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Constantinian Order has Catholic ethos

AS Delegate of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George in Great Britain and Ireland, I was surprised to read Mr Loftus's commentary on our ancient and internationally recognised Order of Knighthood. It appears that he is harbouring under a considerable amount of misinformation, which I feel compelled to correct.

The Constantinian Order is one of the oldest Roman Catholic Orders of Knighthood in existence today with recognised documentation dating from 1190. Each knight and dame must pledge complete fidelity to the Holy Father and to defend the Roman Catholic faith.

All knights and dames must be in excellent standing with the Catholic Church and must devote themselves to the many charitable, humanitarian and hospitaller initiatives which we undertake in this country and abroad. Many senior members of the Sacred College of Cardinals fulfil official roles within our Order. My delegation counts as its spiritual head, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor in Britain, and Cardinal Desmond Connell in Ireland.

Mr Loftus's assertions that that we are neither a Catholic Order nor have any connection to the Holy See is incorrect. The Grand Prior of our Order is Cardinal Mario Francesco Pompèda, Prefect of the Supreme Tri-

bunal of the Apostolic Segnatura. Cardinal Pompèda has also been formally appointed by Pope John Paul II, as his personal Ecclesiastical Counsellor to the Constantinian Order, under the grandmastership of HRH Prince Ferdinando of Bourbon Two Sicilies.

The Order is fully recognised by successive decrees of the President of the Italian Republic, and by many other governments and dynasties across the world. Such recognition is hardly for 'socio-historical' reasons but out of deep respect and understanding for the many activities our voluntary organisation undertake across the world.

As to questioning the relevance of our existence, I wish to assure Mr Loftus that our Order has absolutely nothing to do with, and is indeed offensive to suggest, that some or all of our members, seem only interested in looking backwards to a former kingdom or promoting a non-existent social class system.

Our knights and dames come from all social and economic extremes, and through our Royal Order of Francis I, from all Christian denominations as well as the Muslim and Jewish faiths.

Membership not only recognises personal merit but also consists of a lifetime and active commitment to the high requirements which our Statutes place upon each of them.

Anthony Bailey, HE The Delegate, SMCOSG - UK and Eire