

Humility as the Fundamental Touchstone of Life for a Knight or Dame of Malta

By Wade C Hughan, Knight of Grace and Devotion in Obedience, Regent Subpriory of Our Lady of Philermo



Every aspect of the spiritual life of a Knight or Dame of Malta may be seen as a response to Baptism. It is the fundamental moment in the life of every Christian, the moment at which we are admitted to the Body of Christ, the moment at which we receive solely by God's gift the inheritance of salvation left to us by Our Lord's passion and death on the cross. It is a little disconcerting that our life peaked so early, and for many of us at a moment which we were too young to remember. But, because

most of us are infants when we receive the grace of baptism, it is easier to recognize that nothing we have done merits God's gift of salvation in baptism; it is always God who acts first and we live in response to his primary act of love.

The natural response to this realization that it is always God who acts first is for us to build our interior life on personal humility founded on gratitude. For members of the Order of Malta, this should mean that we work at understanding how the long traditions of the Order have been developed to promote a sense of community among its members. As we are reminded in our daily prayer, the successes of our efforts are for God's glory; we should pray that the poor and the sick whom we serve do not recognize us individually in our work, but that they might instead feel the hands of Our Lord himself serving them in their need.

Further, humility for a member of the Order also manifests itself in acknowledging that the Order existed for 900 years before we were admitted. This can help us to come to each activity not by trying to figure out where we fit in, what it is that we can best contribute, but instead by focusing first on everything that preceded our participation.

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Successful Completion Of The First Altiplano Chuño Project

By Willem Langelaan, project co-chair



My confrontation with the reality of life on the Altiplano led to a desire to alleviate hunger and poverty of the indigenous Aymara people. One remedy was to increase the yield and quality of the potato crop.

Chuño, potatoes that are naturally freeze dried in the open air, during the day by the sun and at night by the frost.

The Bolivian Aymara have farmed on the Altiplano for more than 2,000 years. The people of the Altiplano maintain a centuries old social structure which includes unconditional co-operation to survive in a harsh climate at an elevation of 3,700 to 4,600 m. Their way of life without clean water, electricity, gas, sewer or knowledge of hygienic practices and plowing with oxen and a wooden stick appears to us as a primitive agricultural society. Well before the Inca domination their ancestors discovered the potato and cultivated more than 160 varieties. The Spanish conquistadors brought the potato to Europe. We can be very grateful to the Aymara for their important gift to our diet.

During Christmas 2000 the writer stayed four weeks as volunteer at Hospital Cuschieri in a poor suburb of Cochabamba. The hospital was founded by our late Chaplain Rev. Cuschieri. Cochabamba, elevation 2,400 m, is located at the foot of the Altiplano.

Bishop Gelmi of the Archdiocese of Cochabamba and a director of Hospital Cuschieri, invited me on some excursions into remote areas of the Altiplano region. There I saw the abject poverty and hunger of the local Aymara population. The campesino families suffer from severe poverty, malnutrition, declining food supply, little agricultural variety and lack of means for economic activity. The dominant staple is potatoes and some quinoa or cañahua as little else will grow sufficiently well at this altitude and in this climate.

My confrontation with the reality of life on the Altiplano led to a desire to alleviate hunger and poverty of the indigenous Aymara people. One remedy was to increase the yield and quality of the potato crop. The best chance to succeed with an agricultural project is by developing a locally sustainable solution through a dialogue with the beneficiaries.

We were most fortunate that the Dean of the Facultad de Agronomía introduced us to AGRUCO, a center of excellence for agricultural research and development at the university in Cochabamba. AGRUCO specializes in improving indigenous agriculture which is sustainable with local practices, materials and customs. We met with AGRUCO and decided to take on the project together.

The project attracted 360 participating Aymara farming families in 16 communities of the ayllu Majasaya Mujlli representing 2,100 women, men, children and elderly. The excellent work of AGRUCO improved the Aymara's quality of life. AGRUCO supplied better seed potatoes with more bio-diversity, improved seed selection methods, and ecological pest reduction increased the yield of the potato crop by 17%! With material

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assistance from the project, beneficiary families constructed 147 pirhuas, small adobe storage sheds for their chuño. With material assistance from the project, beneficiaries constructed 16 adobe community silos for storing and distributing seed potatoes. All 16 communities received 5 training courses about soil conservation and new cultivation methods.

We observed increased pride and vigour of the participating families. All beneficiaries are very grateful to Canada for the assistance that they received through this Canadian project. We hope that the improved quality of life may also reduce a socially de-stabilizing migration to the city. Non-participating families may be positively affected through project examples and knowledge transfer by word of mouth. The project may positively impact the total population of 3,600 people.

The project received 66% of its funding from the Government of Canada through CIDA. The remainder was raised through the generosity of many foundations, corporations and private donations. In October 2008 CIDA reviewed the project in the field, gave it a glowing review and encouraged the Canadian Association - Order of Malta to submit a funding request for the next project!

In 2008 the project was extended with a 3 year education program for 24 young women, age

18-24, from the Chuño project communities. Knowledge is power. By giving an opportunity for education to young women, the knowledge base of the community will be more robust. The young women room and board at the Instituto de Educación Rural in Quillacollo, near Cochabamba. The school is owned by the Archdiocese of Cochabamba and managed by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Laval, Québec. The school's program includes: reading + writing, Spanish, hygiene, first aid, basic medical care, assisting with child birth, animal care, administration, embroidery, mathematics.

In December 2008 we met in Cochabamba with AGRUCO to develop the specifications for the next Chuño project. We also visited the new communities. The people heard about the first Chuño project and are eager to begin tomorrow! We hope to start the Chuño 2 project with financial participation from CIDA in March 2009.

Please consider a donation to the Chuño 2 project. ❖

The Chuño projects are administrated by our Order of Malta. The projects are co-chaired by Richard T. Brown P.Eng and ir. Willem Langelaan. The projects have zero overhead. We pay for our own semi-annual site visits. Every penny that is donated goes to the project.



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We should hope not to leave our mark on every effort, but instead to be the wax which is molded to hold the mark of the Order.

There is a further reflection that may help us to develop our spiritual life within the Order. It is to remember that at our death it will not be our accomplishments and the decorations which we wear that will grant us admittance to the Church for her blessing before our burial, it will be our baptism that opens the door. While members of the Order have the privilege of having their coffin draped by the flag of the Order while it is lying in repose at the funeral home, at the point at which our body is brought to the door of the Church, the flag is removed and

replaced by a white pall. The prayers which are said as the body is received into the Church specifically identify the pall with the white garment we wore at our baptism. Our life in the Church ends not with the procession of banners, but where it began, acknowledging that our hope is founded in God's first gift and that the only things that shall survive death are God's love for us and our love for Him.

The spirituality of the Order is built on active service. To serve is to put the needs of another first. Humility is the key by which this service becomes God's work and not our own, and for that reason it is the hallmark of the life of a member of the Order. ❖



A tribute to our Auxiliaries

By Henri Pelland



Insisting on paying a visit to each one of the Brigades, the Grand Master was impressed by the involvement and implication of our volunteers towards the poor and the sick.



This year, we celebrate the 54th anniversary of the Auxiliaries' Corps. One of the main activities of the Canadian Association has been embedded in our Brigades that are made

up of members from twelve different nationalities.

Half a century at the service of pilgrims and sick people, marks an important achievement in the life of our Association. We therefore intend to pay a particular tribute to our generous volunteers who deserve our admiration.

The six brigades currently active in Quebec are composed of 126 members. Our benevolent representatives are present at two National Shrines, welcoming over four million visitors on a yearly basis, and at four residences for elderly, handicapped and sick people where a pastoral program specifically designed to provide assistance and comfort to non-autonomous people benefits more

than fifteen hundred residents. Moreover, some of the volunteers have acquired the knowledge and experience to assist people in the terminal process of their lives, even spending nights with them when required.

Devoted to carrying on the original mission of the Order, our volunteers implicate themselves on a daily basis, providing a yearly average of 50,000 hours of volunteer service and an estimated nine million hours of voluntary service since the foundation of the Corps. We can consider the members as being the hands, the arms and, indeed, the very soul of the Canadian Association.

In fact, the auxiliaries have been the Ambassadors of the Order of Malta since 1955, the foundation year of the Corps. In appreciation and thanks, an Annual Dinner underlines the involvement of our volunteers. For the past twenty years, this event is always a highlight for those who deserve our sincere recognition.

All past Presidents have paid personal attention to the implication of the various Brigades, with a special mention of Fra' John A. MacPherson for his foresight during his tenure as President of the Canadian Association. Our Confrere was largely responsible for the Grand Master's visit to Canada in 1992. Insisting on paying a visit to each one of the Brigades, the Grand Master was impressed by the involvement and implication of our volunteers towards the poor and the sick. Upon his return to Rome, a fulsome congratulatory letter followed. It has been deposited in the archives of the Association in Ottawa.

A respectful word of appreciation is also addressed to the local chaplains. They always have played an important role in the success of the Brigades.

To all those who have contributed to bringing the Auxiliaries' Corps where it is today, our most sincere gratitude. ❖

Free eyeglasses and the Order of Malta in Vancouver

By Alex de Cosson, regional vice-president



Beginning in 2001 members of the Order of Malta in the Vancouver area together with various catholic parishes and outreach programs have been serving the needy through bi-annual eyeglass clinics in the lower mainland of Vancouver. For many poor and handicapped people and for those on low incomes the cost of eyeglasses can be a real barrier to getting the best eyesight possible. Some people are covered by welfare but the rules can be rigid and of course many do not have easy access to the facilities needed for eye examinations. For this reason we began an outreach clinic led by confrere Dr. David Neima at Holy Rosary Cathedral in 2001. The church staff identified 40 persons who needed help with their eyesight. On a Saturday afternoon, eye doctors examined these patients free of charge. We found that many of these people were legally blind for want of lenses and very much in need of assistance, and that others just needed very old glasses to be replaced. A few people had more serious eye conditions and follow up with local ophthalmologists, as well as free medications were arranged for them.

Tony Viani and some of his students from Douglas College optician's program brought

eye glasses and fit those patients needing glasses. They then made the glasses and returned a week later to fit the patients with their new glasses. The eyeglass costs were covered by donations from members of the local Order of Malta.

This team has now completed 16 clinics over the last eight years at many different locations throughout the lower mainland. Many of the Knights and Dames have volunteered at the clinics so ably organized by confreres Frank & Terry McCullough. We have given away over 600 pairs of glasses all made by Tony Viani and his students free of charge. We have depended on the pastors and their staffs of the local parishes and the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement at THE DOOR IS OPEN to locate persons in need and to arrange the location for the outreach clinics.

Without the help of these wonderful people we wouldn't be able to serve the poor in this way and so we are very grateful to them. It is a fundamental aspect of the spirit of the Order of Malta to serve the sick and poor. If there is a need in your parish for this outreach, please contact Frank McCullough at fgam@telus.net. ❖

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Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs

*His Most Eminent Highness Fra' Matthew Festing
Prince and Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller
Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta
Magistral Palace Via Condotti, 68 - Italy, Rome*



*Minister of
Foreign Affairs
Ottawa*

June 4, 2008

Your Highness:

I am pleased to confirm the decision of the Government of Canada to establish official relations with the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta. Canada holds the Order of Malta in the highest esteem, and appreciates its longstanding charitable and humanitarian work.

The Ambassador of Canada to the Holy See will henceforth be designated Canada's representative in its official relations with the Order of Malta. The Order of Malta has also been listed in the Directory of Diplomatic, Consular and Other Representatives in Canada of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

It is our hope that establishment of official relations with the Order of Malta will facilitate high-level contact for members of the Order with officials of the Canadian government, particularly in relation to areas of potential future collaborations. To this end, officials of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada have recently initiated discussions with colleagues at the Canadian International Development Agency, and I plan to remain closely apprised of their work.

I hope this letter will provide you and the members of the Order with confirmation of our official relations and an introduction that will facilitate contacts and collaboration with Canadian government officials and institutions.

Please accept, Your Highness, the assurances of my highest consideration.

The Honourable David L. Emerson, P.C., M. P.

President's message

By Peter Quail

We are very pleased to send you this new look for the Epistula, designed and produced by our confrere Roman Ciecwierz.

I hope you like the stories of our activities over the past year. The year 2008 was marked in several ways. It was one of the most successful fund-raising efforts ever, reaching \$62,000, including a matching gift of \$25,000 from one of our members.

Sadly, we lost 4 members:
Edmund Cachia 080531,
Rhena Charland 080919,
Philippe Garigue, 080326, and
Very Rev. Wilfrid Sowerby, OSB 081124.

At the investiture held in Toronto we welcomed 6 new members:
Luc Bigras - Montreal,
Paul Hong - Caledon,
Mrs. Catherine Mackay - Kitchener,
Rory O' Neill - Toronto, and
George Plaxton QC - London.

Our pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2008, the 150th anniversary of the Apparition of Our Lady not only brought record numbers of pilgrims to Lourdes, but also a record for members of the Canadian Association numbering some 31 in all. Lourdes is a place where every member should go at least once and preferably more often. It is a week of prayer for our spiritual lives and a week to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Most of us feel exhausted by the end of the week but we feel we have added something to the lives of others as well as to our own.

I send you all my best wishes for a happy and holy year. ❖