

# GREETINGS OF THE GRAND MASTER TO THE GUESTS

Dear Guests,

Today we have a double celebration:

**Firstly, we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Ceremony of Investiture**, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, organised by this so efficient state ceremonial team, a real dream team headed by Her Excellency Countess Lady Anna Popper, who - as Minister of the government of our State of Knights - is also in charge of the state ceremonial.

Countess Lady Anna is assisted by one of the most efficient persons that I know: our dear Lady Erika Macsári, and by a team of very committed and experienced knights and dames.

Since 2005 our Sovereign Order had a remarkable progress, so in each and every one of our ceremonies we are forced to limit the number of new candidates to knighthood and many candidates have to stay in waiting for the next ceremony.

Even during the years of the COVID epidemic this happened, and is a clear demonstration of the credibility and of the respect that our Sovereign Order and our State of Knights has achieved all over the world.

In this period our State has grown very much and presently many countries, on different continents, recognise our State of Knights and maintain with us diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level in accordance with the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations of 1961.

Many of you, here today, are witnesses of the remarkable work that our embassies are doing.

Our FEMERAID International and its different institutes, departments, such as the Air Rescue Service with nearly 900 successful flights evacuating critical patients, or the International Ambulance Service already in different countries, our medical assistance, research, donations of medicines and of medical equipment to several countries, make our FEMERAID a respected international health service, legally registered as a volunteer organization in EU countries and also in African countries.

Our Pro Deo State University, based in the USA, continues giving courses in different areas and has recently registered its trademark in the EU.

The local associations of KMFAP knights are now legally registered as volunteer organisations in different EU countries, and recently we have registered new associations of knights in Malta and in Germany.

Many of our international programs are very successful, such as the Orphans Program, the Orphans for Animal Rescue program, the blood donations program, the fight against human traffic, the program for medical equipment donation, food donations in Mozambique, etc..

I would also like to mention our Chamber of Commerce and recently the launch of our online wine shop with its high-quality wines.

Dear Guests, all this good work, this growth and this development are not the merit of the Grand Master alone, no, these are the results of a very good team work done with loyalty, commitment, brotherly friendship by us all, knights and dames.

There are no Generals who can win wars without soldiers, sergeants and officers, as there is no Grand Master who can do anything alone.

The merit of all our development goes also to all the Grand Priories and Priories, to the structures of our Sovereign Order and to the members of our diplomatic service and of the government of our State of Knights, with a very special mention to His Grace Count Sir George Popper, Lieutenant General of the Order and Prime Minister of the government of our State.

In the 1000 years of our history no Grand Master, no Head of State, has ever had a better Lieutenant General and Prime Minister. The merit is also his.

**The second event we commemorate this year is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the decease of my dear predecessor Archbishop-Count de Valitch**, born in 1910 in Belgrade, Hero of the French resistance during WW2, Archbishop of the American Orthodox Church, Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Cyprus and Regent of KMFAP, who was of vital importance for the survival of our Federation of Priories of the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem after the decease of His Most Eminent Highness Prince Ligny Luxembourg and during the difficult post-World War II period.

Archbishop-Count De Valitch was also responsible for deciding that the hereditary Sovereign Order Of Cyprus should join our Federation, which, in the present times, constitutes the military and security arm of KMFAP and is now, thanks to the devoted work of His Grace Sir George Popper, a florescent select group of knights, experts in security, police and military matters.

So, dear guests, grateful and honoured by your presence here today, I welcome you to this large, multi-faceted, multicultural and multinational family of knights, dames, squires and damsels, where human rights, respect, tolerance, humanitarian work, cooperation, freedom and environment are sacred.

Be welcome!

15 June 2024