ROYAL ORDER OF SAINT ISABEL

Dear Ladies of Real Ordem de Santa Isabel, it is with great joy that I welcome you to this annual meeting, in the spirit of prayer for the Family, in the light of the Church's teaching on the challenges of our time.

I ask the Holy Queen to accompany them and their families.

Today, we have a special welcome for our new Dames:

- H.R.H. Princess Maria Gabriela of Orleans and Braganza
- H.R.H. Princess Léopoldine von und zu Liechtenstein
- (Dr.) Mrs. Mercedes María Baptista de Ybarra, Countess of El Abra
- (Professor) Mrs. Isabel Maria de Oliveira Capeloa Gil
- (Dr.) Mrs. Maria João Borges Carioca Rodrigues
- (Master) Mrs. Maria da Conceição Barreiro de Sousa
- (Eng.) Mrs. Maria Teresa Lencastre de Melo Breyner Andresen

We only have to offer you the obligation to bear witness in defense of the values of the Holy Queen and requests for prayers for Peace, for the Family, and for the causes of the Holy Father.

To be a Dame of this Royal Order is to be part of a community of women united by the same Christian ideals, where each one is called to put her talents at the service of the common good. The Order offers the opportunity to grow spiritually, to strengthen the friendship between the Ladies, to participate in moments of prayer, celebration and reflection, and to collaborate in concrete works of solidarity.

The Order also offers a legacy. By receiving this distinction, each Lady becomes a guardian of a centuries-old tradition that spans generations and remains relevant because it is based on enduring values: charity, human dignity, fidelity, and love for one's neighbor.

But perhaps the greatest gift the Order offers is the invitation to transform the recognition received into responsibility. The insignia we wear on our chests is not just a symbol of honor; it is a commitment to live the values of Queen Saint Isabel every day, with discretion, generosity, and a spirit of service.

May each of us respond to this call with joy, knowing that true greatness lies not in the honors received, but in the good we do for others.

We meet annually here in Coimbra for the Queen Santa Isabel Feast, the religious processions and ceremonies that take place throughout the year, and the Grand Meeting, where we discuss the best way to be present in the life of our country, in a kind of renewal of the witness of Queen Santa Isabel.

Annually, we make donations to social causes mainly linked to the defense of life and, more recently, to projects for the defense of heritage, especially the iconography of Queen Santa Isabel.

I cannot fail to mention here the memory of our dear Jorge Brito e Abreu, with whom we could always count on in this and other areas.

He oversaw, for example, the restoration of the altarpieces of the Miracles of the Roses in Alenquer and in the Church of Queen Saint Isabel, where we will go after this meeting.

I also ask that, in these days, you add to the causes of your prayers the victims of the earthquakes in Venezuela, especially the Portuguese and people of Portuguese descent, and, as always, the intentions that His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV, entrusted to his World Network of Prayer, which deal with aspects as diverse as:

- human dignity,
- art,
- life,
- migrants,
- the elderly,
- young people,
- and Artificial Intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence!

How does Real Ordem de Santa Isabel connect with Artificial Intelligence?

• AI seems to solve everything. But it doesn't pray.

• It is undeniable in many aspects. But it doesn't know the essential. It doesn't love, it doesn't suffer, it doesn't forgive. These are capacities proper to the human person, created in the image of God, and constitute a patrimony that no machine can replace.

• It approaches perfection. But it does not possess moral conscience nor does it bear witness to the framework of Christian values that we seek to defend.

António Barreto aptly defined Pope Leo XIV's proposal during the launch of the encyclical Magnifica Humanitas at the last Book Fair: The Pope's alternative is simple, even if difficult: to replace the civilization of power, force, efficiency, and profit with the civilization of the common good, freedom, human values, and love.

In fact, the encyclical invites us to look at the world with hope, but also with responsibility. We are called to remember that true progress is not measured by technological innovation, but by how that progress protects human dignity, strengthens relationships, and promotes the common good.

Artificial intelligence helps, accelerates, organizes. But it does not replace what is fundamental: love, conscience, faith, the capacity to care and forgive. No algorithm can raise a child, cope with grief, or support a family in its most difficult moments.

That is precisely why the Pope places the Family at the center of this reflection. It is in the Family that we learn to recognize the other as a face and not just as a number, a profile, or a set of data. It is in the Family that conscience, freedom, responsibility, and the capacity to care are formed. These virtues allow technology to remain an instrument at the service of humanity and never the other way around. The Church reminds us that the Family continues to be the heart of society.

It is within the Family that we learn to see the other as a person and not as data. It is within the Family that the inner freedom is formed that allows us to use technology with discernment and not with dependence.

In this context, the Order's mission takes on an even deeper relevance. In an increasingly digital and accelerated world, we are called to keep alive the dimension of care, closeness, and concrete solidarity. What we do cannot be replaced by systems or machines, because it is born from human encounter, listening, and presence.

This meeting in Coimbra is not only a moment of reflection, but also of prayer. Let us pray for the family, that it may remain firm in love and truth, even in a changing world.

Let us pray that technology does not replace the human heart, but helps it to serve better.

And let us pray that we always know how to choose the path of good, even when it requires more silence than speed.

May the Lord enlighten us and our families, protect our homes, and grant us wisdom to live this new time with Faith, Balance, and Hope.

Following the example of Santa Isabel, let us not be afraid to defend the true values of Family, of love for our neighbor, of knowing how to forgive, being humble, and learning to ask for forgiveness.

May Santa Isabel always inspire us in the pursuit of peace!

May she intercede for all of us and for Portugal!

Coimbra, July 4, 2026

(H.R.H. Duchess of Braganza)