

### *The Order of Saint Lazarus*

We welcome the recent announcement by the Vatican on 16 October 2012 which clarifies the position of the Vatican on Orders of Knighthood. The Vatican announced that the only Orders it recognizes are its own Orders of Knighthood (the Supreme Order of Christ, the Order of the Golden Spur, the Pian Order, the Order of Saint Gregory the Great, and the Order of Pope Saint Sylvester) along with the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. It notes that all other Orders, whether of recent origin or medieval foundation, are not recognized by it. This announcement supersedes any previous announcements on Orders that the Vatican does not recognize (most recently on 14 December 1976).

This announcement ends the Vatican listing of “alleged” (unrecognized) orders, which was interpreted as lack of legitimacy, and is a step forward for the Vatican, which has sensibly decided that it is not in a position to guarantee any orders other than those it awards itself. Previous listings have been controversial and included orders such as our own that have been recognized by Popes and are of canonical origin, but nevertheless, as Bander van Duren has noted, been included on the list of unrecognized orders despite Papal efforts to challenge that status. Rather than placing Orders into two categories, legitimate and “alleged” (unrecognized), the Vatican has simply listed its own official Orders as opposed to all others (some of which, as it notes, may be of medieval origin). Now, all Orders which are not conferred by the Vatican are classified identically. The removal of the naming of the Order of Saint Lazarus (among others) as an unrecognized order and its general classification with all other non-Vatican orders is a welcome step.

The Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem has not, since it became an Ecumenical Order in the 1960s, been subject to any Papal authority, although its Spiritual Protectors since 1841 have been the Greek Melkite Catholic Patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and All the East. The Order numbers among its Senior Chaplains and Spiritual Counsellors a number of senior Roman Catholic clergy, including Cardinal George Pell (Archbishop of Sydney), Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera (Archbishop of Mexico City) and Cardinal Francis George (Archbishop of Chicago). The present Spiritual Protector is His Beatitude Gregorios III Laham, Patriarch of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and All the East.

The Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem is a Catholic-founded, but now secularized and ecumenical, Hospitaller Order of Knighthood which is recognized by the Government of Spain since 1941. It is a continuation of the Order of St Lazarus founded by Papal Bull in 1255 and in accordance with its statutes as recognized by the Papacy (most recently in 1668). Under the continuous Spiritual Protection and capitulation of the Patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and All the East, it was reorganized in 1910 on the basis of its canonical statutes as a secular Order under the control of a Grand Master and Council in accordance with those statutes. As a Christian Ecumenical Order and given its state recognition, it does not fall under any control of the Vatican, although it maintains warm relations with the Apostolic See.

