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## Pastor's Column

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### “Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem”

This weekend I am away from the Parish and in attendance at the annual Conference/Convention of the “Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem” which is being held this year in San Diego on Coronado Island.

It is a special weekend for me, since I am being officially inducted into the Order.

The “Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem” is at the same time one of the oldest and yet one of the least-known organizations within the Roman Catholic Church. It was founded in the 11th century, at the end of the First Crusade, and there is continuously documented evidence of its existence during the past nearly nine hundred years.

Membership in this Order is the highest Papal award which can be conferred on clergy and laity alike. Other Papal decorations, such as the *Pro Ecclesia* or the *Benemerenti Medal*, are given in recognition of outstanding service to the Church. Holy Sepulchre does this also, of course, but, in addition, membership in this Order entails a personal, solemn commitment to an active apostolate, namely, the fostering and support of a viable, vigorous Christian Presence in the Holy Land.

In the past 150 years, the Order has done its most effective and truly Christian work, but no longer has any military character. However, it is still an authentic order of knighthood, the oldest in continuous existence, and much older than any of the current and better-known dynastic orders, such as those of the British Empire.

The esteem with which this Order has been held by modern popes can perhaps best be illustrated by quoting the words of Pope John Paul II in an address to members during the Jubilee Year 2000 on March 2, 2000:

*“The custody of Christ’s tomb would no longer depend on the force of arms, but on the value of a constant witness of faith and solidarity towards Christians residing in the Holy Land. This is still your task today. May the celebration of the jubilee help you to grow in fervent practice of your Faith, in exemplary moral conduct and in generous collaboration in Church activities at the parish and diocesan level...”*

*As your motto says Oportet Gloriarī in Cruce Nomini Nostri Jesu Christi (We much glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ).*

*Let Christ be the heart of your life, of every project and program both as individuals and as an association.”*

I am grateful to Parishioners, Knight Jim & Lady Nell McGlone, who sponsored me. I look forward to my activity in the Order which will help me in my own spiritual life, and which will allow me to continue to find ways to support the Christian Presence in Israel/Palestine, a land that I hold very dear to my heart.

Our Lady of Palestine, pray for us!

F. Mike