

Living in Obedience: Leaven for the Order of Malta

By Fr. Eric Hollas, OSB, Saint John's Abbey

As people who have been steeped in North American culture, we all tend to take a negative view of elitism. Our country was founded on the principle that liberty and justice are for all. All are created equal, and all are created in the image of God, who loves us all as individuals. But of course elitism is one thing – with its connotation of privilege and power – and elite is another. We can't help but notice that abilities and talents have not been distributed democratically. Not all are equal in what they can and cannot do. Not all are equal when it comes to leadership ability or responsibility.



So when we come to consider “living in obedience” within the Order of Malta, the issue of elitism arises once more. Are Knights and Dames in Obedience to be thought of as the elite of the Order? Are they inherently superior, to be distinguished by clothing and insignia as the higher echelon within the organization? Of course the answer to that is a resounding NO. Living in obedience makes no one inherently superior, because promises of obedience heap

on a member additional responsibility rather than additional prestige. Like the priest at ordination, one can assume that a person living in obedience is set apart for sacred duties. Members “in obedience” have taken special vows that distinguish them – not for veneration or added respect, and certainly not to be grander than others – but to be of greater service. And so the distinctive clothing and insignia are not intended to elicit greater reverence, but rather they mark who it is in our midst that we can turn for special care or service. These are the people who have promised to set aside personal goals and objectives for the sake of others. They have promised to live in obedience as a way of life – a life with a focus on the sacred duty to be of service to the sick, to the poor, and to their fellow Knights and Dames.

Until more recent efforts, I think it's safe to say that the Order of Malta has always lacked a fully-articulated spirituality, and *Continued page 2*

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“John the Baptist has been the subject for reflection in a recent volume in the Order’s Journal of Spirituality, and it seems to me that members of the Order can find no better figure to emulate.”

Continued from page 1 there are lots of good reasons to explain this. Part is due to the emphasis on action, since service to the poor and the sick has been a hallmark of the Order from the very beginning. This bias toward action has been paramount for centuries, and by default the Order has never evolved a vibrant intellectual tradition. It simply wasn’t designed for that. Fra’ Gerard, despite a life of stellar service, never left a corpus of writing that outlined a coherent spiritual program. Subsequent Grand Masters and knights had other things that they worried about; and while they certainly prayed, they never were known as great spiritual leaders. Their later focus on military exploits became characteristic of the Order, but we can also say that military activity never displaced the fundamental commitment to the care of the sick and the poor. Nor did it put aside the quest for God and personal sanctification. Despite all this, or because of all this, by 1798 and the exile of the Order from Malta, there were no bookshelves groaning with massive tomes on the spirituality of the Order of Malta. Over time the members had evolved into military monks, and they were also busy about service to the sick and the poor and a host of less sacred duties. But they were not the studious monks that had populated the Benedictine cloisters of Europe for centuries.

That said, it is not impossible to construct a modern spirituality for the Order of Malta. There are many sources to tap, and in fact the work of formulating such a spirituality has been underway for some years and is at last beginning to bear fruit. Among the sources are the most obvious ones: the examples of our patrons Saint John the Baptist and Blessed Gerard. Then there are the spiritual documents that have inspired Fra’ Gerard and others – in particular the Rule of Saint Benedict. And finally there is the lived experience of Knights and Dames through the centuries. Both the 12th and the 21st centuries have provided unique challenges to members of the Order, and those challenges do shape the way we form

our spiritual lives today. Members in obedience do not have to reinvent the wheel, then, because they can draw from the experience of their spiritual ancestors. They must adapt and grow thoughtfully and organically from strong roots in order to flower in ways appropriate to our time.

John the Baptist has been the subject for reflection in a recent volume in the Order’s Journal of Spirituality, and it seems to me that members of the Order can find no better figure to emulate in a culture whose values sometime run counter to our own Christian precepts. In a society in which image can be superficial but still count for everything, John the Baptist as patron offers a powerful example for those who elect to integrate service to the sick and the poor into a witness to the vitality of Christian faith. But at the core of this is the suggestion that those who choose to follow in the steps of John the Baptist have chosen to embrace a prophetic life, in a world which finds its meaning elsewhere.

The last point I might suggest for meditation is one we can draw from the marketing world: stay on message with your lives. Walking on the path with Jesus is sometimes a joy and sometimes a challenge. Sometimes we even wander off the path. But it is important that through our prayer and reading and service we call ourselves back to the right path.

With John the Baptist our lives should constantly proclaim: “Behold the Lamb of God!” just as Fra’ Gerard suggests we do with our lords the sick and the poor. With Mary we should proclaim that “our lives magnify the Lord,” for so they do when others begin to perceive Christ in us. It is absolutely appropriate for us to say with Mary that “the Lord has done great things for me,” for so he has and continues to do so. And there is no better way to live our lives as members in obedience. For what God has done for me, he also does for you. That is the prophetic life we embrace and the prophetic message that our lives should cry out.



The Canadian Association's Auxiliaries

By André A. Morin, KMOB

For the past 25 years, our fellow member Henri Pelland, assisted by his wife Rollande, has been doing remarkable work heading our various brigades. These Auxiliaries, both at places of pilgrimage and hospices, are able to live the Order's charism; caring, for the sick and the poor.



work. Once again this year, our Auxiliaries as well as Mr. and Mrs. Pelland were invited to their recognition dinner at the St. Joseph Oratory. Several certificates of appreciation in recognition of their volunteer work were presented. A certificate of appreciation was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Pelland for their

In my capacity as President, I wish to pay tribute to these women and men who, by their volunteer work, are living examples of the Order of Malta's own values. I wish to recognize these volunteers' exceptional

25 years of involvement with the Canadian Association's Auxiliaries.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Pelland, please accept my warmest congratulations on behalf of the Board and on my own behalf!

Canadian Association members presented with Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medals



During a ceremony held in the Senate on Sunday, May 27, 2012 a number of members of the Canadian Association were presented with the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal. Pictured with Senator Noël Kinsella and his wife Ann are (from left) H.E. Peter Quail, Andrew Doyle (who, later in the week received the pro ecclesia pontifice medal), Fra' John Dunlap, Beatrice Ross, and H.E. André Morin.



Cardinal Presides at St. John Baptist Mass and is feted at Celebratory Dinner

By John J.F. Kennedy, KMOB, Vice-President Toronto

Canada's newest Cardinal, His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins, Archbishop of Toronto was invited by the Toronto Region and National members of the Canadian Association to preside at the patronal feast of St. John the Baptist on the early evening of 23 June, 2012. His Eminence concelebrated the Mass with Bishop John Boissonneau, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto and Chaplain ad honorem, plus five other priests at the Basilian Centre Chapel.

Following the liturgy of the word and the Cardinal's homily, His Excellency, Dr. André A. Morin, President of the Canadian Association presented His Eminence with the dignity of the cross of Bailliff, Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion on behalf of the Sovereign Council of the Order of Malta.

His Eminence and approximately 60 Knights, Dames and invited Guests adjourned to the Toronto Club to commemorate His Eminence's elevation to the Cardinalate. There followed a great evening of sharing and joyfulness. The Cardinal charmed everyone with stories of his recent trip to Dublin for the Eucharistic Congress, his family background and other positions in the Church before being appointed Archbishop of Toronto. His friendly and engaging

manner included everyone and was warmly reciprocated.

The Toronto Club itself proved to be an excellent venue for this occasion. Guests were treated to historic surroundings which included an admirable collection of paintings (e.g. Group of Seven Canadian scenes, Bronze Busts of Toronto's historic figures).

Mr. Brian O'Malley, President of the Ontario Foundation of the Order of Malta presented His Eminence with a cheque in the amount



Photo by Alexander Puettner

"Within the Class of Knights of Honour and Devotion of the Order of Malta, the Bailiff Grand Cross is the highest rank. This honour is bestowed by the Sovereign Council of the Order, which is to say that it is conferred by Rome and not by individual or national association."



of \$10,000 for the Out of the Cold Program. Master of Ceremonies, Valentine Lovekin highlighted that several local Toronto knights, spearheaded by Christian Elia, had established a volunteer effort in the St. Michael's Cathedral Out of the Cold Program this past winter. Unfortunately, Sister Susan Moran, founder of the Out of the Cold, who had attended the Mass, was unable to attend the Dinner. The Cardinal accepted the cheque on her behalf and thanked the Canadian Association and the Ontario Foundation for their generosity. He also thanked His Excellency, Dr. Morin for the bestowal of the dignity of Bailliff Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion from the Sovereign Council of the Order. The Cardinal expressed his hope for future contacts with our Order.

The Toronto Branch's Organizing Committee for both the Mass and Dinner was led by

Valentine Lovekin, and assisted by Joseph Stephen, Dr. Rory Fisher, MD and Dr. John J. F. Kennedy, Ph.D. Thanks are also due to a number of others: Dr. Christian Elia, Ph.D. for obtaining a photographer and contacts with the Archdiocesan office, Revs. Donald Finlay CSB and David Katulski CSB, chaplains ad honorem, for their constant ongoing generosity in allowing the Basilian Centre to be used by our Order and for their kind nurturing of our members over the years. Thanks also to the other concelebrants of the Mass, to the organist and choir member from the St. Michael's Choir School who provided lovely accompaniment to our patronal Mass as well as to many other members, who though unable to attend personally, nonetheless contributed financially so that others might attend. Lastly, to all who came, shared and made this a wonderful and memorable evening.

2012 Annual Meeting and Investiture

Please mark your calendars for this very special event in the Association's year. Renew friendships or make new ones, and help to celebrate the admission of our new knights and dames. The Vigil will be held on Friday, September 28. The Mass of Investiture and the Annual General Meeting, followed by a formal evening dinner will be held on Saturday, September 29, 2012 in Ottawa. Further information including a special hotel rate* will be forwarded to all members shortly.

**Contact the Lord Elgin Hotel at 1-800-267-4298 and reference the Order of Malta.*



On June 14, 2012 visiting members of the Sovereign Order of Malta's Government Council, were introduced during a session in the Senate. Pictured with Speaker of the Senate, The Honourable Noël Kinsella are Mr. Fausto Solaro del Borgo (left) and Mr. Dan Kelly (right).



President's message

By André A. Morin, KMOB

*Dear Knights, Dames and friends
of the Order of Malta:*

Once again, I am pleased to give you an update on the activities of your Association since my last message in *Épistula*. Several members of our Association were once again part of the international pilgrimage of the Order of Malta. Our delegation consisted of Knights and Dames from the Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver areas. We were privileged to work with the British and French Associations.

The Lourdes pilgrimage is a highlight in the life of a Knight or Dame. It allows us to better understand our duty to care for the sick. This is a fundamental aspect of our Order's mission, and it differentiates our Order from other associations within the Church. Indeed, our work must be entrenched in caring for the sick and the poor, while remaining committed to our Order's mission.

During our meeting with the Grand Master, more than 13 members of our delegation received the Pilgrimage Medal in recognition of their first visit to Lourdes. At the end of the pilgrimage, a fraternal reception gave us the opportunity to exchange with several members and presidents of foreign associations on the significance of our presence at Lourdes and our involvement within the Order. Next year, the Order will celebrate its 900 years of existence and our Association, 60 years since its establishment in 1953. Dr. Jean-Marc Guilé and Mr. Lionel Lavallée have been tasked with organizing the Lourdes pilgrimage which, as usual, will be held early in May. I look forward to seeing you there in great numbers.

I also wish to point out that, during the pilgrimage, our past president, Mr. Peter Quail, was made Knight in Obedience. Furthermore, the Sovereign Council recognized two of our members by promoting them to Knight Grand Cross of Magistral Grace. They are Mr. Peter Quail and The Honorable Noël Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate. I offer them my warmest congratulations on behalf of the Council, as well as, on my own behalf.

The Canadian Association is also honoured by the fact that two of our members have been appointed members of the Order of Canada. A few weeks ago, the Government of Canada recognized Mr. Henry Kloppenburg, Q.C., Council member, for his social involvement within Canadian society, as well as The Honorable John Richard for his exceptional contribution to the advancement of law in Canada. What excellent news for our Association!

Many of you already know that Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, has been made Bailiff Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion. I went to Toronto with my wife for this event, in the presence of our fellow members of the Order. Moreover, one of our chaplains, Raymond Poisson, has been appointed Auxiliary Bishop of the St. Jerome diocese by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Our warmest congratulations to Archbishop Collins and Auxiliary Bishop Poisson.

Your Council is working on the development of events and celebrations which will mark the 60th anniversary of establishment of our Association in 2013.

Finally, we hope to see you in great numbers at the Vigil, Investiture Mass, annual general meeting and dinner on September 28 and 29, 2012 in Ottawa.

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