles K  pel) has been spoken of. Today, one cannot understand the world without religions. And this - for here indeed is the great paradox of the current situation - is because they are seen as a danger: fanaticism, fundamentalism and terrorism have been or still are associated with a perverted form of Islam. It is not, of course, a question of the true Islam practised by the majority of this religion's followers. Still today it is a fact that people kill for religious reasons (the assassination of the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul). I read that 123 Christians met with death in 2007 in Iraq, India and Nigeria because they were Christian. The reason is that religions are capable of the best as well as of the worst: they can serve holiness or alienation. They can preach peace or war. Yet it is always necessary to explain that it is not the religions themselves that wage war but rather their followers! Hence the need, once again, to conjugate faith with reason. For to act against reason is in fact to act against God, as Pope Benedict XVI said at the University of Regensburg on 12 September 2006:

"In the beginning was the logos [...] Logos means both reason and word -- a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason. [...] A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion to the realm of sub-cultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures".

Thus we are in a world in which because of material and human precariousness, the dangers of war and the hazards of the environment, in the face of the failure of the great political systems of the past century, men and women of this generation are once again asking themselves the essential questions on the meaning of life and death, on the meaning of history and of the consequences that amazing scientific discoveries might bring in their wake. It had been forgotten that the human being is the only creature who asks questions and questions himself. It is remarkable that *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian

Religions of the Second Vatican Council, should underline this aspect of things in its introduction: "Men look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence.

The problems that weigh heavily on the hearts of men are the same today as in past ages. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behaviour, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found?" (n. 1).

Thus we are all condemned to dialogue. What is dialogue? It is the search for an inter-understanding between two individuals with a view to a common interpretation of their agreement or their disagreement. It implies a common language, honesty in the presentation of one's position and the desire to do one's utmost to understand the other's point of view.

Applied to interreligious dialogue, these presuppositions make it easier to understand that in the context of religion it is not a question of being "kind" to others to please them! Nor is it a matter of negotiation: I find the solution to problems and the matter is closed. In interreligious dialogue it is a question of taking a risk, not of accepting to give up my own convictions but of letting myself be called into question by the convictions of another, accepting to take into consideration arguments different to my own or those of my community. All religions, each one in its own way, strive to respond to the enigmas of the human condition. Each religion has its own identity but this identity enables me to take the religion of the other into consideration. It is from this that dialogue is born. Identity, otherness and dialogue go together.

My Christian faith proclaims that Jesus "the true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world" (Jn 1:9) This means that in every human being there is the light of Christ. Consequently, all that is positive existing in religions is not without shadows. All that is positive shares in the great Light which shines on all the lights. One then understands better the prologue of *Nostra Aetate* and the document "Dialogue and Proclamation": all that is true and holy in every religion is accepted, strengthened and brought to its completion in Christ. It is the logic of the Incarnation: the Logos assumes, purifies and glorifies human nature! But be careful: we do not say "all religions are of equal value". We say "All those in search of God have equal dignity"!

It is always necessary to return to *Nostra Aetate*, particularly paragraphs nos. 2 and 3: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life' (Jn 1:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (II Cor 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life" (no. 2). And it is necessary to mention the special

relations which unite Christians and Muslims who “worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty... who has also spoken to men” (no. 3), as well as the existing bonds with the Jews, from whom “the Church ... received the revelation of the Old Testament” and to whose race, “according to the flesh” Christ and the Apostles belonged (cf. no. 4).

Then one understands better, as the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990) said, that interreligious dialogue “does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest”, but “is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills”. Thus, “through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the ‘seeds of the Word’, a ‘ray of that truth which enlightens all men’, these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind”. Consequently, “the religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church: they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ’s presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of Revelation which she has received for the good of all” (no. 56, *passim*).

One can say that from the end of the Second Vatican Council to our own day, Catholics have moved on from tolerance to encounter, to arrive at dialogue:

- dialogue of life: good neighbourly relations with non-Christians which encourage the sharing of joys and troubles;
- dialogue of works: collaboration with a view to the well-being of both groups, especially people who live alone, in poverty or sickness;
- dialogue of theological exchanges which permits experts to understand in depth the respective religious heritages;
- dialogue of spiritualities which makes available the riches of the life of prayer of both to all, in both groups; Interreligious dialogue therefore mobilizes all those who are on their way towards God or towards the Absolute.

Believers who carry on this kind of dialogue do not pass unnoticed. They are a society’s wealth. Since citizens who adhere to a religion are the majority, there is a “religious fact” that is essential, to the extent that all religious faith is practised in the heart of a community the “confessions”! By their number, by the length of their traditions, by the visibility of their institutions and their rites, believers are present and can be identified. They are appreciated or they are opposed, but they never leave one indifferent, which brings their leaders to get on with other communities of believers without losing their identity and to meet each other without antagonism. Civil authorities must only take note of the religious fact, watch in order to guarantee the effective respect for freedom of conscience and religion, and only intervene if this freedom is damaging to the freedom of non-believers or disturbs public order and health.

But more positively, it is always in the interest of leaders of societies to encourage interreligious dialogue and to draw on the spiritual and moral heritage of religions for a number of values likely to contribute to mental harmony, to encounters between cultures and to the consolidation of the common good. Moreover all religions, in different ways, urge their followers to collaborate with all those who endeavour to:

- assure respect for the dignity of the human person and his fundamental rights;
- develop a sense of brotherhood and mutual assistance;
- draw inspiration from the “know-how” of communities of believers who, at least once a week, gather together millions of widely differing people in the context of their worship in authentic spiritual communion;
- help the men and women of today to avoid being enslaved by fashion, consumerism and profit alone.

To conclude, then, to the question: “Interreligious dialogue: a risk or an opportunity”? I answer, it is both!

If this is so, you might ask me: “But then why is it that religions frighten people?”

I answer that we should not fear religions: they generally preach brotherhood! It is their followers of whom we should be afraid. It is they who can pervert religion by putting it at the service of evil designs. Religious fanaticism, for example, is a perversion of religion, as is the justification of terrorism in the name of religious values. Religious leaders must have the courage to condemn and to excise these “tumors”.

Unfortunately, however, other factors contribute to fostering a fear of religions:

- the fact that we are very often ignorant of the content of other religions;
- the fact that we have not met the believers of other religions;
- our reticence in confronting other believers for the simple reason that we have not very clear ideas about our own religion!
- and then, of course, the acts of violence or terrorism perpetrated in the name of a religion.

And, further, the difficulties encountered in practising their faith by believers belonging to minority groups in countries where a majority religion enjoys a privileged status because of history or law.

In order to remedy this situation it is necessary to:

- have a clear-cut spiritual identity: to know in whom and in what one believes;
- consider the other not as a rival, but as a seeker of God;
- to agree to speak of what separates us and of the values that unite us.

Let us take the case of Islam. What separates us cannot be camouflaged:

- the relationship with our respective Scriptures: for a Muslim the Qu’ran is a “supernatural dictation” recorded by the prophet of Islam, while for a Christian, Revelation is not a book, but a Person;

- the Person of Jesus, whom Muslims consider to be only an exceptional prophet;
- The dogma of the Trinity which leads Muslims to say that we are polytheists.

But there are also realities which see us united and sometimes even collaborating in the dissemination of the same cause:

- faith in the oneness of God, the Author of life and of the material world;
- the sacred character of the human person which has permitted, for example, collaboration of the Holy See and of Muslim countries with the United Nations Organization to prevent resolutions that damage families;
- vigilance to avoid symbols considered “sacred” from being made the object of public derision.

I would like to indicate also, some concrete areas of life where Christians and Muslims together can contribute effectively to the common good of society:

- First, by witnessing to a life of prayer, both individual and communal, recalling that “Man does not live on bread alone”. In our world today it is a must to stress and to show the necessity of an interior life.
- Secondly, Christians and Muslims faithful to their spiritual commitments can help to understand better that freedom of religion means much more than to have a Church or a Mosque at their disposal (this is obvious and the minimum you can ask) but it is also to have the possibility to take part in public dialogue through culture (of schools, universities) and also through political and social responsibilities in which believers must be models.
- Together Christian and Muslims must not hesitate to defend the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the family, as they did in the framework of recent meetings organized by the United Nations Organization.
- They should not refrain from uniting their efforts fighting against illiteracy and disease.
- They have the common responsibility to provide moral formation for youth.
- Finally, they must be peacemakers and teach the pedagogy of peace in the family, in the church and mosque, at school and at university.

In the “Open Letter” of the 138 Muslim leaders addressed to the Christian religious leaders, it is opportunely stressed that Christian and Muslims represent 55% of the world population and consequently, if they are faithful to their own religion, they can do a lot for the common good, for peace and harmony in the society of which they are members.

Such a context is favourable for calmly tackling ancient, thorny “subjects”: the question of the human person’s rights; the principle of freedom of conscience and of religion; reciprocity with regard to places of worship.

Lastly, what engenders fear is above all a lack of knowledge of the other. It is necessary for us to first become acquainted with one another in order to love one another!

This is God’s will. As Pope Benedict XVI said in Turkey: “We are called to work together, so as to help society to open itself to the transcendent, giving Almighty God his rightful place...” (Meeting with the President of the Religious Affairs Directorate, Conference Room of the “Diyanet”, Ankara, 28 November 2006).

Finally, I should say that Christians and Muslims are heralds of two-fold message:

1. Only God is worthy of adoration. Therefore all the idols made by men (wealth, power, appearance, hedonism) constitute a danger for the dignity of the human person, God’s creature.
2. In God’s sight, all men and women belong to the same race, to the same family. They are all called to freedom and to encounter Him after death.

If I may say so, believers are prophets of hope. They do not believe in fate. They know that gifted by God with a heart and intelligence, they can with His help, change the course of history in order to orientate their life according to the project of the Creator: that is to say, make of humanity an authentic family of which each one of us is a member. Anyway, for us Christians we must always remember Paul’s exhortation in the letter to the Romans: “Let us then pursue what leads to peace and to building up one another.” (14:19) It is a beautiful roadmap, isn’t it!

But having said that, we must be humble. We have not explained God! We have to stop on the threshold of mystery, “the Mystery of God where man is grasped instead of grasping, where he worships instead of reasoning, where he himself is conquered, instead of conquering” (Karl Rahner).

ADDRESS BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL
LEONARDO SANDRI,

PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION
FOR THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES,
ROME, DECEMBER 1, 2008

*Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Reverend Fathers,
Knights and Ladies of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre,*

1. I would like to express to His Eminence John Cardinal Foley, Grand Master, His Beatitude Fouad Tawal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior, and to all the other distinguished Officers of the Order my most heartfelt thanks for the invitation to this Consulta. To all the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre do I extend expressions of gratefulness on the part of the Catholic Orient for the impressive support provided to Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

I voice these words of thanks on behalf of the Oriental Catholic Churches as well as the superiors and officials of the Dicasterium. The Order and the Cardinal Grand Master in particular reserve prompt and friendly attention to us, acknowledging the mission entrusted by the Holy Father to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in the territories of its competence, beginning from the Holy Land.

As president of ROACO (Assembly of Works Assisting the Oriental Churches) I can attest to the same degree of gratitude towards the Order on the part of the its historical agencies. Your generosity towards the ecclesial community living the Catholic faith in the Holy Places, and especially for the community gathered around the Patriarch of Jerusalem, constitutes grounds for satisfaction and hopefulness for the universal Church.

“All were born in her” recites Psalm 86. We are all debtors towards the Holy City for the spiritual motherhood she offers as witness of the Christian origins, and we are so

pleased that the Order of the Holy Sepulchre stands out in the gratitude extended by the Church at large.

2. When visiting the Congregation for the Oriental Churches on 9 June 2007, His Holiness Benedict XVI defined the Oriental Churches as *“living custodians of the Christian origins, without which there is no future for the universal Church”*.

Partaking of this mission in a most singular manner is the community of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem situated at the very heart of the Catholic East. In fact, it is the task of the Patriarchate to coordinate the concrete ecclesial life of the Holy Land in a spirit of fraternity and service, and with respect for the prerogatives of the other components (Custody of the Holy Land in the first place, and the Oriental Catholic Churches of the various rites present and active there). In this way the Catholic community, united within, may in concord act in harmony with the other Churches and Christian ecclesial communities present in the Holy Land, thereby exercising that mission set forth by the Ecumenical Council Vatican II in the decree *“Orientalium Ecclesiarum”*: be a bridge for ecumenical dialogue and for encounter and possible collaboration with Judaism and Islam.

3. The witness of the Oriental Catholic Churches receives a specific contribution from the silent yet impressive message which the Holy Places offer to the entire world, with the Holy Sepulchre doing so in such a special way. This is a message which the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre wish to grasp, and such a joint intention generates among them a truly efficient meeting of minds for the good of the Holy Land. We see this in the history of the Holy Land, and perhaps we could well reflect upon some of the most outstanding moments of that history.

The destiny of the Christians of the Orient suffered a setback in 683 when the Patriarch of Jerusalem St. Sofronio handed over the keys of the city to Khalif Omar. In order for there to be an epochal change in the situation it proved necessary to wait for the Eucharistic Congress celebrated in the Holy City between 13 and 28 May 1893. That assembly brought together all the Oriental Catholic Patriarchs, including the famous Greek-Catholic Malachite Patriarch Gregory II Youssef, and succeeded in convincing the Papal Legate, Cardinal Benoît-Marie Langénieux, that Catholics in the Middle East really were living in a deplorable state. The Cardinal Legate reported back to Leo XIII (2 July 1893), making no mystery of his clear sympathies for the Catholic and Orthodox Orientals alike, and already in 1894 the pope convened a Conference of the Oriental Patriarchs in Rome. That encounter led to what constitutes the magna charta of the rights of Oriental Christians, the *Orientalium Dignitas* (1894). That document also spurred the creation of the Oriental Congregation, which was founded by Benedict XV in 1917.

Down through the centuries Jerusalem had nonetheless retained a central role for the three monotheistic religions, as well as a core position within Christianity due to the presence of all the traditions. Jerusalem was and is “the center of centers”. Upon taking a much closer look, however, we do note that Jerusalem has always suffered a sort of “outskirts condition”. Surrounded way back in time by super-powers such as the Assyrians and Babylonians, and in keeping with the profane laws of history, the community of Israel should have disappeared during the great exile and been absorbed by neighboring peoples. Due to the clamorous failure of the second revolt of the Jews against the Romans in 135, the latter changed the name of the city into Aelia Capitolina and decreed that any Jew even approaching the city was to be put to death. Jerusalem survived! From a Christian viewpoint we would have expected the City of Christ to become the capital of Christianity. Communication between head and members proved to be rather difficult, however, and Providence decided on Rome. Communication between Jerusalem and Rome was bolstered when the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem was erected around the same time as the creation of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Both institutes experienced very sad events and changing fortunes, which neither one of them survived. And then both of them were revived in 1847.. With this its status of being both privileged and abandoned, center and periphery at the same time, Jerusalem remains the symbol of the Redeemer, who even though He was God did not hesitate to take upon Himself the human condition in order to uplift His brothers by adoption to divine dignity.

The message which the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre wish to continue embracing together is therefore this: the human countenance God assumed and the historical traces left by this event in the stones of the Holy Land, and in the living stones of the Christian communities, must also continue to shine forth today for good, and above all for the peace of humankind at large, ideally called together in Jerusalem to strengthen the hope of one day being seated in the heavenly Jerusalem.

4. Dear friends, members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, most cordially do I wish to perorate ever closer communion of intent and purpose so the Oriental Catholic Churches and the Ecclesial Community of Jerusalem may always be worthy of the message they bear.

The five wounds of Christ which the members of the Order bear as their emblem evoke the ‘via crucis’ that Jerusalem has shared with its Lord.

Partaking in these stations of the cross were the Oriental Catholic Churches together with the Latin community. Thus did they share as well in the hopes fanned by each one of these sufferings. Just like the blood shed by martyrs, the blood of the Oriental Churches was the seed of Christians and remains as a wellspring of hopefulness. Our two institutions must most generously serve this mission of hope entrusted to the Christian Orient and in particular to Jerusalem.

The historical events that befell the Holy City did not desecrate it. The yearning to visit it and share its mystery was not suffocated by the passing of centuries. The presence of the Franciscans nourished this yearning because St. Francis himself was the one who so ardently sought that presence. Dating back to him is an uninterrupted sharing of life with the Holy City, which became glorious as a result of the trials and hopes shouldered with equally admirable readiness such as to foster radiant emulation on the part of other orders and congregations.

On 19 March 1895, less than two years after the Eucharistic Congress in 1893, Leo XIII created a commission of cardinals to promote a gathering of the so-called dissident Churches. The renowned experts serving as consultants to that commission included the Abbot of Grottaferrata Arsenio Pellegrini for Italo-Albanian matters, and the Barnabite Cesare Tondini de'Quarenghi for Russian affairs. This commission worked for as long as Leo XIII lived. Its 22nd and last session dates back to 20 July 1902.

Interesting and worthy of note is what we read in the minutes of these meetings, especially the first one. Patriarch Youssef voiced his regrets not only about the lack of preparation on the part of the missionaries sent among the Oriental Catholics, but also the fact that in Rome "our rite" was being disfigured by Latinization. Patriarch Youssef's heart was deeply troubled over the situation of the Greek College of St. Athanasius founded by Gregory XIII in 1576, and which was the oldest Oriental College in Rome. His concerns were soon laid to rest because Leo XIII himself redressed the situation in 1897, entrusting the College to the care of the Benedictines.

In these events it is not difficult to glimpse yet another contribution to the creation of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Pontifical Oriental Institute.

5. Historically speaking there is a constituent bond between our institutions and the ecclesial community of Jerusalem. Once again the psalm confirms that "all were born in her" (Ps 86)!

It is therefore incumbent upon us to devote special attention and care to the Holy City and the Latin Patriarchate, even though it is not subject to the Oriental rite like the other patriarchates. In fact, it is situated at the epicenter of 'oriental' movements and can well offer unique possibilities for dialogue both within and outside Catholicism in ongoing contacts and collaboration with the Christian world and other religions. This care and attention may not be limited to sympathy alone.

Needed first and foremost is prayer, but when prayer is genuine it gives life to concrete acts of solidarity. Just like in Rome, all the Oriental Churches and not only the Latin Church are represented in formal terms in Jerusalem, which is in need of joint projects shared by all.

CONCRETELY SPEAKING, WHICH PROJECTS?

- First of all the commitment to circumscribe the flight of Christians that evokes memories of the exodus at the end of the XIV century.
- This will be possible only by working resolutely for peace. Knights and ladies are faced with a difficult task, a task not to say impossible, a task quite different from the one dictated by the wisdom of ancient Romans, who were wont to say: *si vis pacem, para bellum*. Incumbent upon them is the task of knights and ladies of peace, witnesses of whom fortunately stand out in our day and age. Suffice it to cite the great Christian statesman Giorgio La Pira († 1977) and his conviction: *si vis pacem, para pacem*; or Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the worldwide ambadress of charity with her ability to open unthinkable horizons of fraternity due to her spirit of peace rooted in profound adhesion to Christ.
- Needed are 'infrastructures' for peace, the first of which is education understood as formation more than information. Education must enter into the system for the promotion of peace in a capillary manner, involving ever broader sectors of society. Needed are schools, scholarships, and educational programmes able to dispel prejudices. Needed are means and resources so Oriental Catholics may come and study in Rome, but also so westerners may come and study in the Orient. Studying 'on site' or in the 'Orient' is compulsory for students attending the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome, while due to a lack of funds this is not the case for those doing oriental studies in Rome. Education demands what could be called life structures, In order to unite their country, for example, the ancient Greeks came up with the idea of the Olympic games. Educational genius and insight will have to give thought to moments of ordinary life so peace may take root in the depths of hearts and become mentality, willingness and action for peace in the young generations.
- A special place among the joint projects for building peace will have to be occupied by endeavors to safeguard Christian culture in all its forms and expressions: e.g. the languages, as well as the artistic and spiritual heritage so seriously threatened. Promoted in this way is the human element with leverage exercised by the common platform of dialogue which is man as such, thereby reestablishing contact between the center and the periphery. The martyred Oriental Catholic Churches reveal an ability inherent in their selfsame nature to continue living despite all the trials of history. What they need now, however, is special support. The hidden treasures of their spirituality constitute a wellspring of human and divine energy, a recharging of human nature transformed by grace. These treasures deserve to be safeguarded and brought into the limelight for the good of humankind at large.

6. The commitment illustrated above requires coordination, and responding to such a call most efficiently are the organs of the universal Church. I would like to mention the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the diverse entities of the Roman Curia, while by no means forgetting the Pontifical Oriental Institute, which is at the service of the universal Church especially as regards the organization of knowledge about the Christian Orient. The Latin Patriarchate and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre are cordially invited to bolster relations with the Pontifical Oriental Institute. Its premises in Rome constitute the setting deputed to favor interior dialogue between the Christian east and west, between Christians of various denominations, as well as interreligious dialogue. The fact that in the *motu proprio Orientis catholici*, the foundational document of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Benedict XV spoke of the need to begin courses of “*istitutiones islamicae*” bore witness to a sensitivity to which we must pay tribute today. In this regard it is necessary to invest the energies of both mind and heart most intensely, and then support these energies generously with material assistance. Cultural exchange, international symposiums and personal contacts between the pastors of the Churches in the Holy Land and the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome will be able to produce abundant fruit for the present and the future of the Land of the Lord. Let us not forget: born of a congress was the magna charta of the eastern Catholics, and perhaps, as we have seen, the selfsame Congregation and the Pontifical Oriental Institute. When the famous wall fell in 1989 a poisonous spine was removed from the heart of Europe. When we find a solution of peace for Jerusalem we will have removed a spine from the heart of the world and human history.

It is incumbent upon Knights and Ladies to do their part, and I am well aware of their generous resolve in this regard. I ask for their help so eastern Christians may never abandon this endeavor to which they alone are called upon to correspond.

7. Dear friends of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, I was in the Holy Land this year from 24 February to 2 March and had an opportunity to meet with the heads and officials of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Custody of the Holy Land, and the other Oriental Catholic Churches active in Israel, Palestine and Jordan. I also paid a visit to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and the Apostolic Armenian Patriarch. Much appreciated by local Christians as a tangible sign of consolation were the solemn entrances into the Holy Sepulchre, the Basilica of the Nativity (with the opening for the occasion of the main passage in the awesome wall of division) and the Basilica of the Annunciation, also because of the participation of ecumenical representatives. In the productive meeting with the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land that took place during those days the main problems came to the surface: e.g. peace, the relentless emigration of Christians, the concrete difficulties within the Catholic community, as well as in ecumenical and interreligious affairs. We did not fail to take note of signs of hope and to acknowledge the love of the universal Church, which our Congregation

strives to keep ever alive through every possible endeavor of a religious, spiritual, cultural and material nature, always enhancing the historical *Colletta pro Terra Sancta* in this regard.

This was the ideal way I wished to mark the beginning of my service to the Oriental Churches from the Holy Land, both out of gratitude and in order to manifest its absolute importance for all Christians.

Readily evident no matter where I went was the contribution of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, which is essential in the fields of education and health care. The roots of your commitment are undoubtedly spiritual, because they have always given proof of a perseverance that only faith in Christ is able to generate.

This stands forth as a guarantee of further efficacy and continuity, and above all of how truly dear to our hearts must be: human promotion never separated from the Christian vision.

As set forth so clearly in the propositions well described in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, I trust and hope you will reiterate and deepen the Christian spiritual rooting of your identity. I assure you of my prayers and extend my best wishes for the work of this *Consulta*, pleased as I am on this most meaningful occasion and duty bound to acknowledge the indispensable spiritual and material support offered to the Holy Land by the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

Thank you.

REPORT BY

MSGR. ROBERT L. STERN

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE VATICAN RELIEF ORGANISATION,
THE CATHOLIC NEAR EAST WELFARE ASSOCIATION (CNEWA)
AND PRESIDENT OF
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ROME, DECEMBER 3, 2008

THE MIGRATION OF CHRISTIANS INTO AND OUT OF THE HOLY LAND

CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Let me start with a few words about demography, the current demographics of the Holy Land and the Middle East. First of all, a static view of the population.

Static view: population statistics. Years ago the then Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah said to me, “Monsignor, you have to understand that in our part of the world numbers have a very symbolic value.” This is a polite way of saying that we assert certain numbers that may or may not correspond to the reality. There are few really reliable statistics about Middle East country populations, with the possible exception of the State of Israel, which is quite good about maintaining accurate census data. So, let me give what, from my point of view, seems to be reasonable estimates. If someone else proposes different numbers, that is perfectly understandable.

Right now in the State of Israel, out of a population which, as of October 2008, numbers 7,337,000 people, there are 147,000 Christians, approximately 2% of the population. Israeli citizens who are Christians are for the most part Arabs. What this ignores is more than 300,000 people who have entered the State of Israel according to the Law of Return, who are officially classified as not-Jewish.

So, what are they? Generally they are people from Eastern Europe who have emerged from the Marxist world, but whose family background probably is Orthodox Christian. This is another number that could be quoted, but the whole structure of the church in Israel is based on the native population, which is Arab. In addition, of course, there are many guest workers, especially from the Philippines, of whom the majority are Catholic.

In Palestine, that is to say the West Bank and Gaza, the occupied territories with their limited degree of Palestinian autonomy, there are approximately 3,800,000 people. And, at maximum, I think the Christians, not Catholics but all the Christians, are about 40,000 or 1%. So, in the entire traditional Holy Land area you are looking at a population of over 10,000,000 people, and a total Christian population of less than 200,000, the smallest percentage of Christians of any country in the region.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has about 6,000,000 people now with so many refugees there and perhaps 250,000 Christians of all denominations, about 4% of the population. Roughly speaking, in that part of the world I think you could say that close to 1/3 of the Christians are Latin (Roman) Catholic, 1/3 Melkite Greek Catholic, and more than 1/3 Greek Orthodox. There are also smaller numbers of other Catholics and Orthodox denominations. The large players, so to speak, are these Latin and Greek Catholics and the Greek Orthodox.

Lebanon has a population of about 3,900,000 people, and the Christian population is down to about 1,170,000 or 30% Christian. On the other hand, when Lebanon was organized and made independent by the French it was majority Christian.

Syria has somewhat under 20,000,000 people and somewhat under 2,000,000, about 1,850,000, are Christian; that's 9.4% of the Syrian population. Iraq has somewhat over 28,000,000 people; the most generous estimate would be that there are 760,000 Christians left; that would be 2.7% of the population, but the real numbers are probably less.

Egypt has 81,700,000 people and a rapidly growing population; 10% are classically said to be Coptic, that is to say, Coptic Orthodox. The presence of Roman Catholics is almost only the religious who work in the different institutions.

That's a static view of the Christian population of the Middle East.

Dynamic view: sociological trends. If you look at the situation from a dynamic viewpoint, that is to say, in motion, you have to ask, "Where is it coming from and where does it seem to be going?" Well, since the end of the First World War – which ended the 400 hundred year Ottoman Turkish hegemony over that part of the world – during this past century, proportionately, Christians are declining everywhere. You can look at the number of Christians in Jerusalem a hundred years ago and today,

in Persia a hundred years ago and today, in Damascus a hundred years ago and today – the easiest way of describing it is a tremendous reduction in the proportion of Christians and, for the most part, even in the absolute number of Christians.

What are the reasons? First of all, Christians tend to be very well educated compared to the majority of the population, and, as we all know, it seems that the higher the level of education and economic opportunity of the family, the smaller the family size. So you have declining birth rates among Christians. On the other hand, in the less developed sectors economically or in the more conservative religious sectors you see a large family growth. For example, the ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel and the very strong Muslims throughout the region have a much higher birth rate. Another reason, of course, is emigration. Christians are leaving the Holy Land, leaving the Arab world, leaving the Middle East.

Why? First of all, because socially, among Christians, there is a sense of exclusion, if not discrimination, in many countries. There are some people who like to talk about the persecution of Christians. I think that that is a bit of an exaggeration, but that there is discrimination in Muslim countries is absolutely incontestable; it just varies from country to country. Certainly, in a large country like Egypt, there have been distinguished Christian ministers like Boutros Boutros-Ghali, but generally speaking the higher levels of the political and social order are reserved for Muslims; it's a fact of life.

So, you have this phenomenon, in terms of trends, of rapidly declining Christian populations, not only in the Holy Land, but throughout the entire Middle East. Some sources project that it is likely that the total Christian population of the Arab world will be as low as 6,000,000 within the next 15 to 20 years at the rate things are going. I'm abstaining from saying "good" or "bad," I'm just trying to be dispassionate as the sociologists would look at it and say these are the population trends.

LONG-TERM (HISTORICAL) PERSPECTIVE

If you would be patient with me, I would like to look at very long-term trends, because an historical perspective is very useful for assessing the present. So, I would like to make an overview of the past 2000 years.

Early Christianity. When Christianity started in what we call the Holy Land, it was a branch of Judaism. It was a Jewish sect and it had an ethnic identity. The first Christians were Jews. Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the Apostles were all Jews, Messianic Jews. The political world in which they lived was under the control of the pagan Roman Empire.

But, within a very short time the crisis of these early Christian communities was, “Are we going to be Jewish, or not?” Once they started to admit pagans, that was the breaking point with Judaism. Christianity then became, let us say, a transnational movement, because Christians didn’t have to belong to a particular tribe, ethnic group, or political body. This was very, very radical because religion was a component of the political order everywhere. Within a short time, early Christianity was a movement that didn’t have national or ethnic boundaries. In Christ, as St. Paul said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This was a very radical aspect of Christianity.

Christianity rapidly spread within the pagan Roman Empire and outside the pagan Roman Empire. And basically, since the Christians didn’t accept the religions of the lands in which they lived, they were seen as somewhat subversive. In fact, in Rome they were killed because they weren’t politically correct, they didn’t offer the sacrifices to the gods of the State. Christians refused to accommodate themselves to the state religion of Rome, or the state religion of Persia, or the state religion of any other place.

The established religion of the Roman Empire. Within a few hundred years, a radical change came. For better or for worse, Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman Empire. By the end of the 4th century, Christianity was the imperial state religion. So then, what happened to this transnational movement? It became the established religion. And outside of the Roman Empire it was perceived as the religion of the Romans. Therefore, it was a foreign religion if you lived in Persia, because that was a rival empire. Christianity was tolerated in the “enemy” empires. Outside of both the Roman world and the enemies of the Roman world, it flourished. You know, in a few hundred years there were dioceses spread all across Asia; there were bishops in China and Mongolia. The church of the East—what we call these days, the Assyrian Church of the East—was spread all across Asia, even though the Western world knew little about it. In spite of the growth of Christianity outside of the Roman world and the world of Persia, this transnational movement came to be identified as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Minority Christianity in an Islamic world. What happened with the coming of Islam? Rapidly, and in some cases within a century or two, all the Middle East and beyond became the world of Islam. Christianity was reduced to the status of a minority religion, the Roman religion. It was tolerated as a forerunner religion before Islam, but Christians had second-class status in Islamic society and were subjected to a tremendous social pressure that they should adopt Islam. Actually, much of the history of the Middle East is the story of the Islamization of what were once Christian countries. For about three hundred years, Egypt was a Christian country, Syria was a Christian country, and so forth. Gradually the Middle East became an overwhelmingly Muslim world – and the process still continues.

Interlude: the Crusader states. There was a brief interlude that we are familiar with, the Crusader period. For a relatively brief historical period, the Islamic states and jurisdictions were displaced by Western feudal Christian rule. All of a sudden there were Christian jurisdictions; that is to say, the political authority was Christian in the sense that it came from the “Christian” West. It was Christian Western powers that imposed this new political order. There was even a displacement of Eastern forms of Christianity by Western forms of Christianity. For example, the Westerners put their own patriarch in Jerusalem—that is why we have a Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem still today—and the same thing happened later with Westerners putting their patriarch in Antioch, a Latin patriarch, and their patriarch in Constantinople, a Latin patriarch. It was a displacement of Eastern Christianity by Western powers. And so the Crusader conflict with Islam, a political conflict, had significant religious overtones.

Christianity in the post-Crusader Islamic world. In the post-Crusader world, which pretty much describes most of the rest of Middle Eastern history, Christianity was seen with suspicion because it was tangled with the Western powers and therefore had a Western involvement. Look, for example, at the waning years of the Ottoman Empire when France became the protector of the Catholics and Germany, the protector of the Protestants. The Western powers were seen as religious powers. That is why, there was always a lingering sense that Christians in this part of the world were of questionable loyalty because they seemed so tied to France, Germany and England, to the West, and to the Pope.

Interlude: the period of Western (“Christian”) mandates. There was only one other interlude of Christian control of the Middle East, the post-First World War period, the period of the mandates, the French and British mandates. You know that the Sykes-Picot treaty after the First World War divided up control of that portion of the Ottoman Empire between Britain and France. It was during that period that modern nation states were created: France created Lebanon from Syria and Britain cut off Jordan from Palestine and put three Ottoman provinces together to create the modern state of Iraq.

Of all of these modern nation states created during and after the mandate period by the Christian powers, only one country, Lebanon, is non-sectarian, so to speak. Israel, of course, is a Jewish state. All the other countries are Muslim, either secular or religious, but they are Muslim countries.

Middle Eastern Christianity today. Today, a Christian in the Middle East lives in a Judeo-Muslim world. They are citizens or subjects either of an Islamic political authority or a Jewish political authority, except for the unique case of Lebanon, which is a little bit ambivalent at the moment.

THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

What is the future of Christianity in the Middle East? Excuse me, for sounding a bit pretentious; after all I am a New Yorker talking here about the future of Christianity in the Middle East. On the other hand, half of my life as a priest has been focused in that area. Sometimes the outsider can look with a different pair of eyes than the insider, perhaps better, perhaps worse.

Christianity is trans-national, -ethnic and -cultural. In any case, the nature of Christianity is that it should not be tied to a government. It should not be tied to an ethnic group. It should not be tied to any one culture. It is transnational, trans-ethnic and trans-cultural. It's for the whole world. Jesus came to save the whole world. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the whole world. The mission of the Church is for the whole world. And the Catholic Church, the universal church, has that dimension. Of course it may be tangled a little bit with ethnicity, or culture, or politics, but it serves the whole world. The challenges for Christians everywhere, especially the Middle East, is that they must not cling to a Western identity. In Lebanon, a generation or so ago, the average well-educated Christian would speak only French and could hardly speak Arabic. They self-proclaimed themselves as foreigners. All that has changed. The tendency of Christians in the Middle East is to identify with Western ways and Western styles. We have an office in Lebanon; one day, while visiting, I asked our director to talk to some of the women who work here about their dress, because they are more Parisian than Paris. They're Lebanese Christians, but just too attractively addressed for secretaries working in a religious office.

Christians in the Middle East shouldn't claim to be Western. And part of their challenge is that they shouldn't claim a particular ethnicity either. There is still a very tribal sense in many of the Middle Eastern countries. For example, you could ask Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Fouad Twal, "What tribe do you belong to?" and he would have an answer. He belongs to a tribe; he has Bedouin roots in Jordan. Of course we all belong to a family, a clan, have an ethnic group. In America, for example, when I went to school, they would ask me, "What are you?" which means, are you Irish? are you Italian? are you German? I always had a terrible time answering because my name is Stern, and I'm a Catholic in spite of a Jewish name; my father's side is German and my mother's side is Irish. So, I had to give an explanation as I am doing now. This is the ethnicity we all have. But the Christians in the Middle East - and everywhere - have to be able to let go of that, too.

One of the problems in the Middle East is that Christians have asserted Western culture against Islamic culture. Muslims don't eat pork, we will. Muslims don't drink wine, we will. Muslims fast through Ramadan, we won't. It's a sense of, we have to be us and they have to be them. It's understandable, but it is also one of the challenges. Christianity doesn't have to be - and shouldn't be - tied to the Western way of doing things.

Christianity is not tied to geography. Another observation that may cause serious disagreement, Christianity has no ties to geography. Judaism is land-bound. Judaism is focused on one piece of land, the small strip of land, the Holy Land, because of the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, because of the ancient kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Judaism is land-bound; that's why the creation of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East was so important to Jews everywhere.

Islam is very tied to territory, too: Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. In a sense, Muslims are shrine-bound. The Haram-as-Sharif with the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque, is terribly important to Islam. The second Intifada was provoked by Ariel Sharon going up into the Muslim sanctuary area on the top of the mount where centuries ago the Jewish temple stood and stating that an Israeli can stand anywhere in Israel. That was as dangerous as throwing a lighted match into a powder magazine. For Muslims, this is the third most important place in the world. They are shrine-bound; Christianity is not. Jesus is not buried in the Holy Sepulchre. We are not tied to a place the way Jews and Muslims are.

I'm sure you remember the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: "...the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...but in spirit and in truth." Where do we find Jesus? We find Him everywhere. We find Him among ourselves when two or three are gathered in His name. As followers of Jesus, we don't have ties to a place like the Jews and the Muslims. Christianity can flourish anywhere. It can flourish in China, it can flourish in Georgia, it can flourish in Africa, it can flourish in Rome. Christianity is transnational, trans-ethnic, trans-cultural. However some of our structures can't flourish in quite the same way. It is hard to do things the Italian way if you live in Australia; it is hard to do things the Spanish way if you live in Mexico. There are links to many places and cultures, and structures have to be modified to the place where they are, but Christianity itself can exist in any place at all.

There are no geographical imperatives to Christianity. We have historical roots in the Holy Land. There is no place so evocative to visit for a Christian as the Holy Land. The Holy Land is of immense symbolic importance. However, if it should happen that there be not one single Christian left in the Holy Land, it will not hurt Christianity fundamentally. Sadly, at the rate things are going, we may be coming very perilously close to that.

Christianity as bridge to the future for the Muslim Arab world. Having given this perhaps rather negative assessment, I want to emphasize that Christianity is a bridge to the future for the Muslim Arab world. First of all, Christians from the Western world have learned certain things and bring certain values and perspectives that are vitally important for the growth and maturation of the Arab world. For example, what in America we call the separation of church and state, is a very valuable concept. It was enshrined in Vatican II in the document about religious liberty and freedom of conscience. It's enshrined in the declarations of the United Nations Organization. It's rooted deeply in the teachings of Jesus. It is the idea that human dignity and

human freedom requires respect for the conscience of the individual; this leads to freedom of worship. This is very upsetting to the Islamic world; yet if the Islamic world is to join fully into modern society, it has to integrate these values into its daily life. Pluralism is not evil. Pluralism is a healthy phenomenon. It has been long since experienced in some of the Western countries like Canada and America, and it is increasingly being experienced in Europe. It's a value in itself. And Christians, because they bridge these cultures can be the instruments of assisting the maturation and modernization of the Islamic and Arab worlds.

Christians bring some other unique perspectives. Remember on Monday when someone asked Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran about the difference between Muslim and Christian attitudes towards God; the cardinal summarized a lot very briefly saying that Christians see God as Father, a tremendous insight. Christians bring certain values, for example, reconciliation and forgiveness. We take them for granted, but we are facing a culture in the Eastern Mediterranean, in fact in much of the Mediterranean world, where you're a wimp, you're soft, you're too easy if you forgive. Honor demands vengeance. You know, we think of this as a sort Mafia code, but it's alive and well. Even in a modernized place like the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the honor of your family, of your clan, of your tribe demands vengeance sometimes. Christians come with the message of reconciliation and forgiveness. Jesus taught His followers to renounce their legitimate right to revenge. This is a value that is totally different from the culture of the Middle East, and yet it is something that we bring to it.

I think that ultimately what Christians bring is that they become bridges in their very selves. In Rome the Holy Father uses the title of "Pontifex Maximus," originally a pagan Roman title. "Ponti" refers to a bridge and "fex," to the verb "to make"; a pontifex is a bridge builder. In ancient times, to build a bridge was a tremendous advancement because it allowed people to cross rivers easily, facilitated transportation and opened the way for armies. As Christians, we are all "pontifical," all of us. Our challenge is bridging differences. Christians have a tremendous role to play, even though they are a tiny minority and don't quite fit. They have tremendous roles to play in the Holy Land and in the Middle East.

I think what we basically need in light of the sociological reality is a sort of John the Baptist type spirituality. The Church is never going to flourish in the near future in the Middle East. It's in a state of rapid decline. But, it's okay. "He must increase, I must decrease." If the Church can be an instrument to turn around the Islamic world and the Jewish world in which it lives, that would be a tremendous and valuable contribution. In small ways it's happening already. We talk so much about helping schools, for example, or Bethlehem University, where such a large number of students aren't even Catholic, or Christian. But, the university is of tremendous importance because the students are receiving values, they're learning about coexistence, they're experiencing the other, and they're getting exposed to a higher quality of education. The work of the Church may not lead to increased numbers of Christians, but it's

immensely valuable. The best thing we can do is to give all the support we possibly can to advance the works of the Church – at least the best of the works of the Church. That's why this Order of the Holy Sepulchre is so important.

MIGRATION OF CHRISTIANS

Christianity is a movement. When we talk about migration, we need to remember that fundamentally Christianity is a movement. Christians have always spread throughout the world. The mission of Christians is to spread throughout the world. Evangelization is all about spreading the kingdom of God.

Emigration – not an evil as such. Don't think that the movement of Christians is necessarily bad; the fact that a lot of Christians leave one place and go to another doesn't mean it is an evil, although they may move with regret. If there are more Christian Bethlehemites in Santiago, Chile, than in Bethlehem, that is a fact of life. Is the goal to get every Bethlehemite from Santiago back to Bethlehem so they can be a Christian majority? Whether it is the goal or not, it's not going to happen; it's also a fact of life. On the other hand, isn't it wonderful that Christians of Bethlehem are bringing their values and history to other lands? So, emigration isn't necessarily an evil. But, it does involve a loss. There's a patrimony and a culture that is being lost with the exodus of the Christians.

On the other hand it is understandable that Christians and other people in the Middle East want to seek a better life. People are leaving the Middle East to go to Australia; they're leaving the Middle East to go to Sweden; they're leaving the Middle East to go to France; they're leaving the Middle East to go to Honduras; they're leaving the Middle East to go to Brazil; they're leaving the Middle East to go to Canada and the U.S. It takes a valiant minority to stay simply for the sake of maintaining the Christian presence when there are jobs, educational opportunities, a future and freedom in other parts of the world.

Need to cultivate a climate of safe migration. Migration, by the way, doesn't mean you can't come back. One of the challenges, it seems to me, is to create a climate for safe migration. We wax very ecstatic about, "Can we ensure that the storks can travel from Russia through the Middle East flyway and get down to Africa and back again?" or "Can the monarch butterfly get from North America to Central America and back again?" or "Can the whales migrate freely through the seas?"

Why can't we be at least as concerned about people migrating? That is to say, along with the environmentalists, we want animals to live in a safe place, we want safe passage so they can get to where they're going, and a safe breeding ground when they get there. Minimally, our concern as responsible Christians regarding the United Nations and regarding our own governments is to advocate safeguards so that Christians can

live in their own lands if they wish to and laws that facilitate allowing them to move across the world and allow them, if you will, new breeding grounds in other places – not laws that deny entrance, restrict movement, and restrict citizenship. It’s paradoxical that we’re more inclined to let the birds migrate than to let the people. And in migrations, as we know from birds, bees, salmon or elephants, migrants return. Why can’t Christians return to the Middle East if the social, cultural, and historical climate there is attracting them? Why should they be excluded from returning, as often is the case?

Particular concerns regarding the Middle East. Well, to come to a conclusion to these lengthy set of remarks, what are our concerns about the situation and migration of Christians in the Holy Land and the rest of the Middle East? First, we’re concerned to assist those who are there. They are our brothers and sisters; they have to be helped. They live in a negative environment. Discriminated against, they lack certain opportunities that we take for granted. They need help. Second, if we are truly concerned with that part of the world, we need to use some of our influence on the governments of the lands in which we live to affect their national policies about the Middle East. It says in the preamble to our constitution, dating to Pope Paul IV, that one of the characteristic virtues of knights and ladies of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is “a courageous struggle for justice and peace.” Accordingly, issues of justice, peace, human rights, and reconciliation are of vital importance to members of this Order – especially issues of justice and peace in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East. Further, we help ensure that Christian values, Christian ethics, Christian criteria of judgment are being brought to the table, either directly through our home countries or through the advocacy and work of the local church.

A very practical thing we can do is help those who wish to migrate: welcome them, facilitate their arrival and the presence and establishment of Middle Eastern Christians who wish to come to our home countries. Also, we can advocate less restrictive immigration policies in the countries in which we live.

The challenge for the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. As members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre we have a major, complex and challenging task. One caution: let us not overly identify with the “Crusader” background of our Order. After all, from the point of view of the Muslim Middle East, it was a very unfortunate period. In the Arabic Muslim world, the word for “Crusader” resonates almost as badly as “Nazi” in the Western world. So, you don’t win any points in the Middle East by speaking about crusades or crusaders or by identification with crusaders. We are not crusaders. We’re not Western feudal armies coming to stake out a turf in the Islamic world. We are people seeking the spread of justice and rights and the teaching of Jesus.

Our mission is to help the survival of the Christians in the Holy Land – through our financial help, through our person-to-person help, through the presence of our visits and pilgrimages, through our promotion of education and human development for those who are there, and through our willingness at home to engage in this “courageous struggle for justice and peace.”

Thank you.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE OF
**HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL
JOHN PATRICK FOLEY**

GRAND MASTER OF THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER
OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

AT THE AUDIENCE WITH
HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

DECEMBER 5, 2008

Most Holy Father:

We are deeply grateful to you for having granted an audience to the Grand Magisterium and the Lieutenants of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre on the occasion of our Consulta, the quinquennial meeting of the representatives of our Order not only from Europe, but also from North and South America, Asia and Oceania.

We are also grateful that the group you see here before you represents more than 24,000 Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre from throughout the world who will have contributed almost fifty million euros since the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 for the parishes, schools and charitable institutions of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Most of those schools and charitable institutions serve not only the Catholics of the Latin Patriarchate but also all Christians and indeed all residents - Christians, Moslems and Jews -- in the areas where they are located in Israel, Palestine and Jordan. We truly hope that this universal service promotes not only the cause of Christian unity but also greater interreligious understanding and eventual peace in that land made sacred by the life, death and resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Many of our members have made pilgrimages to the Holy Land, where they visit not only the places made sacred by Our Lord but also some of the parishes and institutions helped by our Order. I am sure that Patriarch Fouad Twal, our Grand Prior and the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, would hope with me that Your Holiness might be able to visit some of the places assisted by our Order when and if you are able to make your desired pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

In the meantime, be assured of our continuing prayers not only for Your Holiness but also for the often beleaguered and continually diminishing flock of our brothers and sisters in the Faith in that Land of the Lord which we rightly call Holy, and we sincerely ask your Apostolic Blessing for them and for us.

Thank you.

ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE
**HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL
TARCISIO BERTONE**

ROME, DECEMBER 5, 2008

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the episcopacy,
Distinguished Members of the Grand Magisterium and Lieutenants
of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre!*

I am most grateful for the invitation so courteously extended to me to take part in the closing session of this meeting, which has gathered you here in Rome, the center of Christianity.

In keeping with customary practice, you have come together to take stock of the aims and purposes of your historical institution and update the ways and means whereby your mission is carried out in practice. I take true pleasure in extending my affectionate greetings to one and all. Said greetings are obviously addressed in the first place to His Eminence Cardinal John Patrick Foley, Grand Master of the Order, who is experiencing his first ever Consulta, since he was appointed to such a prestigious office by the Holy Father in June of last year.

You have already had the joy of an encounter with His Holiness Benedict XVI and have heard his encouraging words highlighting your mission, whose centuries-long aim has been and remains that of protecting and promoting the sacred places of Christianity, the places where the Paschal mystery unfolded, the places where Christ, our Redeemer, died and rose from the dead. I too wish to express my appreciation for the vast number of works and institutions you support with such praiseworthy generosity. At the same time I would like to encourage you to cultivate ever more those sentiments and intentions that animate you one and all, and which, according to the institutional requirements of your Order, stem from genuine and noble affection for the Holy Land. In a very special way do I wish to render manifest the Holy See's recognition for your concrete endeavors of charity towards the Christian communities living their Christian profession in the troubled regions of the Middle East, doing so not without sacrifices. Those beloved Catholic ecclesial communities are now most especially in need of their brothers' industrious affection in order to continue living and bearing witness to their faith in the land of Jesus. Those Christian communities reach out to you for help, and how can anyone fail to recognize your efforts to assist the schools, cultural institutions and places of worship of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem? The schools contribute to

ensuring the future presence of the Christian faith in these places and represent a sound contribution to the civic, human and social promotion of those populations, especially through the formation of honest citizens and good Christians, or also non-Christians.

I was pleased to learn that during these days together you have delved into the spirituality that identifies you in the Church and must inspire you more and more in your endeavors. Belonging to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre must, in fact, represent a stimulus to 'personal' asceticism on the part of each knight and lady: may prayer, constant reference to the Word of God read and incarnated in life, and readiness to sacrifice be ever present points of reference in your personal and community life. May your special communities become schools of prayer in order to tackle today's challenges with a constructive spirit and Christian hope.

Each Christian, by virtue of baptism and as a member of the people of God, is called upon within the conditions of his own life to carry out the mission of the Church, which is evangelization in order to bring the liberating proclamation of the Gospel to one and all. This is demanded by the ongoing process of secularization, which is becoming particularly acute in the most delicate sphere of the family, the transmission and acceptance of life itself, where the countenance we observe is becoming ever more dechristianized. Consumerism and materialism tend to make people forget God, tend to exclude Him from the life horizon of so many people, thereby curtailing the authentic dimensions of man. It is therefore necessary for Christians to have the skills of clarity and persuasiveness in advancing the sole authentic and adequate response, which is Christ Himself, the perfect model of man and his Savior. It is necessary to inject this response of faith well into today's changing culture in order to regenerate it from within, liberate it from its myriad forms of slavery, and open it to true values.

All this constitutes a challenge for you, dear friends of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Your most meritorious Order is present in its various expressions throughout the world, intent as always on generating renewed attention and solidarity towards the Holy Land. Yours is an Order that can count on substantial presence in terms of quantity! See to it that this is a meaningful presence in terms of quality as well by being ever more part of the journey traveled by the local churches, intensely active in works of the apostolate. Insofar as lay faithful you are called in your daily endeavors at home, at work and in society to recompose the oneness of life that draws inspiration and force from the Gospel for its fulfillment. Moreover, your Order cannot help but be more and more of a forge for the formation of the laity, who, enlightened by the Social Doctrine of the Church, are active on the front lines in the defense of the sacred gift of life, the safeguarding of the dignity of the human person, the implementation of the freedom of education, the promotion of the true meaning of marriage and the family, the exercise of charity towards those most in need, and the weaving of peace and justice. This formative dimension will enable you to imbue temporal realities with the redemptive force of the Gospel. Only in this manner will your Order be a transforming resource in the society and culture of the countries where you are present; a resource able to have an impact on comprehensive orientations and in its own manner help to

bring into the social fabric of life the richness of values and the seeds of life proper to the message of the Gospel.

During this time of Advent the Church never ceases to exhort us to be vigilant. Being vigilant and watchful means expediting the service requested of us with loins girded and lamps lighted, always ready to welcome the Lord coming to visit us in the brothers we meet along the way. With this disposition must we live and work, bearing witness everywhere to the newness of the Christian life. Romano Guardini writes: "With Jesus Christ human existence enters into a new situation and the entire world is caught up in the fervor that burst aflame in Palestine". My sincere wish is that you and all those you represent may always cultivate this style of life. Thus do I hope you may live this time of Advent, preparing yourselves for a Christmas abounding with faith and renewed apostolic generosity. I entrust you, your families and your projects to the maternal intercession of Mary, whom we will solemnly celebrate in a few days time on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Once again, thank you one and all for the service you render to the Church, and best wishes for a holy Christmas and a happy New Year!

