



**ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM, KNIGHTS HOSPITALER**  
Under the Constitution granted in 1964 by his late Majesty King Peter II of Yugoslavia

## THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD

*PRO FIDE, PRO UTILITATE HOMINUM*

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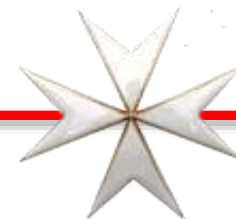
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**4/2020 EDITION**





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**A MESSAGE for CHRISTMAS from  
H.E. THE LIEUTENANT-GRAND MASTER**

**Dear Brethren of Saint John of Jerusalem,  
Knights Hospitaller – OSJ (Malta),**

The spirit of the insubordination in man, quite often inspired by pride, ego, jealousy, envy has always been the means of his undoing. This trait to the character of man is so common that few are the organizations, whatever these may be, which have not suffered from this malignant disease. Such a disease splits an organization and quite often destroys it completely or renders it powerless, hence the oft repeated axiom "Divide and Rule". The Christian, Knightly spirit is completely lost.

This hateful scourge of such a trait being what it is, all Christians need the hope that comes to us in the mystery of the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

This world, marked by evil, most urgently needs this hope. Countries threatened by war and at present also attached by the present pandemic virus need it. Christians who suffer persecution and risk their lives need it.

The poor who die of hunger, the sick in body and/or in mind need it.

The immigrants who swim to a foreign land and, in so doing, risking their lives need it and the great nations built

upon a Christian foundation, who seem to have forgotten piety and abandoned love, most urgently need the hope that comes in the mystery of the birth of Jesus. This is where the Knight/the Dame are to come in.

Us Christians should be looking to the future without fear because our hope is rooted in the very heart of God.

Now is the time of 'Advent', a time of waiting so as to prepare ourselves to rejoice with the day that God became human in Jesus Christ. A Christian should not allow Christmas to be just lights or friendship or a special day of (...)







(...) winter or giving and receiving presents but more poignantly, should be celebrating the commemoration of the One who has already dwelt among us in the mystery of the Nativity. Now, above other times, is the time for not only hope but also for true Charity. A Christian is to recall that (quote) "By annulling the tragedy of evil, optimism is hope's worst enemy. By keeping human beings in the illusion of being able to be free themselves, it actually diverts them from the path of Charity, the path of our salvation." For us, members of the Order, it is the time to truly live up to our motto "Pro Fide Pro Utilitate Hominum". It is the time not to allow Christmas pass us by. Pope Francis has said "If we remove Jesus, what remains of Christmas ? An empty party. Jesus is the centre of Christmas."

While thanking you all for your continued loyalty, support and charity towards the needy, it is my hope that this coming celebration of the Christmas of the Redeemer will fill all your hearts with joy and light, **I Wish you and your loved ones A Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year, filled with Copious Blessing of our Lord.**

Yours in Christ & in Saint John,

Paul M. BORG, OSJ,  
Lt.-Grand Master





## Christmas and St. Stephen

When I was a boy, I always thought that there was something depressing about St. Stephen's Day service. It did not really fit into the joy and rejoicing of Christmas, for its gospel is not about the birth of Jesus, the centre of Christmas, but it is about persecution and death, and this gloomy character is further reinforced by the story of death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. It was as if all joy disappeared, and how could this be reconciled with the essence of Christmas, for Christmas is the feast of joy? When I associated Christmas with joy to such an extent, it was probably primarily due to the fact that I walked around in an overwhelming joy because of all the gifts I had received from a large family, and this joy had not to be touched for everything in the world. At the same time, the Christian teaching in the school had given the impression that Christianity had only to do with joy. I had been told that if you simply believed in God, my life would become bright and happy, a dance on roses, and God would give me everything I asked for.

But as I grew older, I inevitably got a somewhat different view of life and thus also of Christianity, because life was not pure happiness after all, and it apparently did not help that I prayed for it to get better. At the same time, I became acquainted with the theories of science regarding the creation of the earth, the evolution of species and much

else, which completely contradicted what I had been told in biblical history, and which, I had been told, was truth and therefore I had to believe it, if you would be a Christian. In short, it can be expressed in this way that due to a wrong or unvarying teaching of Christianity, a completely unreasonable gap arose between faith and knowledge, a gap that most people have probably faced, and which means that I had to do up with myself and my relationship to the Christian faith. For my part, it was studies at the university in modern epistemology and medieval interpretation of the biblical texts that showed me the possibility of combining scientific cognition and Christian faith, but that is a completely different story. (...)





(...) It is probably also one of the reasons why we today can see the symbolic in the fact that the birth of Christ and the first Christian martyr are celebrated on two consecutive days. It is, of course, a coincidence, for St. Stephen's day has been determined long before the Christian Church decided to celebrate the birthday of Jesus on December 25. We do not know for sure what day Jesus was born, not to say at what time of the year or what year it happened, but the church needed to find a day to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and what was so more nearby than to choose one of the most important feast days on the time, the day when one celebrated the returning sun. In this way the church could at the same time combat the



worship of the undefeated sun, which was one of the early Christianity's strongest competitors, and this was done in the most effective way by giving the pagan festival a Christian content. That was the reason why December 25. was chosen, and thus there are no theological depths at the location of Jesus' birthday and St. Stephen's Day in continuation of each other.



But regardless of whether it is a coincidence, the fact that at Christmas we both commemorate the birth of Jesus and the first martyr of the Christian Church points to something significant in our Christian faith. The message of Christmas is as follows: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2: 10-11) There is every reason to rejoice over this message, but the texts of St. Stephen's day show that it is also necessary that we do not fall into the belief (...)







(...) that Christians faith is the pure shepherd idyll and escape from reality. For sure the Saviour has been born, but it has not changed the world as such; the world has not gotten better for that reason, for sin and death do still exist, and they still rule the world. The Saviour's life was not a dance of roses; on the contrary, it became a story of suffering and death. The reason that the gospel of the Saviour of the world came out to all nations is a martyrdom, for it was the persecution associated with Stephen's death that was the reason why the Christians fled from Jerusalem and spread all over the Roman Empire. In the first centuries of the history of the church at all, martyrdom was, so to



speak, the lifeblood and condition of existence of the church and Christianity, our church, so to speak, is based on suffering and persecution.

Stephen stands as a living witness that Christmas does not mean idyll. The joy of Christmas is not the same as freedom from struggle; the joy of Christmas is not the same as freedom from grief, and the encounter with the new life in the manger is not the same as freedom from physical

death. Christian faith means a constant struggle both internally and externally. It would be insane to try to express that the life of Christians unlike other people is a dance on roses.

This is very important to keep in mind in these days where human lives are threatened by covid-19 all over the world, and where our societies are being shut down more or less, and where strict restrictions are placed on how many people we may meet. This year Christmas cannot become the same family party for us. The darkness of loneliness threatens us from all sides. Therefore, we must constantly remember that the most important message of Christmas is that God has lit a light in the darkness around us, a light of hope that reaches into our hearts, a light of hope that manages to penetrate even the closest darkness. This light in the darkness makes it possible for us also this year to wish each other a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

**Rev. Niels REFSKOU, KJSJ,**  
**Chairman of the Ecclesiastical Council.**





## PERSONAL AND COMMON GOOD REBALANCED ?



Every crisis always brings benefits with its burdens. What will it be with this coronavirus crisis? We cannot see it yet, but we can speculate and think about it. Something has certainly happened to man that may be irreversible. Is it a change for the better or for the worse ?

It is clear that the tension between the personal good and the common good was never before felt so strongly. We were and are confronted with our true colours, revealing fear, self-preservation, even selfishness, but at the same time we

perceive in ourselves a desire to do good, to help others; there is an upward thrust to be observed in our humanity. In times of crisis, the mask slips, even when we have to put one on to protect ourselves and others. This is what it is all about: ourselves and others. What matters most when wearing these masks: our desire for self-preservation or our concern not to put others at risk?

We cannot deny that in recent decades the balance has increasingly shifted towards the personal good, or more accurately worded, the individual good, coupled with a declining concern for our neighbour. Individualism in the wake of the

freedom of the individual citizen demanded more and more attention and space, and society seemed to conform to it. It was a slow process since John Locke



propagated this individual freedom in the late 17th century, which was given a pertinent place in the American Constitution. Society must do everything in its power to protect, promote, and possibly restore the freedom of the individual. In the Church's social doctrine, it sounds somewhat different. It states that one must strive to promote human dignity on the basis of the principle of the common good. Both start from what is common, but in the secular context the private is strongly narrowed down to individual freedom. Of course, man's dignity is often violated by imposing restrictions on this individual freedom. (...)







(...) We experience this in countries with totalitarian regimes. But there is more at stake when it comes to man's dignity than his individual freedom. Even more so, if one starts to emphasize individual freedom too much, one is in danger of losing attention for one's neighbour. Everything is focused on one's own good, while the other disappears from sight. The other can still be there to promote our good, but that's about it. If they cannot fulfil their task, we



push them aside very quickly. It becomes a pursuit for one's own good in which the other still matters to the extent that they can make a positive contribution in order to increase this personal good. What I can do for the good of the other becomes secondary and even completely ignored after a while. It becomes an every-man-for-himself mentality. There is no room for the other in individualism, so that we also see a difference between the concept of personal freedom and

individual freedom. Because, in personalism, the other is a reality for which I feel responsible. As an individual, I open myself up to the other and to the wider community. This is what the social doctrine of the Church holds to be essential, setting two other principles as conditions: solidarity and subsidiarity. It is the four-leaf clover of the Church's social doctrine: caring for human dignity is an essential element in caring for the common good, which, in turn, is accomplished on the basis of the



principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. This is a harmonious model in which one slides into the other and one needs the other. Society is not isolated and has only one objective: to help achieve the collective good of its citizens, which is expressed in respecting, (...)





(...) promoting, and restoring the human dignity of each person. And in this, the amount of freedom that each person must have in order to be able to develop and experience his or her humanity in a dignified manner is of course important. But it must always remain a situated freedom, taking into account the presence of others and



the task of contributing to the growth of the good, call it the human dignity of others and of all others. Pope Paul VI called it the care of all people and of the whole person. And we do this by showing solidarity and respecting the rules of subsidiarity: not taking away or undermining the other person's responsibility but, on the contrary, helping him (the word 'subsidiary' meaning support) to grow in responsibility.

Back to the coronavirus crisis and the time after it. Will the experience we gained during the lockdown period help us to replace the individualism to which we were slipping with a healthy personalism, in which we rightly care for our own good, but also for the good of others and ultimately for the common good? And that we do this in a way in which there should be no tension at all between the three, quite the contrary. Will we remember how important the attention for others is for our personal good ? Those who were separated from their



beloved family members have certainly experienced this and must now carry this experience with them and even cherish it. Will we remember the importance of the commitment to others, which, in caring (...)





(...) for those who fell victim to the coronavirus, took shape in a magnificent way ?  
Will we treat the environment with greater respect now that we have experienced how clearer the sky was when we were forced to leave our car in the garage and the planes were parked on the runways, and we yearned for a refreshing walk in a nearby forest? Or will we soon dream again of travelling to exotic locations and forget how exotic it is in our own neighbourhood?



Will we continue to care about the good of people in other continents, even when there are no more statistics coming in about how many coronavirus-related deaths there are? A global feeling arose that was different from what we used to understand by globalization. It took on a totally different meaning than the economic one we usually gave it.

And will political authorities continue to focus on the person and everything that should promote human dignity,



including the economy? Or will market interests very quickly claim their priority on the political agendas, with the risk that people will once again be pushed into second place ? And will the same political authorities not allow themselves to be carried away once again by the demands of an individualistic view of (...)







(...) mankind, which only care about absolute self-determination, absolute freedom, and absolute autonomy?

These continue to be open questions and the only ones who can respond in a positive way are we. It starts with the specific choices we make. Hopefully, those are like the circles that gradually spread across the surface of the water caused by a pebble that was thrown in. There are numerous videos appearing today that illustrate the coronavirus crisis from different points of view. I received one yesterday. It was a father telling his little children a fairy tale about what happened in 2020 and how it profoundly changed the world. And they lived happily ever after, the people who learned positive lessons from the crisis. Or will it just be a fairy tale?

**Frater René STOCKMAN, KSJ,**  
**Superior General, Brothers of Charity**





## PETIT CONSEIL by VIDEOCONFERENCE: a FIRST...

Exceptional circumstances lead to *spetsial'nyye mery*, which is Russian for special measures as the members of the Russian Grand Priory already knew. The Petit Conseil couldn't convene as scheduled in April-May in New York for obvious reasons; all travelling strictly forbidden, half of the world declared red 'no go zones', and most of all: it's a heck of a swim from Australia or Europe to the States. With the second covid wave globally raging, the planned October meeting of the Petit Conseil in Malta was evenly bound to be impossible too. Nevertheless to have an October meeting of the Petit Conseil was strongly preferable to make some decisions on different domains and to assess a number of situations. So we had to regroup our forces digitally, *yours truly* hosting. It happens all over the world and in our OSJ-world on all levels, so why wouldn't we ? After a test and try-out meeting to check communications and agree upon protocols on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> of October, the real deal was on, on October 31<sup>st</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup> with the participant's local time zones ranging from 06:30 o' clock in the morning in New York to 22:30 hours in South Australia, and everything in between.

Apart from the digital aspect, this was a quite conventional **Petit Conseil meeting**, wisely lead by the Grand Hospitaller Dr. Vincent BONAGURA, OSJ, with a classical agenda: after the opening devotions and the approval of the last meeting's report, some specific items were addressed more intensely:

- **the Vow**: different vow texts co-exist and are used by different units, abstraction made of the language and translation aspect, some longer and some shorter versions, all evenly valuable, (\*\*\*)

"Alright, does everyone have sound?"



Last  
Supper,  
Version  
2020.



Petit Conseil, version 2020: Dr. Vincent Bonagura,  
OSJ, Grand Hospitaller, Chairperson o/t meeting.







(...) and all of course fully reflecting the mission of the invested Knights or Dames. The Petit Conseil chose not to impose one model text to all units for all Investitures but to leave the choice of the specific Vow text to the different (Grand) Priories or independant Commanderies,

- The **Questionnaire Form**, and which informations to be sent on which moment about our aspirant-donates and about the Knights and Dames to be invested, will be clarified in the minutes of the meeting, to be sent to all units leaders, and

- The **International Website** could benefit from some updating: the Chancellor / website administrator of the Low Countries, Dame Gretel De Meyer, DJSJ, will be contacted to update the website and post the last two year's International Heralds, thus reflecting the maintaining of activities of our units on both domains of our Vow, even in these harsh times of confinement.

Each Conventual Bailiff reports on his competences and actions.

**The Grand Commander HE Joseph GRECH** delivers his Administrative Report on the Investitures held in & scheduled for 2020, the number of members invested & to be invested, the list of Bailiffs and Bailiffs Emeritii, the payments of Oblations. The Grand Commander continues with the Treasurer's Reports on the years 2019 and 2020.

**The Grand Marshal HE Krister THELIN** transferred his written report on a.o. the Trademark of the Order in different regions of this globe. One of the Grand Marshal's Lieutenants, HE Chev. Bengt Almebäck, OSJ, clarifies the issue of the Legitimacy: you will find the updated text 'document A' on page 25 of this edition.

**The Grand Hospitaller HE Vincent BONAGURA** updates the meeting about the amounts spent on Charity during the year 2019, gives some additi-ons to the report given at PC meeting of 04/10/2019 and reports on the Victims of Hurricane Dorian. When the issue arises of the House of (...)



Grand Hospitaller Dr. Vincent Bonagura on the screen and Grand Counselor Boudewijn Franck in front.



Lieutenant-Grand Master Paul Borg on the screen







Last Supper, Version 2020



(...) the Order on the camino to Santiago de Compostela, the situation shows out that the earlier plan to have the house exploited by the local group of Caritas Catholica is to be abandoned. The Petit Conseil decides to sell the house to avoid further losses.

**The Grand Councilor HE Boudewijn FRANCK** comments on the external relations and communications and on any positive results in the talks with other Order branches. One of his Lieutenants, yours truly, comments on the International Herald quarterly magazine and on the international website (cfr. supra).

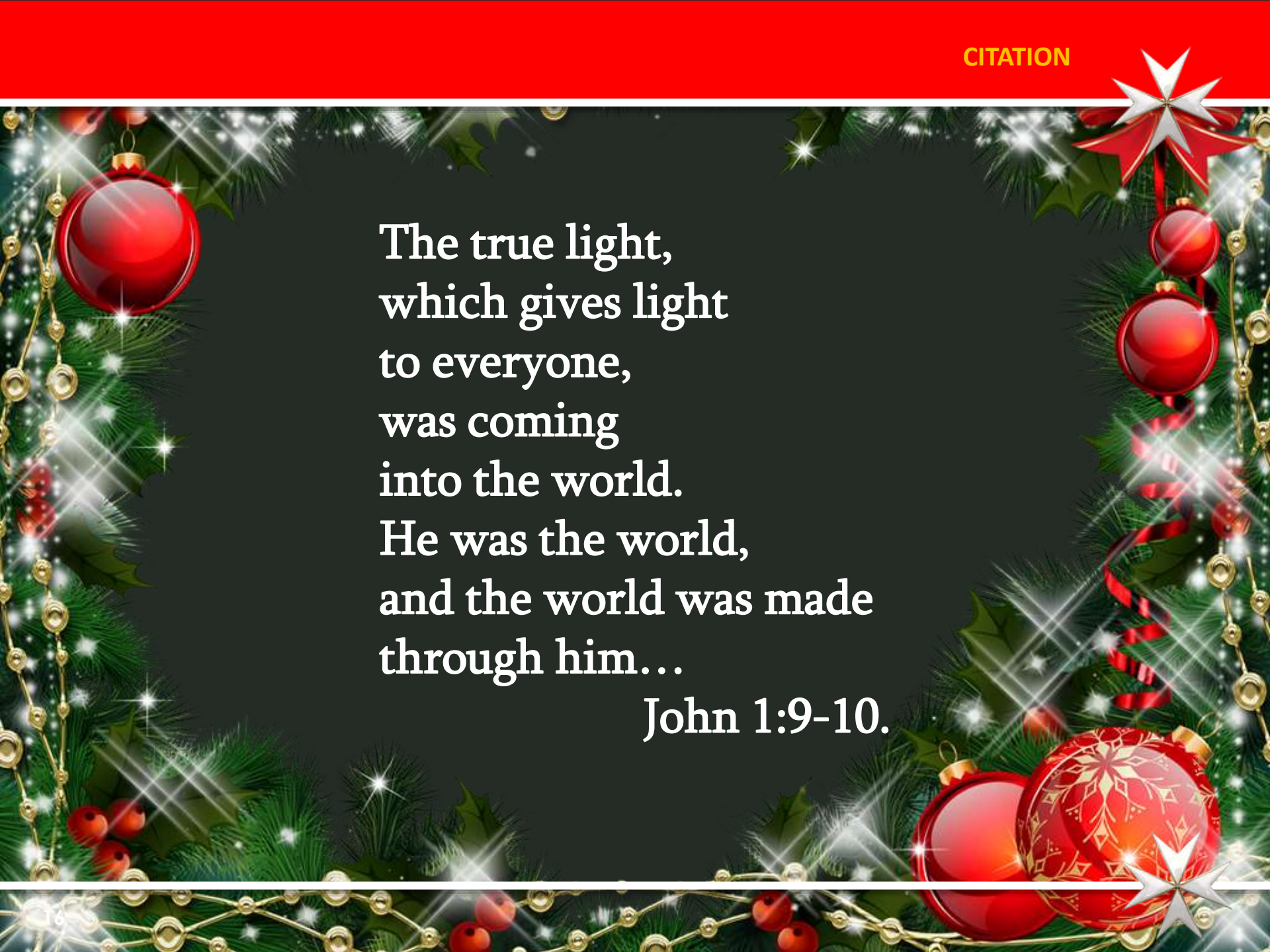
Notwithstanding the current covid situation and the incertainties this brings, the Petit Conseil chooses to maintain for the time being the dates and venue of the **next Petit Conseil** (24th & 25th of April) **and Sovereign Council**, with an evaluation update mid January to come. No dates were stated yet for an possible postponement of the Sovereign Council to the Autumn of 2021: members will be informed in due time to be able to make reservations and bookings.

The Petit Conseil then elects the **Judges to the Supreme Court** of the Order, the approval of the Sovereign Council members pending. Due to the current situation, the written approval was solicited by e-mail and obtained from the Sovereign Council members. The Supreme Court is therefore legally formed as follows. The Judges are HH. Chev.

Peter Anthony HERRIMAN, CGSJ (Grand Priory of Australasia), Chev. James Anthony BALLERANO Esq., CGSJ (The Americas Priory) and Chev. Judson SCOTT, CGSJ (Priory of the Pacific). Auxiliary Judges are: Chev. Alberto FINOCCHIARO, CGSJ (The Priory of Sicily) and Chev. Richard MUSCAT, KJSJ (The Priory of Malta).

After the closing devotions, the meeting was adjourned and best wishes for good health and safety were exchanged. Next April shall be the next Petit Conseil meeting: 'live' in Malta all government regulations permitting, and if not: digital.





The true light,  
which gives light  
to everyone,  
was coming  
into the world.  
He was the world,  
and the world was made  
through him...  
John 1:9-10.





## PRIORY of the PACIFIC (USA): **REPORTS** on LIFE IN COVID-TIMES: the FIRES, COMMUNICATIONS, ACTIONS and CHARITY WORKS



### REPORT: PRIORY of the PACIFIC, Summer & Autumn 2020

This summer has been one of seclusion because of Covid-19, extremely damaging fires in California and Oregon causing wide-spread smoke in various locations, including San Francisco. St. Francis Commandery, primarily a military commandery, has held virtual meetings utilizing the Zoom platform and thus has continued vital communication with the members. Chevalier Scott Powell, pilot and veteran of the U.S. Army, gave the initial presentation to the Commandery, and gave a well presented discourse on his military service including deployments to Iraq. Chevalier William Chadwick gave the second presentation to the Commandery and related his military experiences including advanced training, and deployment to Grenada with the U.S.

Army forces. Chevalier Christopher Barnes presented the members with a detailed history of the Great Siege of Malta Including historical pictures and maps of the area. In November Veterans Day was observed individually by Commandery members and later Chevalier Tom Gilheany gave a detailed presentation on cyber security, including threats to individual computers, password security, and specific suggestions to enhance computer security. Father Jack Izzo gave the invocation and benediction for this meeting with a reminder to remember the sick and poor as we gather for Thanksgiving Day.

Several charities that St. Francis Commandery supports have suspended their programs during this Covid-19 period but will resume activities in the future. However, three charities have continued  
(...)



Grenada deployment



Veteran working on SV Clover







SV Clover



Fly fishing outing

(...) to function during this period. One charity that the Commandery continues to support is the restoration of the sailing vessel (SV) Clover, a 68' foot Gaff-Rigged Topsail Cutter which was built in Great Britain and was involved in the rescue of Dunkirk. Clover eventually ended up in Alameda, California near San Francisco. CDR Terry Moran, USN-ret and a Vietnam Veteran pilot found Clover and decided to take on the restoration of the old wooden yacht. Moran set up a charitable foundation and recruited veterans to help in the restoration. Chevalier Stephen Pendas and Chevalier Michael Lark of the St. Francis Commandery were instrumental in getting Moran funding from the Commandery. Moran's charity is Wooden Boats For Veterans (WBFV) and is dedicated to provide recovering veterans and their families an experience on wooden boats including restoration, designing, building and sailing wooden boats. Since 2016 more than 3000 veterans have taken part in restoration and sailing programs sponsored by WBFV. After several years and many hours of hard work by volunteers and veterans, SV Clover was re-christened on 11 November 2020, Veterans Day in the USA. Chevalier Christopher Barnes, attended the event and gave the project and event a Bravo Zulu (Well Done). SV Clover will soon be taking veterans and guests sailing on the Bay.

Chevalier David Fleming vetted another charity that the Commandery supports and they continued in 2020 to provide veterans with an outstanding fly fishing outing on the Middle Fork of the American River, near Sacramento, California.

Tom Bartos founded the Horseshoe Bar Preserve and acquired several miles on the river for a fly fishing retreat. Mr. Bartos has hosted wounded veterans for several years and the Commandery has supported this event which gives the veterans an opportunity to associate with fellow veterans in a tranquil environment and enjoy





(...) (...) the healing of comradeship with other veterans. As Mr. Bartos stated: "The 2020 event was one of our best events."

Ranger Road is the newest charity that supports veterans and the Commandery made a financial donation to them in 2020. Chevalier Biz Obley met with Mikhail Venikov in 2019 and had Chevalier William Chadwick and Chevalier Gordon Hess meet with Venikov and further vet his program. Venikov and his wife Eileen founded Ranger Road to give disabled veterans the opportunities to participate in a variety of programs to assist in their rehabilitation and transition to civilian life. Some of the participating veterans suffer from PTSD, traumatic brain injury, depression, or limbs lost from explosive devices on the battlefield. Venikov is a veteran of the 2nd Ranger Battalion and was the winner of the prestigious and most demanding Best Ranger Competition in 2006 while on active duty. He developed, with active duty service men and women, and other veterans, scuba diving instruction, parachute jumping weekends, car racing instruction on race tracks, hunting trips, and physical fitness programs. Those activities fit the mission statement of Ranger Road: "Bring veterans together through extraordinary experiences by empowering the transition to the next chapter of their life."

St. Francis Commandery, with guidance from Commander Keith Turner, has started a new sailing program with Ranger Road to provide veterans the opportunity to learn to sail and to race on San Francisco Bay. The program utilizes yachts from the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco and Ron Young, a yacht club member, is the advisor to Ranger Road for the program. Veterans and disabled veterans are now sailing on San Francisco Bay with the Golden Gate Bridge as a







Parachute day for Ranger Road in Davis, California.



(...) sunset back-drop. A closing note from Mikhail Venikov, President of Ranger Road: "Thank you once again for your gene-rosity and support of our efforts and may God Bless You."

Yours in St. John,

**Biz Obley, KJSJ.**  
Prior,  
Pacific Priory (USA)



Fly fishing outing



SV Clover



Fly fishing outing







### IN MEMORIAM/ Chev. Peter WEILENMANN (CJSJ), 11 Juni 1945 – 18. August 2020

With great regret we, the Priory Deutschschweiz, had to say goodbye to our former Prior Peter Weilenmann.

For twenty-four years our brother Peter wore the insignia and mantle of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. For Peter, his oath in front of the altar was very important. For him it symbolized two things:

- on the one hand, to give a little light as a hope for the needy
- on the other hand, to keep the obligation to love one's neighbour as a baton on its way between the generations of our order.

Following this intention, with the help of his enormous knowledge of languages and his eloquence, he led our Priory Deutschschweiz as Prior for 14 years (until 2015). His prudent leadership was characterized by respect and a solution-oriented directive.

He carried on the baton of the Order through the establishment of the German Hospitaller Foundation and the signing of the Concordat of Confederation at the seat of our Order in Malta. Peter represented our Priory at many international events of the Order.

Just as Peter was finishing his professional career and one year before he could pass on his position as Prior, a very dark time overtook him personally. He suffered a stroke, partly paralysed and the aforementioned talent for languages was taken away from him. But also, during this time he worked on the light again. This time on his own. Peter passed his personal baton to his wife Kerstin. Kerstin has done a great and exemplary job and we can only hope that – should we ever be confronted with such a baton – we will only be able to do this nearly as well as Kerstin has done in the past years.

Faith as a foundation, light as a sign of hope and charity as a tool, so we too, in the spirit of Peter, should continue to hold the baton on his way between generations. True to our motto:

PRO FIDE, PRO UTILITATE HOMINUM.

(Extract from the speech hold by Prior, Chevalier Philipp Henrik Mayer CJSJ, at the funeral service on 28th August 2020, in the Evang. Church at Müllheim, Switzerland)



**Othmar ZÜGER, KGSJ,**  
Webmaster  
Deutschschweiz Priory





### Three charity actions supported by the Priory of Saint-Alexander Nevski

(...) The Priory of Saint-Alexander Nevski is certainly not the largest in terms of membership. As a result, it is not easy to launch major charity campaigns. That is why the members mainly concentrate on small-scale projects and offer support to existing initiatives. Their last three actions bear witness to this.

A first initiative took place on Tuesday December 17, 2019. On



that day, the Priory of Saint-Alexander Nevski donated toys to the children of VZW Levenslust (Zest for life) at Schepdaal-Dilbeek.



"The warm days of the end-of-year period are celebrated in many families in Dilbeek. We, too, want to put our money where our mouth is during this period", according to Prior Louis Loossens. "Every year we try to support a few charities. This year (2019) our attention was drawn to the VZW Levenslust. This non-profit organization works every day for young people who suffer from learning difficulties, behavioral problems or autism". (...)





## CHARITY: 3 ACTIONS SUPPORTED St. ALEXANDER NEVSKY (B)



(...) Thanks to a few companies, friends, family and generous donators, funds could be raised to enable the Priory to purchase educational toys. "Thanks to the heartwarming support of dozens of people of Dilbeek, we are able to donate more than 100 pieces of educational toys to VZW Levenslust", according to future Prior Ronald Vereecken. The donation of the educational toys took place on December 17, 2019.



One week later, on December 24, 2019, the Priory donated collected toys to the municipal services of Lebbeke. Each

year, the municipality hands out packages to the most deprived persons in the village. "But it is becoming increasingly difficult to put together such packages, so all help is welcome. We would therefore like to thank explicitly the Priory of Saint-Alexander Nevski for their contribution", says the representative of the municipality who wishes to remain anonymous.

A third action followed on July 1, 2020. Here too, the Priory of Saint-Alexander Nevski cooperated in an organized initiative. In collaboration with many volunteers, the House of the Child of Lebbeke organized a toy and children's clothing fair for vulnerable families who are struggling (...)







(...) financially. The organization therefore appealed for clothes and toys to be brought in. "The CoVid19-crisis is making things more difficult for many people and with this initiative we want to give them a helping hand", according to the organizers. "We focus on families with children between 0 and 15 years old. And apparently there are a lot of people with a warm heart in Lebbeke, because the collection yielded a lot of material."



The Priory appealed to a few befriended organizations, as a result of which material could once again be collected and delivered to the organizers. On the day of the fair itself,



some members of the Priory rolled up their sleeves to help with the distribution of the material.

**Gunther VAN HAUT, KSJ,  
Herald.**





## Summary of the second edition 2020 on the LEGITIMACY of the ORDER of Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller.

The second edition is based on a large additional source material that was not available during the work on the first edition. This include recent addition to literature, scientific articles, minutes of meetings and other documents obtained from several archives, e.g. belonging to Grand Priory of Malta, the English Priory (documents published on [www.orderstjohn.org](http://www.orderstjohn.org)) and Roger Lindsay- keeper of files of late Prince Andrej (Custos Rotulorum) as given by Princess Eva Maria, widow of Prince Andrej and executrix of King Peters' estate. The material and the related investigations have led to partial changes in the historical narrative stated in the first edition. A special challenge has been to sort out part of the former Grand Chancellor Charles Thourot Pichel's deliberately fictional history of the American Order i.a. published in his work, the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, Shickshinny 1957. Thus, clarity has been achieved about previously questionable historical events.

The King Peter II Order is a Christian Ecumenical International Order of St. John, devoted to the main purpose of helping, the Lord's poor and His sick and needy. The Order is an International entity under the King Peter II Constitution, which the King by his *fons honorum* in exile, since Nazi Germany invaded 1941 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, signed in Paris on March 19, 1964 and gave the right of usufruct of the Constitution to the Order. The original Document of the Constitution in French, based on the King's Royal Charter of 1963, was trusted by the King to the care of the newly created Malta Priory on March, 8 1964 by the involvement of the King. The Constitution was brought over to Malta from Switzerland by the Order's Ambassador, Commander Ivo Muscat Azzopardi. In the same year Bailiff Prior of Malta, professor Gaston Tonna Barthet decided to archive the Constitution, originally issued by King Peter II, at the National Notary Archives in Valletta [Notarial Act No. 271]. (...)





(...) Due to the intangible creation of the King Peter II Constitution the intellectual property of the constitution belongs to the Crown of the Royal House of Karageorgevitch. The legitimate usufruct is strictly limited to the articles of the Constitution and cannot be amendment. Since 1990 the Order consists of two administratively separated branches operating under the King Peter II Constitution of 1964: OSJ Malta, the trustee of the original document of the Constitution – equivalent to the grant of a Royal License - headquartered in Valletta and SOSJ Vancouver headquartered in Vancouver. The latter branch has made some amendments of the Constitution. A later study of the Constitution and statements by HM King Peter II have resulted in being drafted in such a way that it does not allow any legal amendments.

An additional organization was founded in 1988 by Anthony Zammit, Conventual Bailiff of King Peter II Order, expelled from the Order when trying in 1987 to unseat Grand Master Prince Andrej. Anthony Zammit's institution of the Order is to be regarded as a private Law association. Anthony Zammit as Lt. Grand Master in 1989 engaged HRH Prince Karl Vladimir Karageorgevitch, the son of the late Prince Andrej, who became the 'Royal Patron' and Deputy Lieutenant Grand Master in 1991. Prince Vladimir was elected Grand Master in 2001 of the Order upon the passing of the then Grand Master Anthony Zammit. The Order is Headquartered in London and operates under an unauthorized copy of the French version of the Constitution of 1964. The use of the Constitution has not been accepted by the Crown of the Royal House of Karageorgevitch.

In the present document, with emphasis on the King Peter II Malta Order, the historical legitimacy of the Order is described and compared foremost, to the four Protestant Orders of the Alliance: the German Balley Brandenburg, the English Venerable Order, the Johanniter Order in the Netherlands and the Johanniterorden i Sverige. A specific description is devoted to the Catholic Order of Malta, affiliated to the Pope. The Order of Malta is of special history significance and was a state before the fall of Malta 1798. It is to be noted that the Holy See does not recognize the Orders of the Alliance although there is an acceptance of the Orders humanitarian activities. Added to this, the Order of Malta and the Orders of the Alliance in 1975 established the Committee on the Orders of Saint John,  
(...)







(...) complemented with the False Order Committee as a collaborative body focused on protecting their shared heritage, including names and symbols.

The comparison between the Orders in concern and the King Peter II Order is based on criteria that are established for a genuine Chivalry Order, widely accepted by a large number of states and in International Public Law. Criteria have also been laid down in statutes of e.g. the International Commission for Orders of Chivalry (ICOC), a privately run organization founded in 1960. In addition to humanitarian aid and work in spirit of Christianity, the criterion of a Sovereign's fons honorum is of importance. The comparison shows that OSJ Malta branch can assert its legitimacy as an genuine King Peter II Chivalry Order. Of significant importance for the Order's legitimacy is that King Peter II has laid down a "Hereditary Protectorship" within the Constitution in favour of the Head of the Royal House of Karageorgevitch, currently Crown Prince Alexander, the only son and heir of H.M. King Peter II. The dynastic Protectorate presupposes a Sovereign's fons honorum, which King Peter II exercised as a non-abdicated Monarch in exile. Due to the dynastic Protectorate the Constitution is the Intellectual Property of the Crown of the Royal House, managed by Crown Prince Alexander. As a result of the Constitution's provisions of the dynastic Protectorate, the intellectual property rights could be compare to a Copyright considered as a sui generis; a copyright of its own. This in turn means that the King Peter II Order is to be regarded as an International entity sui generis within the framework for an International Non Governmental Organization (ONG-NGO) in accordance with the Constitution of the Order (C III 1.)



Of importance for the legitimacy also is the unequivocal fact, that the precious relics of the Order, counting its origin well before the Order's refuges from the Holy Land via Cyprus and Rhodes to Malta, i.e. the arm of John the Baptist, part of the Cross of Christ and an icon, Our Lady of Philermo, were at the time of the Russian revolution transferred, according to the wish of Tsar Nicholas II, to King Alexander I of Yugoslavia, the father of King Peter II, and placed under the Protectorship of The Royal House of Karageorgevitch. The relics are now deposited in Montenegro's old capital Cetinje.[1] (...)

[1. John the Baptist's arm and part of the Cross of Christ are deposited in the Orthodox Church while the icon is in a security deposit in the National Museum.]





(...) The document also discusses the historical legitimacy, based on whether King Peter II Order can relate to the original Order, which, after Napoleon's conquest of Malta in 1798, was no longer a state and came under the Protectorship of the Russian Tsars in St. Petersburg: from Tsar Paul I (Honorary Protector and Grand Master) and thereafter under Tsar Alexander I to the last Tsar Nicholas II. In 1803 the Catholic part of the Order under the Protectorship of the Pope convoked a general assembly at Messina while the ecumenical part of the Order remained in St. Petersburg under the Protectorship of the Tsars up to the Russian revolution 1917.



**Tsar Paul I (Honorary Protector and Grand Master)**

During Tsar Nicholas II reign, a Grand Priory of Americas, with some affiliation to the Order in St. Petersburg, was established in the United States 1908, however, to a much lesser extent than described by some authors, especially by the former Grand Chancellor Charles Pichel. Charles Pichel was expelled from the Order in April 1962 by the Sovereign Council of the Order, Preceded by H.M. King Peter II, then Grand Protector of the Order. In 1911 the American Order adopted a Constitution, certified registered in the same year in the State of New Jersey. In 1912 a new Constitution was adopted. Available data indicates that Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich of Russia, when - a second time out of three - visited New York in 1913, was honored elected as Grand Master of the American Order with the Grand Priory of America. During his Mastership he lived in Paris and most of the operational activities of the Order were taken care of by Lt. Grand Master and President of the Sovereign Council. Grand Duke Alexander visited New York for the first time in 1893 on behalf of Tsar Alexander III for e.g. make contacts with prominent civic leaders and officially expressed to President Grover Cleveland the gratitude for the help extended by the American nation during the Russian famine. He visited New York for a third time in 1928. After his death in 1933 several Lt. Grand Masters over the years took turns until the Prior of the Priory of France, Paul Granier Cassagnac, duly elected Lt. Grand Master in 1960.

During the World War I members of the American Order founded a committee which established voluntarily the American Ambulance in Russia to operate with the Russian Army in collaboration with the American Red Cross and the Russian Red Cross. Tsar Nicolas II appointed his second daughter, Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaevna, to the Patroness of the American Ambulance in Russia. (...)



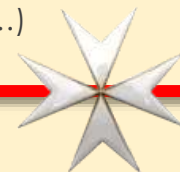


(...) Besides the American Order, a Sovereign Order of St. John and Malta had existed in Canada since late 19th century, descended from a Scottish Order of St. John even styled "the Black Knight". In 1958 the Order was Headquartered at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania and led by the President Bailiff Franklin A. West. In 1959, the two orders formed a board of directors on the initiative of Charles Pichel, who a couple of years earlier had been appointed Grand Chancellor of the American Order as a kind of reward for the history of the Order through the previously mentioned publication, the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, Shickshinny 1957. Later the Sovereign Order of St. John and Malta would become the Formals Order, then named Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller.

Several documents and authors' investigations support that the American Order also known as the Grand Priory of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, was the same organization of which King Peter II become Grand Protector in February 1962 [minutes of the Board of Directors Of the Order]. The initiative had come from the Lt. Grand Master Cassagnac and His Majesty was installed as Protector at the Sovereign Council meeting in April 1962 at Grandson Castle, Switzerland. Charles Pichel, who saw his position within the Order threatened by King Peter II becoming the Patron of the Order, intriguing against Cassagnac, who considered Pichel unworthy and tried to unseat him. The controversy resulted in that Cassagnac was suspended by the Court of Justice in May 1962. The suspension was not accepted by the European part of the Order. In June that year the Sovereign Council removed Charles Pichel from the Order. Thereafter Pichel continue to run an organization of 'his own': the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem INC., which had been incorporated by proxy under the laws of the State of Delaware already in August 28, 1956. This Order, also named Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, in 1962 elected Count von Luckner as Lt. Grand Master. In 1967 he was succeeded by Crolan Edelen as Grand Master. Due to disagreements Pichel in 1976 tried to unset Grand Master Edelen but instead Edelen secured the backing of the Supreme Council of that Order and removed Pichel.



Due to necessity arrangements to protect the Order from the problems caused by Charles Pichel King Peter II in concert with Paul Granier Cassagnac – as Lt. Grand Master from the view of the European part of the Order - and several Bailiffs decisions had been taken in June 1962 to transfer the seat of the Order from United States to Europe. Sovereign Council (...)







(...) of the Order in September 1962 confirmed the decisions of the transfer. However, the transfer of the seat of the Order did not come into effect. In addition, Cassagnac seemed not to be willing to accept the Constitution of 1964 King Peter II had signed in Paris to replace the Constitution of 1912. This was a beginning of a rift between King Peter II and Cassagnac. (...)



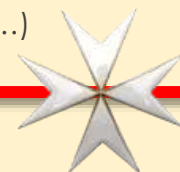
Paul Granier Cassagnac

Due to His Majesty's great concern for the Order, albeit, reluctant he in January 1965 accepted the election of the Grand Mastership of the American Order also named the Grand Priory of America of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the Hospitallers, Knights of Malta. The European Grand Priory with its units, except part of the Priory of France under leadership of Cassagnac, who had renounced the Kings recommendation to be elected Grand Master emeritus, concurred fully in the election of King Peter II and the merger with the Formals Order (the Sovereign Order of St. John and Malta); a board of directors of the two Orders had been established in 1959. The part of the Priory of France under the Grand Mastership of Cassagnac had already in March 1965 adopted a Constitution of an Order separated from the Order King Peter II was elected Grand Master and was its the Grand Protector.

On St. John's day 1965 King Peter II was invested as Grand Master of the united Order under the Constitution of 1912. In 1968 King Peter II issued a new Constitution to replace the 1912 Constitution. It was meant that King Peter II would become the Royal Protector for the united Order, but due to disagreements the Constitution of 1968 did not seem go into effect.

Several documents show that King Peter II considered himself the Grand Master of the Order.

As a last formal act King Peter as the Grand Master of the Order on February 22, 1970 by a Royal Warrant and the King's fons honorum, upon the recommendation of the Kings Council, elevated the Priory of Malta to the Russian Grand Priory. In congruence with the Royal Warrant the name of the Order at the time was the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, the Hospitallers, Knights of Malta. After the death of King Peter II in November 1970, a split in 1971 occurred upon a Grand Magistry meeting. Nevertheless, before the split, the Grand Magistry in March 1971 under Lt. Grand Master Prince Sergei Troubetskoy Presidency confirmed the elevation of the Malta Priory to the Grand Priory. The members affiliated to the late King Peter II continued to operate under the Constitution of 1912 and the Lt. Grand mastership (...)





(...) of Sergei Troubetsky. The members affiliated to Formhals continued to Operate under the leadership of Robert W.Y. Formhals and ratified the 1968 Constitution. In 1972 Formhals was elected as Grand Master. For some time Prince Andrej was the Protector of Formhals Order.

(...)

In 1977 the autonomous Grand Priory of Malta broke with the main body of the Order, under the leadership of Lt. Grandmaster Sergei Troubetsky, and in concert with the autonomous American Grand Priory elected Prince Andrej to its Grand Master under the King Peter II Constitution of 1964. However, the American Grand Priory continued to operate under the 1912 Constitution, which had been incorporated into a section of the 1964 Constitution. On November 30, 1978 the Order was granted official recognition by the International Commission for Orders of Chivalry (ICOC).

In 1979 the Order led by Grand Master Prince Andrej reconciled with the American part of the Order led by Lt. Grand Sergei Troubetsky. The reconciled Order under the Grand Mastership of Prince Andrej convened its International Headquarters in Malta.

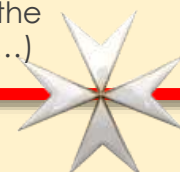
A special event took place in 1981 when Mother Teresa Of Calcutta was Invested into the Order a ceremony in Sydney. At a same time a donation was presented for her ongoing charitable endeavours.

In 1988 the Headquarters of the Order was located in Belgium in preparation for a Royal Belgic Charter for the Order as an International Charity. Prince Andrej had sent a letter to his cousin, H.M. King Baudouin dated November 30, 1988 whereby he sought recognition from the Belgian Crown for the International Charity. Prince Andrej had died in May 1990 and the Order had elected a Council Regent based in Brussels. The request of the recognition from the Belgian Crown was granted in April 1991 as an International Humanitarian Institution chartered per Royal Decree by H.M. King Baudouin of Belgium.

In August 1990 Sovereign Council in Brussels moved that a) the Constitution King Peter II had given in custody to the Russian Grand Priory and lodged in Malta's national archives, b) the Russian Grand Priory accumulated capital (...)



House of Karageorgevich  
Coat of Arms





(...) and c) the World headquarters in Valletta were to be moved away from Malta to be transferred to Brussels. The Sovereign Council's decision prompted the Russian Grand Priory, and with it unified European units, seceded under Grand Prior Bailiff Victor Capur, who had succeeded Gaston Tonna – Barthet maintained the Headquarters at the Russian Grand Priory in Valletta and became the centre of an independent network.



The late  
King Boudewijn  
of Belgium.

Apart from the fact that the Sovereign Council meeting held in Brussels was unlawfully convened under the Constitution, the Sovereign Council did not appear to have reflected on the fact that the Constitution which King Peter II decided should be trusted to the care of the Malta Priory could not legally be separated from that then by King Peter II elevated Russian Grand Priory of Malta, unless permission of the Crown of the Royal House of Karageorgevitch concerned has been obtained.

In 1999 the Russian Grand Priory with its units restored the Grand Magistracy established 1977 and elected Victor Xuereb Lt. Grand Master of the King Peter II Order in Malta as a separate administration from the Brussels based administration. This year a split arose between the Brussels Headquarted part of the administration and the new Headquarted administration in Vancou-

ver. The Brussels administration under the Royal Belgic Charter ceased to identify itself as being a part of the King Peter II Order and joined the Russian Hereditary Commanders group – founded in Paris in 1928 – Headquarted in New York. The Canadian Headquarted administration had continued under the usufruct of the King Peter II Constitution and the Lt. Grand Master Raymond J. Addington, since 1994, and then in turn Grand Master Robert G. Brodie, Grand Master David Rolfe and from July 2018 Grand Master D. Stein.

Lt. Grand Master Victor Xuereb led the OSJ Malta until 2007 when succeeded by Michel Bohé. Michel Bohé Mastership lasted until the Sovereign Council meeting in 2015 when he was elected to Lt. Grand emeritus, succeeded by Bailiff Peter Gabrielsen as Lt. Grand Master. In the Sovereign Council meeting in 2019 Peter Gabrielsen he was elected Lt. Grand Master emeritus, succeeded by the Grand Commander Bailiff Paul Borg as Lt. Grand Master. (...)



Bailiff Gaston Tonna Barthet  
1960 - 1985







Standing (L-t-R): the late Secretary General Francis VANREMOORTERE and the then Grand Commander (now Lt-Grand Master) Paul BORG; kneeling: the then newly elected Lt-Grand Master Michel BOHÉ.

(...) The document further discusses several authors' differing views on whether the Order survived in Russia. When comparing many writers' works and their references as well as review of sources such as proclamations – Ukases – by the Russian emperor and government, official lists of Court Almanach and Almanach de Gotha, there are predominant reasons for the Order's survival in Russia, although gradually reduced.

Finally, the document depicts the ongoing work to reunite primarily the two administrative branches of the King Peter II Order, OSJ Malta and SOSJ Vancouver. A reunited King Peter II Order under the Constitution of 1964 would undoubtedly achieve a greater international acceptance and recognition of the Order's humanitarian work. The annual combined contribution to this end presently amounts to some 1, 265, 500 EUR. Double that amount would at least be achievable when the two administrative branches of the Order are reunited.

**Bailiff Bengt ALMEBÄCK, OSJ,  
Lt. t/t Grand Commander**





Princess Dagmar of  
Denmark and Empress of  
Russia

### Dagmar Commandery, The Nordic Priory, in progress and the increased cooperation in the North

#### Where does our name come from?

Commandery Dagmar is a Danish unit in The Nordic Priory in Scandinavia. Our name derives from Marie Sophie Frederikke Dagmar, who was born on November 26, 1847. She was a Danish princess, daughter of King Christian IX, and became a Russian empress, married to Emperor Alexander III. Dagmar became the mother of Russia's last emperor, Nikolaj II. She was Russia's last widowed emperor and last living crowned person. On November 1, 1866, Dagmar married the Russian heir to the throne, Alexander, in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. The Russians warmly welcomed her, and she became a popular member of the imperial family. She devoted her time to family, charity and social chores.

During the 1917 revolution in Russia, the monarchy was abolished, and her son, Tsar Nikolai II, daughter-in-law and grandchildren were murdered.

In 1919 Dagmar travelled in exile in Denmark, among other places in the Danish Royal Castle Amalienborg in Copenhagen, where our Royal Family still lives.

Upon her death in 1928, the Empress was laid to rest in a sarcophagus in the crypt beneath Christian IX's chapel in Roskilde Cathedral.

Under agreement between Denmark and Russia, Dagmar was reburied on 28th of September, 2006, alongside her husband Tsar Alexander III in Peter-and-Paul Cathedral in St Petersburg, 78 years after her death, and 87 years after she left Russia.

#### Commandery Dagmar

It is a great pleasure to note, that Commandery Dagmar is experiencing increased interest in our humanitarian work and in our Knighthood. Over the last few years we have seen progress in the Knighthood membership, and in the coming year we expect 3 new aspirants to be admitted. In addition, we have a few more aspirants waiting.

As something new, the Commandery will seek to increase this interest in our activities by arranging public lectures and church concerts, where there will be an opportunity to ask about the Order and our efforts.

However, a future recruitment will require an aspirant period of at least 2 years, during which the individual's efforts and manner will be the basis for possible admission to the Knighthood.

Commandery Dagmar is currently preparing project descriptions for all our projects in order to strengthen the purpose of the effort. The work on these descriptions will form the basis for further cooperation with other units from our Order (...)





(...) and with other companies, organizations and foundations. It is a great work that awaits us in Commandery Dagmar, but we are ready for the task and fortunately there are many good and willing forces to take off. Commandery Dagmar has several ongoing projects, but the bulk of our efforts and efforts are made in Greenland and Africa.

### Project Greenland

This project supports kids in Kullorsuaq and in Nuuk. Among other things, we have had great success with our efforts in a small village, Kullorsuaq, on the coast of western Greenland. Over a long period of time, we have provided meals for the pupils, as in many cases they showed up to the school with an empty stomach. This, we all know, is not a good start to a day when learning and willingness to learn is essential. Our efforts to send funds for the school's food purchases have subsequently resulted in the local government employing two women to prepare the food. Commandery Dagmar has also been shopping for a satellite phone for the school. When, during the summer months, its students go on a chalet tour in the mountains, there is no cover for mobile phones. If illness or accident is out (there are many polar bears in the area), schoolteachers have not been able to call for help. The new satellite phone creates security and are a very important tool for the community. Nor does the school have any significant computer capacity. Students have only one computer for common use. Commandery Dagmar has started collecting laptops and mobile phones for the school in Kullorsuaq. A request has led Royal Arctic Line to sponsor the shipping of laptops and phones from Denmark to Greenland. Commandery Dagmar is Royal Arctic Line deeply grateful for this benevolence. (...)







(...) In the Capital of Greenland, Nuuk, the Commandery also supports the independent organization Dandelion. The Dandelion Centre works to improve conditions for neglected children and adolescents and prevent further neglect in Greenland. The aim is, that the children and young people of the Dandelion Centre should be pattern breakers and that they should always move on to something better than what they came from.



**Women  
under  
education  
in Old  
Bortianor**



### Africa

Commandery Dagmar has for a period supported a project under the organization Seniorhands for Africa and Asia (ShAA). The project helps women in the cities of Old Bortianor and Kokrobite in Ghana following the motto "Help for Self-Help". The project is being developed in cooperation with the women involved.

The ShAA project includes:

- Formation of a local NGO as the organizational framework for the project.
- Setting up a "money tank" run by the association, providing micro-loans to women and financing investments in joint workshop etc. The money tank is funded by contributions from women (of the income that the project has made possible for them).
- Launching a health programme for project participants and their children.
- The insurance is provisionally financed by the ShAA, but is intended to be financed in the future by the project itself.
- Establishment of a joint workshop with access to equipment for various types of craft, e.g. sewing machines in which women can use or be trained to use. The workshop is run by the association.
- Establishment of a training course for women where they learn to write, read and count. The course will be done in cooperation with local teaching forces, people with experience in adult education and the local public school. (...)





(...) •Planned start-up of nutrition education.

The first effort is adult education for women and the establishment of a joint workshop for the production of sustainable products with which women can supplement their business. The overall objective will be to strengthen women's ability to support their children's upbringing and development.

ShAA has worked in Ghana since 2006 and therefore has a good ballast and knowledge of Ghanaian culture and its society.

### Thailand

Commandery Dagmar supports the development and acquisition of artificial extremities. Here, a large number of children and adolescents have lost arms or legs in road accidents, snake bites or births with malformations. Through the "Protheses Foundation Thailand", which has the Patron of the Thai Crown Princess Sirindhorn, we are helping young people to a better life. Mobile clinics are also in use, so that help can reach the outlying areas of the country. However, due to the corona pandemic, these mobile clinics have had to temporarily suspend work. Instead, agreements have been made with government hospitals, which will step in to do the job.



### Christmas aid

We have also chosen to support those in need in our own country. We do this by supporting the local church parish in Skanderborg, where we have our "headquarters", to purchase and distribute Christmas aid to single people with children under the age of 18.

### Emergency aid

Just as Commandery Dagmar sent a sum to the victims of the Earthquake in Rome a few years ago, the Commandery has in the last few years also sent humanitarian aid to the victims of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas and this year via the People's Church Relief to the victims of the violent explosion in Beirut. Commandery Dagmar is always looking for collaborators and new ideas about areas of action. The aim is clearly to be able to provide assistance to help those in need for a better life. That is why I am very happy to mention the next point.

### Increased cooperation in the Nordic region.

It is very satisfying to note that interest in joint Nordic cooperation and subsequent efforts is growing. Our Prior (...)





## Dagmar Commandery (DK) in progress & increased cooperation in the North



(...) Frank Jakobsen has spoken very warmly of this, and the beginning of a more concrete cooperation took place during a Priory meeting attended by the Swedish Priorat St. Eskil, in Skanderborg September 2018 and 2019. However, the corona pandemic put the project to sleep a bit, but it looks gratifying that it is now taking shape and could become a strong reality around the turn of the year and/or in early 2021.



Both Norway and Sweden have shown great interest in our project in Greenland. With their efforts, the project will grow from a Danish project to a Nordic project, where the combined forces will undoubtedly bring about a marked and tangible progress for the poor, the needy and those who have problems that are difficult to solve with local forces. The common interest is undoubtedly due to the annual physical meetings and close relations between the Swedish Priorat (Priory of St. Eskil) and the Nordic Priorat (Commandery St. Sunniva of Norway, Commandery Aros of Denmark and Commandery Dagmar of Denmark). Here, Prior Frank Jakobsen from the Nordic Priory has clearly encouraged us to bind our forces together in order to achieve a greater result of our work.



### Investiture

The Norwegian Knighthood, Commandery St. Sunniva, will also hold their Investiture in Denmark in 2021 with Commandery Dagmar, but from 2022 a national investiture is planned. The Finnish Commandery was unfortunately considered a resting Commandery by the end of 2019, but it was pleasing to us that Chev. Nikolai Marschan, Chev. Aleksej Sjöberg and Dame Elina Mäntyniemi all joined Commandery Dagmar from the beginning of 2020. It is great to note that the Nordic countries invite each other's Knighthoods to their Investitures and other activities. This makes Nordic unity so much stronger. Separately we are strong, but together we are stronger and can do a greater job based on our common motto: Pro Fide – Pro Utilitate Hominum. Finally, I would like to mention that Commandery Dagmar would have celebrated our 50th anniversary this year. Unfortunately, the Corona pandemic put an end to this celebration, as well as the selection of our Finnish knights' inclusion in Commandery Dagmar, we look forward to marking 19 June 2021 together with our Investiture. You can read more about us on [www.osj-dagmar.dk](http://www.osj-dagmar.dk). May God preserve us all.



**Kim Aabo CHRISTENSEN, KGSJ**  
**Commander,**  
Dagmar Commandery.







### St. Sunniva of Norway: December and Christmas at the Radium Hospital

The covid- pandemic has made the situation for families with children and youth inflicted with cancer, extra demanding. Contact with friends, school, and other family members must be conducted on digital platforms such as Teams and Messenger.

It is also a demanding situation for the leaders and staff at the Radium hospital. They have a responsibility to ensure that both the security and the treatment of the patients are impeccable.

For many years now St.Sunniva has contributed to giving the children, faced with hardship, extra attention of positivity.

We have had several meetings with our partners this year, and even though they have had a difficult financial year, they have all chosen to dedicate themselves to helping us in our work.

The first delivery was 75 Christmas calendars from our partner Coop Prix in Ås. 75 Christmas calendars with 24 hatches give 1800 small moments of joy.

Another regular partner and contributor to our activities are Thorsen Biovital, which is one of Norway's leading (...)  
(...)



Frank and Thora at The Norwegian Radium Hospital



Left: Manager Jeanette and  
Right: her colleague Berit





## CHARITY: December and Christmas at the Norwegian Radium Hospital



(...) distributor of foot-, skin- and hair products. Their contribution of nail polish, perfume, and skin cream is very popular among the girls and gives them a good opportunity to dress up before Christmas.

The Oslo-based company T.T. Mikro is one of the largest suppliers of mobile gear and is donating two pallets of headphones. This gift is a great contribution to those who want to listen to music, audiobooks, and talk to their loved ones over the internet.

The girls at Høybråten Galleri in Oslo have also knitted 140 hats to warm the patients that have little or no hair when they go home after treatment.

We give all our appreciation and thanks to the wonderful partners that contribute with a flash of light in these dark times.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum.



**Frank JAKOBSEN, CJSJ,**  
Commander  
St. Sunniva of Norway,  
Prior  
Nordic Priory.



**Harald Kristiansen and Ikram  
El Mokadem at T.T. Mikro**



**Director Bodil Loffheim  
at Thorsen Biovital.**



**Bente and Ann at The Galleri in Oslo**







Where there is  
charity and  
wisdom,  
there is neither  
fear nor  
ignorance.

Francis of Assisi







## GENERAL CHAPTER BENELUX GRAND PRIORY 14 november 2020, 'worldwide web'.

**Global disasters call for fit and modern countermeasures.** I understand that contacts are kept intact by digital means in somewhat all regions of our OSJ-world, structurally as well as fraternally. And in different regions people who are not so confident on the digital highway for whatever reason, are kindly assisted by members with more digital experience and know-how, or they are still in personal contact within the boundaries of the different and ever changing governmental precautions by whatever means of contact and communication. The army's creed "leave no man/woman behind" is lived up to in our different regions and ranks. It shows both our resilience and resourcefulness to be and act as a true Dame/Knight of St. John, amongst ourselves and towards the poor and the needy. An obvious way to still gather but without taking chances to inflict the virus onto others, is meeting by videoconferencing, which shows out to be the key strategy. And so we did within the Benelux Priory, to have our annual Extraordinary chapter, virus-proof. Of course the annual gathering is much more profound when seeing each other live, and no need to ask which way of gathering is preferred. Unfortunately the cursed virus doesn't pop that question: what would you prefer ? So, instead of the Grimbergen Abbey's hospitality we're so glad to enjoy a number of times a year, it was the worldwide web hospitality for a change. From the safety of our homes or offices, we did handle a major part of the usual agenda. We'll double the fraternal drink next year, confident that this virtual meeting is a *one off*.

The meditation or information part of the meeting this year – we do tend to give alternating way to each aspect a year, pro fide or pro utilitate - was an interesting and well documented lecture by Prioratus Flandirae's Prior(...)





## GENERAL CHAPTER BENELUX GRAND PRIORY, 14th November 2020

Like all OSJ-units, we had to *regroup* on the internet, our familiar gathering location the Abbey of Grimbergen being closed down for groups for the time being. To the downside: there's no match with meeting in real life and enjoying the meeting and the fraternal diner afterwards. To the upside: things could at least happen in the virtual way, and that is a lot better



Hosting / leading the meeting:  
Grand Prior Jan Lambrecht

meeting at all. But as the glass is always half-full and not half-empty: without being naive, we are very optimistic that next year we'll *meet again* (try and get Dame Vera Lynn's voice out of your head, now...) live and well, taking into account the promising messages about different covid vaccines being almost ready for production and dispersal. Having the next Benelux chapter next year's November 13th should be achievable by then.

Of course we tackled the usual general chapter agenda, after the opening prayers by Prelate Rev. Eric Petré with a commemoration moment for the deceased members, and thereafter the *knock knock, who's there ?* round to introduce the participants. But then we got to the main course, the *plat de résistance* of the meeting, a most documented and evenly educational briefing by Prioratus Flandriae Prior Luc Van Eeckhoudt on our Patron Saint St-John the Baptist. The whole exposé was a true whirlwind of information and enthusiasm, all based on the projection of more than 130 slides of religious pieces of art of all kinds depicting our Patron Saint, some true worldwide reknown (...)



Prior Luc VAN  
EECKHOUDT about  
our patron Saint,  
St. John the Baptist







and world class iconography as well as some less known gems, all centered around four topics: 1. his early years, 2. preaching and baptism, 3. the Passion, and 4. relics. It was crystal clear from the first minute that the knowledge of the speaker on the subject was beyond comparison: the result of more than twenty years of fascination and gathering of information on St. John the Baptist by a true art connoisseur. All was brought with *schwung* and flegm and without any pedance. The

one hour speaking time rushed through like a freight train. The beautiful, art based lecture lead us through the life and the key role and importance of our Patron Saint in the life of the Christ, funded on the texts and different approaches of the four evangelists. Every attendee learnt a lot about the life of our Patron Saint in a very entertaining way, and it resulted in a well deserved virtual applause by all participants of the meeting.

After this hit, it was *back to business* with an explanation by Grand Counselor Boudewijn FRANCK about OSJ-International and the virtual Petit Conseil two weeks earlier, followed by the decision on initiative of the Grand Prior Jan LAMBRECHT to form a committee to constitute a Benelux Manual of Rules. After the *varia* Prelate Rev. Peter VERBEKE lead us through the closing devotions, before we prayed both Knights' Prayers in use within the Benelux Grand Priory. Thumbs up !







**Tolerance implies  
no lack of commitment  
to one's own beliefs.  
Rather it condemns  
the oppression or  
persecution  
of others.**

**John F. Kennedy**





## Pro FIDE: a LANDMARK of FAITH ETERNAL WALL OF ANSWERED PRAYERS, Birmingham (UK)



### A MILLION STORIES OF HOPE

Eternal Wall will make hope visible to the nation on a huge scale. Each one of its million bricks will represent an answered prayer, contributed by individuals from all across the UK. The monumental piece of public art will be the largest database of hope stories in the world.

**Standing at 169 feet (51,5 m) meters high**

**Visible from 6 miles/10 kms. distance**

**Next to the road for 500.000 commuters a week**

**Made of 1 million bricks, each representing an answered prayer**

**Eyecatcher for the Midlands**

**Is joined by an exposition about the christian view on prayer,  
complemented by other religions' visions.**



CEO Richard Gamble first had the idea for Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer when he was carrying a cross around Leicestershire at Easter time to lead people to think about Jesus. He prayed over the idea for ten years until 2014 when he felt the nudge to begin acting upon it. The project began with a crowdfunding campaign in 2016 to raise £45,000. This was needed in order to build a suitable website and to run a global Royal Institute of British Architects' (RIBA) competition to find a design for Eternal Wall. From the outset it seemed unlikely that this amount would be reached in time. However, following a time of prayer and encouragement from God, funding miraculously came in from all across the world during a two day period. The full amount was reached with just a day to spare.

Following the successful crowdfunding campaign, the RIBA competition was launched and received 133 entries from 28 countries. The designs were shortlisted to five finalists by a judging panel of experts and national influencers. The project was then presented at Parliament in early 2017.

With things progressing, a member of our prayer team asked God for details about where Eternal Wall would be located, and it was through this short prayer that God gave her information that led us to the land we currently have.

We were connected with the landowner who, unbeknown to us, had felt prompted by God to set money aside in order to contribute to a national landmark about Jesus. The amazing thing is that this landowner set this fund up six months before Richard Gamble even began to think about Eternal Wall. After the meeting, the project was given a ten (...)





## Pro FIDE: a LANDMARK of FAITH ETERNAL WALL OF ANSWERED PRAYERS, Birmingham (UK)



Richard Gamble the green light to start the build. The former chaplain of Leicester City Football Club is the visionary behind the monumental structure.

Gamble says: "It's been 16 years since the idea was first born. To finally receive the official consent is incredible. We are building a very special landmark and it is an amazing opportunity for the British people to leave a legacy of hope for future generations. Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer will make hope visible to the UK. It is unique in that it is all about the community: it is crowd-funded and a million people will come together to crowd-create this incredible piece of art with their stories of hope. What we're doing is historic." The iconic 'eternal' arch structure will be constructed using one million bricks with each representing individual prayers that have (...)

acre piece of land in a prime location near Birmingham.

The RIBA competition continued into 2019 with the final architects adapting their designs to the specific landscape. After presenting their concepts in April 2019 to technical experts and national influencers, a winning design was selected.

At the end of 2019 a successful fundraising campaign was rolled out, securing the remaining funds needed to complete the planning application. This was successfully submitted in January 2020. After North Warwickshire Borough Council granted planning permission, the Secretary of State ratified the decision, giving Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer CEO







## Pro FIDE: a LANDMARK of FAITH ETERNAL WALL OF ANSWERED PRAYERS, Birmingham (UK)



(...) been answered for people across the country. In addition, using interactive technology and a bespoke app, visitors will be able to use their smart device, holding it against any brick to read the individual answered prayers and the personal stories behind them.

It is anticipated that Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer will create 60 new jobs during its two year construction phase from 2021, thereafter providing 20 full-time positions for employees to work for the charity in the visitor centre, café, bookstore and a 24 hour on-site chaplaincy support service. It is also estimated that the monument will generate an additional gross social value of £1.4 billion, including £430 million in charitable donations.



Gamble (picture left) continues, "We want to celebrate and remember all the prayers that God has answered for individuals throughout our nation's history. Each answered prayer could provide hope to those who visit. Our desire is to create thought-provoking public art and offer a space for recreation and reflection for everyone. Our hope is that those who visit will see how God can bring peace in life's storms and be encouraged to reflect on the power and relevance of prayer."

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands and a member of the judging panel who decided on the design comments, "I am delighted Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer has now finally got planning permission and work can get underway. It's an incredibly ambitious, stunning project and is a landmark for the Midlands. It has been a long process, but this landmark will serve as a place of hope for many, and one that will help us remember the Christian heritage of our nation. A massive thank you should go to everyone involved who has turned this vision into reality."

Construction is expected to begin in Spring 2021 with completion in Autumn 2022.

Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer is looking to gather one million answers to prayer. Share yours by going to: [www.eternalwall.org.uk/testimony](http://www.eternalwall.org.uk/testimony)





## Pro FIDE: a LANDMARK of FAITH ETERNAL WALL OF ANSWERED PRAYERS, Birmingham (UK)



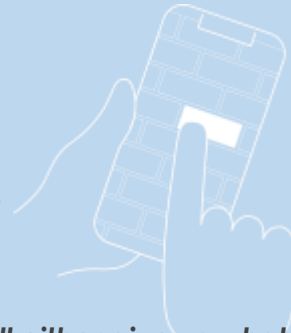
(...)

**Every single one of the million bricks in Eternal Wall will represent an answer to prayer.**

A bespoke app will allow visitors to:

- Hold a phone up to any brick to unlock the associated story,
- See uniquely crafted content, highlighting answered prayers relevant to personal interests,
- Zoom in on bricks out of reach and high up on the 168ft structure, and

Search for answered prayer stories about specific situations or topics from the database.



<https://www.eternalwall.org.uk/donate>



*"God will either give us what we ask or give us what we would have asked if we knew everything he knows"*

**Tim KELLER,**

**Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God**

*"As a nation we are often quite shy about putting our faith in a public place, and it also seemed to me, as a politician, that we need to be able to say that prayer is absolutely important to Christians."*

**Baroness Sal BRIGHTON**

*"I think it will make a big impact on the national consciousness. It's a reflection of the fact that many, many people in Britain today, as well as in our history, have experienced answered prayer."*

**Stephen TIMMS,  
MP**



# CALL FOR CONTENT



WE WANT  
**YOU**

for The International Herald !

**Make yourself heard**, from all OSJ units.  
We **DO** want to know how you are doing over  
there on our motto *Pro Fide, the pro Utilitate Hominum* !

Send your contributions in Word format and in pictures soon for  
the next **01/2021 edition to:** [lambrechtnot@skynet.be](mailto:lambrechtnot@skynet.be), **by the  
end of February** to come at the latest.

**MANY THANKS !**







## REFLECTIONS on the CORONA PANDEMIC and RITUAL

'Never waste a good crisis' was a frequently heard remark in recent months. I would like to draw attention to a peculiar by-product of the corona crisis. It can learn us a lot about what is usually hidden behind the veil of everyday 'business as usual'. For example about the relationship between economic

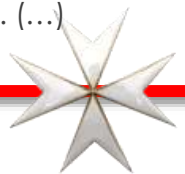


activity and (the importance of) collective health care, or between scientifically managed health care and politics. I would like to focus on what we have learnt about the importance of ritual in human life, even in the lives of completely secular individuals. Everyone has seen the images of family members not allowed to touch or even see their loved ones in

care homes for the elderly, or of grandparents badly missing contact with their grandchildren, or the train of military trucks loaded with coffins, or the mass graves in the Bronx area in New York or somewhere in Brazil. It was abundantly clear that people were really distressed because they could not have the right form of contact (small daily rituals in fact) or perform the appropriate rituals. At the same time one could notice everywhere the attempt to connect in some or other fashion with the loved ones, be it behind windows or plastic screens. Pastors and funeral services



did their utmost best to somehow provide a more or less decent burial service, giving the opportunity - be it only for a few - to pay their last respects in person. (...)





(...) Nobody should die or be buried alone. Even deceased people without any known relatives were buried in beautiful coffins; and if buried in provisional graves, this was with the intention of providing a proper service later during the year. New symbols and rituals sprung up: white flags on window sills and serenades for healthcare workers to new forms of funeral processions obeying physical distancing rules.



Similar things happened with other rites of passage around birth, confirmation, coming of age or marriage. In Belgium last year high school students themselves complained there would be no public graduation ceremony (although they would of course obtain their degree by mail), or no collective fare well activity or group travel at the end of their final schoolyear. As a consequence schools and colleges attempted to set up some alternative ceremony or to postpone the rite de passage happening at the end of secondary

school to a later date.



Rituals give individuals a new or special status within the community. When a child is born, it is given a name that symbolizes its unique status as a human being: no longer belonging to the domain of nature, but to the mystic body of a family and of humanity. How important the name is, is proven when people are denied their name or have it taken away from them to be replaced by a number (as really happened in Nazi-Germany; a theme present also in literature and film, as in George Lucas' movie THX1138). Name giving also provides a new status to the parents: they are not just genitors of offspring, but father or mother of a human being. Coming of age ceremonies again change or add to the essence of the individual: he or she is now a fully responsible human being, belonging to the group of adults having (...)





(...) proper rights and obligations. When people die, we have to pay our last respects, not in order to close our relationship for good, but on the contrary to create a new bond between the living and the dead, to keep honoring the loved one as belonging now to our ancestors. Even everyday politeness is a form of respecting each other as human beings. The French philosopher Simone Weil said that entering an empty room is completely different from entering a room with people. Not to realize this difference is like a form of pathology; to forget or neglect it, signals gross lack of respect. Of course, as we have learned in the pandemic, it may be necessary to adapt the way



we greet others, no longer shaking hands or kissing each other.

The famous Chinese philosopher, Mencius or Meng Tze (4th century BC), told his disciples the following parable. Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, tribe members walked along a ditch in which dead bodies of deceased family had been thrown and lay eaten away by insects and animals. Sweat broke out on their foreheads, they went home for spades and baskets and buried the dead.



If this was indeed the morally right thing to do – so (...)







(...) Meng Tze - that means it is still the duty of sons and daughters today. For Meng Tze the parable is not simply about the discovery of a fundamental ethical duty and about the close relationship between ritual and ethics. It also contains an underlying truth: human beings are not first and foremost beings capable of developing and using tools (they already had developed them); they are beings knowing what is really important or of value in life, and how to respect it. The wisdom of homo sapiens is some-



thing over and above utility and the mastery of nature; it is the wisdom of how to react in the appropriate way (that means also ritually) to what is really significant and important (see also my previous reflections on homo sapiens in OSJ-The International Herald 2019, 2 and 3).

What the corona pandemic has demonstrated is indeed the prevalence of ethics (and its rituals) over and above strictly economic considerations. The amount of means (and land and time) spent in the rite of passage to the

world of the dead and in the cultus of the dead during the course of human history is mindboggling: tumuli, necropoli, mausolea, gigantic cemeteries, expensive and elaborate monuments, etcetera. The whole phenomenon looks like a huge potlatch continuing to this very day, even in the most secular societies. Of course this does not mean that economy is unimportant; without it no potlatch would be possible. But it says something about what is considered as ultimately important. Economy is behind everything, but economy is not everything there is.

It is not very surprising that during the corona crisis attitudes to ritual often betrayed misunderstandings already present in normal times. Two of such misunderstandings cropped up time and again. The first is a psychological reductionism: the function of ritual is to cater for the emotions of the participants or of the living. Not to be able to have bodily (...)





(...) contact or to celebrate produces sadness; not to be able to provide a decent burial or cremation hinders the process of mourning and can sometimes even produce trauma. Rituals or their replacements help to prevent these effects. Of course emotions are important in life, especially in such circumstances. But emotions of sadness or grief are not simply physiological processes, otherwise taking the right sort of pill to appease them would be the simple solution. Emotions are intentional, they are about something significant and important outside us. The emotion of grief is of course a form of (subjectively felt) sadness, but it is about the other. Craving for bodily contact is not (only) the brain craving to be stimulated in a certain way; it is a meaningful craving – craving for a particular kind of contact, contact with the proper sort of people, people to whom we should show our love and respect. Mourning is not a sickness, it is a meaningful process in which our relationship with our loved one is redefined.



The second misunderstanding is the reduction of ritual to a form of information. Again, ritual does of course convey information, but it is much more than that. Otherwise there would be no need for a graduation ceremony; this ceremony would simply be a waste of time for everybody. The graduation ceremony is not just the announce-



ment of a piece of information. It is a more or less solemn public recognition of the new status of young people, expressed in conferring upon them a certain title (B.A., M.A., etc.). In the ceremony the new status is announced publicly by a public figure who has the prerogative to do this (the dean or rector). The public announcement validates the new status before the entire community. This(...)





(...) resembles of course what is constantly going on – but without much awareness or comprehension - in society: the solemn, official appointment of judges, professors, heads of state and ministers, but also, usually less solemnly, of truck drivers, police personnel, lifeguards, etcetera. These phenomena are not just silly (and expensive) remnants from the past. They demonstrate how status and honor are - even today - deeply intertwined with what



look like purely prosaic tasks and duties. These tasks and duties are intrinsically tied up with specific identities, roles and responsibilities, and with the way people recognize each other and judge each other (also morally) accordingly. If due recognition is absent or impossible, this is felt as a real, serious lack or offense. As the Scottish philosopher David Hume said already long ago, human beings are truly an inventive species. Their lives and their dealings

with each other are deeply intertwined with meanings, values and identities that are not purely natural, but symbolic. Ritual behavior is the appropriate way to engage with each other as people belonging together in multiple ways.

The corona pandemic was and is like an unintended experiment drawing attention to what we usually do not notice at all: how important are to us not only the rites of passage, but also the simple daily rituals that typically constitute human life and interaction.

**Herman DE DIJN, CGSJ**  
Prof. Em., Philosophy dept.,  
Catholic University of Leuven (B).







### 30 years of PRIESTHOOD JUBILEE, Bruges (B), September 20th, 2020

It is always nice to bring some positive news in this corona time. On last September 20, before the second lock down in Belgium, the prelate of Prioratus Flandriae, **Rev. Peter Verbeke** was celebrated. He has been associated with Our Lady's Church in Bruges for thirty years. Did you know that the famous statue 'Madonna and Child' of Michelangelo is kept in this church, the only statue that left Italy during the sculptor's lifetime ?

Peter was *inter alia* director of the Our Lady's College in Ostend before taking up the same position at the well-known and reputed hotel school 'Ter Duinen' in Koksijde.

Our priorate did not want to pass up this opportunity. An extensive number of brothers, sisters and partners attended the Eucharistic celebration. It was also an ideal opportunity to see each other again after a long time.

Naturally, gifts and the necessary speeches could not be missed, which our prior Luc Van Eeckhoudt could not be left behind. Unfortunately, a reception party was not included. Darn virus. But delay is not adjusted. (...)





(...) A big thank you to our brother Jean-Marie Van Wijnsberghe for sending us the photos.

**Chev. Erwin VANDECAUTER, KSJ,**  
Prioratus Flandriae Priory







## **NEW YORK CITY and PATERSON, New Jersey, November 2020.**

The New York Commandery of The Americas Priory, The Order of St. John of Jerusalem Knights Hospitaller donates \$16,000 to two food pantries, one in New York City, New York, and the other in Paterson, New Jersey. Similar to the Order of St. John Knights Hospitaller New York Commandery (OSJNY), the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization whose core values, Dignity, Community and Choice, are incorporated into every aspect of its mission and are shared with OSJNY. That is what first drew Dame Mary Elaine Morris, DGSJ, and her husband David Morris to this charity nearly fifteen years ago. WSCAH was the first customer-choice supermarket style food pantry in the United States. This pantry offers healthy food, specifically fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, proteins, and dairy that WSCAH consumers can choose from to provide the foods that best suit their diets and their lifestyles.

Working as volunteers in this pantry provided Mary Elaine and her husband David an opportunity to see how this unique charity helps those in need and supports their consumers' self-esteem grow by aiding in their ability to help themselves.

When OSJNY decided to address local hunger in NYC, raising a total of \$16,000, made much worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commandery sought local charities to support where our contributions would help the most people in need as quickly as possible. WSCAH was selected due to our working know-ledge of the efforts and scope of this food pantry and the fact that the WSCAH outreach had skyrocketed by 328% in the first few months of the pandemic and just continues to grow. Over 2,000,000 meals are provided annually.

The WSCAH pantry had to move outdoors to ensure COVID-19 CDC guideline recommendations were followed, specifically proper social distancing, wearing masks, and limiting the number of recipients being serviced at any given time. The WSCAH pantry truck shown in the accompanying picture in this report is where Dame Mary Elaine Morris, Serving Sister Fulvia McCrie and Serving Brother Robert McCrie are presenting an \$8,000 contribution from OSJNY to the Executive Director Greg Silverman of WSCAH. (...)







(...) The second food pantry supported by OSJNY is Oasis which is in Paterson NJ. "Oasis is the main focus of the outreach ministry of Saint Elizabeth Roman Catholic Church in Wyckoff, NJ, says Father Steve Fichter who is the Pastor of Saint Elizabeth Church and also the Prelate of OSJNY. He described Oasis as "an amazing place, doing so much good for so many needy people in Paterson". It has been around as a food pantry in Paterson since 1997 and was an offshoot of Eva's Kitchen. What happened over time was that as Eva's grew beyond just a soup kitchen. There were many men who would go there for food who were also battling addiction. While many recovered successfully, it became clear that Eva's wasn't the best place for poor mothers with small children. "The idea at the beginning was to create a safe environment, a haven, where women with children could come for hot meals. Over time, the mission expanded, and ten years into the foundation of Oasis, the organization bought a three-story building on Mill Street in Paterson (upon which they are planning to build a major extension soon) that houses many programs included education and job training to help women in need get on their feet, and they developed after school programs to help the children of these women have time to seek employment and housing". Father Fichter states: "As a parish, Saint Elisabeth has focused mostly on our efforts towards helping them. We have other charities that we support such as Eva's Village, The Father English Center, CUMAC, and our own soup kitchen in Jersey City (located at our sister school of Sacred Heart), but our main focus is on Oasis".





Principal promoters Father Fichter and Dame Morris on the left

Many parishioners go to Oasis weekly, less so since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, to help care for babies in the nursery, serve hot meals, or to be tutors for children and adults and children who received support in many different programs at Oasis. "The Executive Director, Jen Brady, who is a faithful parishioner of ours, is an amazing woman. She, and the President of the Board, Sue Buchanan, is also a committed church - attending parishioner who never ceases to inspire me", says Father Fichter. He also states that "I am so grateful to my OSJNY brothers and sisters for helping us help them in their mission" by providing \$8,000 for food in time for Thanksgiving.

**Dame Mary Elaine Morris, DGSJ, & Father Steve Fichter, KHSJ.**





**The beauty  
of Christmas  
is not in the  
presents  
but in His  
presence.**

**Matthew 1:23**





## AID TO THE NATION by BELGIAN DEFENSE

Defense operations were and are therefore safeguarded as much as possible. Even during the most serious health crisis the world has known in recent decades, the Ministry of Defense was ready for the Belgian population. In times of crisis, the army is always ready as a strategic reserve. It soon became clear that this reserve would be used frequently during the corona crisis.

Like all medical personnel in Belgium and abroad, Defense medical personnel worked overtime. They were used in retirement and nursing homes all over the country. There they took the heaviest pressure off the shoulders of the staff and trained them. They transported patients between hospitals with their ambulances. Queen Astrid Military Hospital loaned respirators to civilian hospitals, provided an RNA extraction device to the Institute of Tropical Medicine and made its mortuary available.

The Land Component also deployed a number of soldiers in the Belgian residential care centers. There, cooks and handymen, as well as disinfection teams set to work. The Field Accommodation Unit, which specializes in building temporary infrastructure, installed various office complexes, shower rooms and other rooms to allow people to maintain a physical distance. The main contribution of the Land Component came in the field of logistics: the military quarter in Peutie was converted into a logistics hub. In this distribution center, purchased medical equipment was treasured, stored and distributed throughout the country. This includes the 18 million mouth masks that the federal government purchased through Defense for every Belgian resident. (...)







## Applied CHARITY in Covid-times: AID TO THE NATION by BELGIAN DEFENSE



(...) The Naval Base in Sint-Kruis was designated by Minister De Backer as the official distribution point for protective equipment in the province of West Flanders. Protective clothing that arrived was checked for defects, loaded and transported to the end users.

Defense appealed to its Air Component to do what it is good at: flying. Especially during the start of the crisis, but also later, military pilots brought European citizens from countries such as Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi back to Belgium. After the flight, the aircraft was disinfected each time by CBRN specialists from the Air Component.



### "Aid to the nation is our core business"

One of our core tasks is to help the nation. If existing civilian structures fail, the military is always ready and willing to help. Everyone here is pleased with our presence to relieve the workload" This help from Defence was needed when the coronavirus forced some 60 residents and 40% of staff into quarantine at WZC Ter Bake in Denderleeuw.

The crisis cell covid-19 was also activated for the province of East Flanders at ASZ Aalst. Military personnel (liaison officers, nurses and ambulance suppliers) took care of the transfers of covid-19 patients across the various East Flemish hospitals in function of the number of beds still available in both COVID and INTENSIVE CARE departments.



**Gretel DE MEYER, DJSJ,  
Chancellor and  
Naval reserve Officer.**









**REFLECTIONS on CHRISTMAS 2020: experience a rebirth from a matter-bound existence to the limitless nature of your soul.**

As we honor the birth of the Christ consciousness in the form of the blessed Lord Jesus, may your heart be uplifted and hope so strongly felt during this sacred season. The coming of such great ones who purely reflect God's strengths our faith that we too can experience a rebirth from a matter-bound existence to the limitless nature of our soul. We behold in them are our own infinite potential to expand our consciousness and manifest in our individual lives and our relationships with others God's goodness and love.

Though centuries have come and gone since Jesus was born, the power of his example and his omnipresent love continues to transform receptive souls. He too lived in a time of much strife and turmoil but he showed us how to respond divinely to attune ourselves with the heavenly father that we can feel for all as he does, that we can rise above the dualities of this world to find peace within and be a giver of love and peace to others. By dwelling on Christ's life and striving to emulate the qualities he expressed, you will open your hearts to absorb more deeply the spirit manifest in him and all God-united souls. The strength that upholds the universe filled his being; yet even greater was his humility, which allowed him perfectly express God's will and His love. As long as we live within the confines of our ego's needs and opinions, we easily create barriers that separate us from God and from one another. But when we think less of self, we become more receptive to His wisdom in all ways it comes to us, thus expanding our understanding and compassion. Secure in the love for the heavenly father, Christ was free of any need for position or outer recognition. He sought only to serve, and by doing the same we can know, as he did, the joy of giving. Christ saw the Divine in everyone - even in those who had erred, for he looked beyond their human flaws to see their true Self. We too can practice (...)







(...) the loving, nonjudgmental attitude that comes from realizing "My God is in that Soul"

Every outreaching act enlarges our consciousness, but it is by going into the temple of silence where restless thoughts and emotions subside that we can fully experience "the peace that surpassed all understanding" the infinite love of Christ felt- the love by which God is drawing all souls back to Him. Such depth of inner communion comes gradually, but each effort can bring into our lives greater calmness, empathy, and closeness to the Divine. If we persevere, Gurudeva has told us that we can attain "a communion of unutterable sweetness with the infinite grace, the indescribable glory and eternal protection." That is a priceless gift God offers to you this Christmas season. May it be the beginning of a joyous soul awakening and a time to share with others His all embracing love and understanding.

**The most blessed Christmas to you and your dear ones !**



**Inez Vermeulen, DSJ,**  
Intendant  
Loon Commandery,  
Low Countries (B)



*Celebrate the coming of Christ on earth may be holding the divine Christ consciousness which was manifest in Jesus born, born anew in the cradle of your own spiritual awakening.*

Paramahansa Yogananda





## PERSONALIA

### International obituary:

Several members in different Priories unfortunately passed away from this life.

the Priory Deutschschweiz had to part from their Prior Em., **Chev. Peter WEILENMANN**, CJSJ (cfr. P. 21).

The Benelux/Low Countries lost their eldest active member, **Chev. Paul DOMS**, CGSJ, a most remarkable man, at the most respectable age of 97.

Our deepest gratitude remains for their achievements and fraternity within and beyond the Order. May they all rest in the peace of our Lord; their name liveth for evermore !

### Elections and Nominations, Promotions

No specific information reached us concerning nominatio and promotions, except for what is mentioned on the election of the Judges to the Supreme Court in the report on the digital Petit Conseil (p. 13).

## EVENTS POSTPONED – PETIT CONSEIL by videoconference

Depending on national and local decrees and/or based on common sense in these hazardous times, almost all of the Order's national and regional activities and gatherings are postponed *sine die*, some of these consecutive times, even Investitures. **However:** this edition will show out that while uncountable activities are postponed within the Order and, while religious gatherings are deviated to celebrations online and temporarily more experienced in the personal sphere, **charity** works are **continuing**. This is a situation nobody asked or wished for, but meanwhile an unique opportunity to give way to creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. *Never waste a good crisis !*

These harsh times turn out to be a solid catalyst for **personal deepening** and for making this clear distinction between the Essential and the trivialities.

It allows to appreciate even better this extra dimension of **Brotherhood** and **Sisterhood** within the Order, even when only in contact by digital means, vastly transcending more superfluous contacts in other organizations.

Unusual times lead to **unusual** situations and **solutions**: the **Petit Conseil** had, for the first time ever, a meeting by **videoconference**, because Malta most unfortunately - for the time being - is declared a 'red zone' by some countries during the current pandemic, and vice versa. With this Petit Conseil, we virtually crossed the borders from San Francisco (USA) to South Victoria (AU) and everywhere in between eastbound. (...)





(...)

## DISCLAIMER

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## LITTLE WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Arms, I hope you'll enjoy this 4/2020 edition, despite of all what is socially happening – or rather being cancelled - on this globe.

This happens to be the 20th punctually delivered edition of the International Herald in these five years I am trusted to edit (y)our quarterly global magazine; we total 845 pages so far in these five years. **My sincerest thanks** to all authors who have contributed and are still contributing to our International Herald - without them no International Herald at all - reflecting all the good works and high spirits *pro Fide pro utilitate Hominum*.

Keep up this splendid action on both domains of our motto, and **do NOT forget to send** me content in Word and useable pictures in Jpeg or comparable **by the end of February** to come, at the latest ☺ !

**Gently take care** of each other and of your fellow man within and beyond the Order, as you always did ! In anticipation of Christmas, I wish you all a warm and reflective Advent time, looking forward to the birth of Him who learnt us that, even in extreme suffering and beyond, hope is never ever lost. Last but not least, I wish you and your beloved all the very, very best in all safety and warmth. The focus will be certainly on the prevailing of quality this year, not quantity: and so, every cloud has its silver lining, once more...

Yours most sincerely in X° and St-John.



**Jan Lambrecht, OSJ,  
Editor,  
Benelux Grand Prior.**

