



Obedience in the Order of Malta: An Openness to Another for the Greater Good

By H.E. Bishop John A. Boissonneau

It may have seemed strange to the Knights, Dames and guests that were gathered in a tiny college chapel, on a Saturday morning for a ceremony in the middle of our Eucharist, in which one of our brothers was committing himself to a Promise of Obedience.

Strange because Obedience is not a common concept in our society – not that we are against obedience, but you rarely hear it except in connection with traffic laws. Parents are much in favour of obedience

but that just makes it appear as a guide for the immature and the underdeveloped.



On behalf of the Grand Master, H.E. Fra John T. Dunlap receives the Promise from Roman Ciecwierz. Witnessing are Bill Sullivan and John Kennedy.

St. Thomas Aquinas was well aware of the idea that obedience as the submission of any sort of one man to another is often regarded as incompatible with human freedom. Even more so in our age when

we are so demonstrably a society of freedom and individualism. St. Thomas refutes this approach by showing that it is at variance with the constituted nature of things, and the positive prescriptions of the natural law. For obedience is an act of the will; it is not so much a stress upon the fact that one not only does what is actually enjoined, but he or she does it with a mind to formally fall in with the will of the one who commands. Obedience is openness to another for the greater good.

Moreover, we witnessed this Promise of Obedience as an act of Christian virtue. Obedience is derived from the Latin verb *obêdire*, “to hearken to”, hence “to obey”.

The Gospel on this day urges us in the words of Jesus to listen with an open heart to the word of God, who is the Lord Himself. If we listen, then we are to obey. That is what the taking root of the seed means – we become more like Christ. Revelation teaches us that Jesus was made obedient even to death because he always hearkened to and followed the will of His Father. Making a Promise of Obedience is not a

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*"If we listen,
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transitory and isolated act but rather as a virtue or principle of righteous conduct for the rest of one's life.

As an evangelical counsel, obedience must always be understood as in service to charity, the perfection of Christian life and the highest gifts of the Lord. Obedience is designed to remove whatever is incompatible with charity.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: *for it is charity, as queen of all virtues, all commandments, all counsels, and, in short, of all laws and all Christian actions that gives to all of them their rank, order, time, and value.*

Amongst the moral virtues, obedience enjoys a primacy of honour. The reason is that the greater the value of the object which one offers in order to give oneself to God, then the greater the virtue. Now one of the most precious gifts that we possess is our God-given free will. It is the most intimate and most cherished. So it happens that obedience, which makes a man yield up the most dearly prized stronghold of the individual soul in order to do the good pleasure of his Creator, is accounted the greatest of the moral virtues. In order to love and serve, a promise of obedience

indicates that open heart which Jesus urges in the gospel.

When ordained to serve God's people as a deacon and as a priest the man makes a promise of obedience to his bishop so that his ministry will be fully in concord with that of the bishop, the Vicar of Christ. Religious women and men in the Church make a vow of obedience so in love with the Lord and their community's sharing in the way of the Lord are they.

Within the Knights of Malta, charity is given a consecrated goal in our service to our lords the sick. Promising to be obedient to the leadership and goals of the Order makes us even more attentive to the voice of our lords the sick and now to serve them is his vocation in obedience.

As we witness this Promise and pray for our brother, let us all reflect on the on-going times as followers of the Lord that we are called to obey, to remove the obstacles to charity and the other virtues, so that we can serve others, be they our families, our Order, or the society at large. To serve in the image and likeness of Christ; to serve in and through the Cross – the glorious symbol of the saving obedience of Jesus. ❖



From l to r: H.E. Peter Quail, Nick Quail, H.E. Fra John T. Dunlap, James MacKay, Catherine MacKay, Fr. David Katulski, Patricia Quail, H.E. Bishop John Boissonneau, John Kennedy, Roman Cieciewicz, Dr. Bill Sullivan, Fr. Donald Finlay, Joe Stephen, H.E. Frank Crothers, Dr. Rory Fisher, Willem Langelan

The Canonization of Brother André



On Sunday, October 17, the Dames and Knights of the Montreal Region were joined by members of the Ottawa Region at the Mount Royal Saint Joseph Oratory for a holy mass celebrating

the canonization of Brother André Bessette. Reverend Father Pierre Dufour, vice-rector of the Oratory led the celebration.

We were invited into the procession that included clergy from both Canada and the US, the members of the Brigade, and the Mont Royal Boys Choir. We were given the honour to be seated in the Sanctuary and introduced by Reverend Father Jean-Guy Vincent at Mass. Father Vincent followed with a sermon on the life of Alfred Bessette, now Saint Brother André, whom we may invoke with confidence in our prayers.

We would like to express our appreciation to both Reverend Fathers Jean-Guy Vincent, Chaplain of the Order, and Patrick Vezina, Director of Liturgical Services and Chaplain of the Saint Joseph's Oratory Brigade, for their special invitation and warm welcome to the members of the Order of Malta at this historical event.

We would also like to thank our "Order of Malta" auxiliaries "Saint Joseph Oratory", for their generosity during these days leading to the celebration. Some of them served for over 36 hours on October 16 and 17.



Brother André at the Chapel of St. Joseph in 1921.

May we also express our gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the celebrations, notably the Saint Joseph Oratory's authorities for their continued support and devotion. ❖

*"I am nothing.
Only a tool
in the hands
of Providence,
a lowly instrument
at the service
of St. Joseph."*

*Brother André
Bessette, C.S.C.*



Back row (l to r): Henri Pelland, Downs Ryan, Jean M. Guilé, Mark Dunphy, André A. Morin, Christian Samoissette, Pierre Aubin. Front row (l to r): Lionel J. Lavallée, Eric Van Blaeren, Father Jean G. Vincent, Anne M. Trahan, Father Patrick Vézina, Lisette Paquette, Pauline Dunphy, William Wilson.



What is a True Knight/ Dame of Malta?

By Wedigo Graf von Schweinitz

This simple question has been asked many times, "What is a true Knight/Dame of Malta?". The answer, however, is not so simple to answer in one sentence. Not wanting to write a user's manual, the answer from my perspective is drawn on my many years and many experiences within the Order and the people I have met.

The Origins of a Knight/Dame of Malta

A true Knight/Dame of Malta is not distinguished by his origin but by his character. Nobility has historically been a major qualification for admittance to the Order assuming that integration into the community of member knights/dames would be seamless as he speaks the same language, maintains the same standards, associations, and a similar way of life.

However, a noble name itself is no guarantee for the existence of a chivalrous spirit and character, just as origin from a different background is no indication of their absence.

A true Knight/Dame of Malta is not a member of the Order for societal reasons, and especially not to improve his social position or to treat the Order as a springboard for entering into society.

Professional Position and Achievement

A true Knight/Dame of Malta does not have to be conspicuously successful in his profession, but he should be economically secure, or meet the expectation of becoming so after the completion of his professional education. The least that must be demanded is that a Knight/Dame of Malta can manage his life and can master the challenges of life with relative ease.

Community and the Order

A true Knight/Dame of Malta must be prepared to form a community both in spirit and deed with his confreres. He should place his trust in the community of the like-minded and in the natural support from that community. He should feel comfortable and at home in the circle of member knights and should not regard himself as a foreign body.

Instead, he should find and have friends within that group. This is an important criterion because the secret of a quick understanding without many words and silent consensus consists of the fact that to a certain minimum degree we are homogeneous. If it were otherwise, we would have to engage in lengthy discussions about self-image, which sap energy and usually lead nowhere.

A true Knight/Dame of Malta should not regard mere membership in a community as a sufficient life achievement. To be accepted by people whom we respect and to whom we feel bound is, naturally, a very pleasant experience and gives us strength.

The Work Within the Order

A true Knight/Dame of Malta must be prepared to participate in the tasks of the Order or to engage in an activity that reflects the aims of the Order. Ideally this would involve active work within the Order or one of its projects, and also within the broader Church community.

It is important that a Knight/Dame of Malta has the capacity to take initiatives independently and is ready to assume and discharge responsibility for a long period. He should recognize where he is called to action or accept tasks willingly. This presupposes a social conscience and interest in

"Nobody is so overburdened that he cannot make a minimum effort for the Order."



fellow humans, a clear vision of reality, but also social imagination. Finally, it takes perseverance to carry out a task once it has been undertaken or taken over and to continue with it even in the face of difficulty or resistance.

The Grand Master does not tire of saying: “An officer offers his service.” This without doubt is the ideal.

As to the scope of activity, we should not make utopian demands. There is no use expecting a young man who is building a professional career and founding a family to become the regional Vice-President of the Order of Malta. But I emphasize that it is expected from each member of the Order that he holds regular telephone conversations per week, and devotes a number of continuous hours per month to the Order, be it by participating at an event, or in the form of a long discussion on behalf of the Order, or another type of work for the Order. As we wish first and foremost to be a spiritual community, a member of the Order also includes the Order in his daily prayers.

Nobody is so overburdened that he cannot make a minimum effort for the Order.

Obedience to the Order

A true Knight/Dame of Malta has to be intellectually independent; he has to have the capacity to judge, to make decisions, and to be master of his decisions. In one word, he should be sovereign.

I treat these preconditions under the heading of “Obedience”, as only a man possessing these described qualities will be prepared for a voluntary subordination, which in the terminology of the Order is called obedience, a natural corollary as membership in the Order is voluntary and members of the Order are equal gentlemen.

Ready acceptance of voluntary subordination does not mean that discussion and opposition

are not permitted or not welcome in the Order. Quite the contrary, we wish to discuss matters openly, so that together we can find the right way.

In this context it might be useful to mention a negative criterion: A true Knight/Dame of Malta should under no circumstance be inclined to take offense. Debates over essential questions need to be conducted with rigour, without leaving behind offended persons, or rather those who perceive themselves as offended parties.

The Order in Relation to the Church and the Christian Faith

A true Knight/Dame of Malta does not only have to be baptized and belong to the Roman Catholic church, but must also be a conscious Roman Catholic Christian. This cannot be achieved by an occasional, or even frequent, church attendance, useful as it is. A true Knight/Dame of Malta must know the rule of the Order and must be prepared to accept it in his heart. He reads the rule and recites it in prayer more than once a month.

When on top of this, he is an active member of his local church congregation; when he knows the parish priest and has contact with him or comments on his sermons; when he works for the congregation in a diaconal function; when his calendar is structured around church celebrations (instead of hockey games or hunting season); and when the long series of Sundays following Trinitatis don't keep him from attending church, then little more is desired.

The Knight and/or Gentleman

The concept of “knight” and “gentleman” is understood and used synonymously in this text. The image of “gentleman” is shaped by his attitude which has for a very long time been described in terms of the following cardinal virtues: justice, wisdom or intelligence; courage; and

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“A gentleman always regards himself also as a servant.”



resident's message

By Peter Quail

In the coming year, there will be a greater involvement for all of us in the care of the sick and poor. To do this, we are in the process of recruiting new members. Not just anyone, but men and women who are willing to give a lifelong commitment to the service of the Order and thereby to the sick and the poor. Such members must be willing to contribute their time and money, not only in domestic projects, but also in those overseas which includes helping in disasters worldwide.

Yet we also need to concentrate on good works within Canada. We should always remember that it is a privilege to be a member of the Order and that the membership carries with it great obligations. We all recognize there is much more to be done to help the sick and the poor, and I ask all

members to look for opportunities to do this, in association with other members, in their own locations.

We wish to emphasize that without financial contributions from all members, we cannot meet the obligations that we need to undertake. It is the duty of all of us to give generously to the Canadian Association so we can fulfill our obligations.

We need to pray to our Lady and the Saints for guidance so that through their example we may do more than we are at present.

In closing, I wish all of our members and their families a Happy and Holy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. ❖

*Confraternally Yours,
Peter Quail*

Continued from page 5 moderation. These virtues form the physical and spiritual physiognomy of the Knight/Dame of Malta.

For a gentleman right and justice, charity, and love must be fundamental standards. The relationship between a gentleman and his environment is founded on fidelity. A gentleman has the duty to protect the weak and defenseless. Central to this ethic is that a gentleman always regards himself also as a servant.

The authority of a Gentleman does not start with the power he wields over others but with the power he exercises over himself. The moral ego of a Gentleman must rule

over his personal ego. Or to put it differently, a Gentleman distinguishes himself by his inner sovereignty. He stands above matters. He "has as if he did not have". He does not look backward but forward. A Gentleman shows courage to serve as a role model and example. He knows that he is responsible for the whole and is thus prepared to take on tasks without being asked.

In concluding after this high flight, let me once more return to earth. Ideally, the true Knight/Dame of Malta fulfills these great expectations with ease, without strain, cheerfully, affably, sociably, without pretension, and with humour. ❖

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