

Benedict XVI and a “New Springtime” of Holiness for the Knights of Malta

By Michael Miller, CSB

Archbishop of Vancouver

While John Paul II, with all the prophetic intuition that marked his entire pontificate, launched the appeal for a “new springtime of Christianity,” it has fallen to Benedict XVI to give it shape today. As members of our great Equestrian Order we are constantly being called to conversion.

The Holy Father believes that at this time in the Church’s history we need a renewal of apostolic zeal which inspires each of us actively to seek out the lost, to bind up those who have been wounded, and to bring back to the life of the Sacraments those who have strayed. This “new springtime” calls for courage, a zest in proclamation in the immediate environs where we live our daily lives. The soul of discipleship, of the Church’s mission in which each of us shares – what animates her and gives her life – is friendship with Jesus. Before all else, the disciples were called into a communion of life with Jesus.

Besides clearly and joyfully proclaiming the Gospel, we must also be committed to striving for holiness, an invitation to friendship with Christ. Renewal in the Church always begins with holiness: “a clearer focus upon the imitation of Christ in holiness of life is exactly what is needed in order for us to move forward. We need to rediscover the joy of living a Christ-centered life, cultivating the virtues, and immersing ourselves in prayer.” The Holy Father insists – and he repeats this in many discourses – on our being friends with the Lord. For him, this is the key to being a faithful and holy disciple. Very often he cites the text from St. John’s account of the Supper: “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn 15: 15).

Indeed, our greatest joy lies in friendship with Christ: encountered, followed, known and loved, thanks to a constant effort of our mind and heart. Friendship with Him guarantees profound peace and serenity to the soul, even in the dark moments and in the most arduous trials.



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"We need to rediscover the joy of living a Christ-centered life, cultivating the virtues, and immersing ourselves in prayer."

When faith meets with dark nights, in which the presence of God is no longer "felt" or "seen," friendship with Jesus guarantees that nothing can ever separate us from his love (cf. Rom 8:39).

Friendship is not a theory, an opinion about God and the world. The opening of Pope Benedict's first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, says this: "We have come to believe in God's love": in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."

Friendship means sharing in Jesus' thoughts and will. This communion of thought is not a purely intellectual thing, but a sharing of sentiments and will, hence, also of actions. It means that we should know Jesus in an increasingly personal way, listening to him, living together with him, staying with him. "Your attitude must be that of Christ" (Phil 2: 5): to think with Christ; to think with Christ's thoughts.

Jesus chose the Twelve primarily "to be with him" (Mk 3: 14); that is, they were to share in his life and learn directly from him not only his behavior, but above all who he really was. Only in this way, taking part in his life, could they get to know him and subsequently,

proclaim him. Indeed, "they were not to proclaim an idea, but to witness to a person." And what marks this proclamation is the witness of being loved: individually, personally and intimately. Above all else, friendship is a "being with" the one loved, what St. John refers to as "abiding with," staying with the beloved (cf. Jn 1:35-42).

Moreover, our friendship with Christ is to be shared. Anyone who has been with him cannot keep to himself what he has found; instead, he has to pass it on. Friendship with Jesus is such a beautiful gift that it cannot be kept for oneself! Those who receive this gift feel the need to pass it on to others, and so when the gift is shared it is not reduced but rather is multiplied! Like our friendship, our faith is strengthened when it is given to others.

Pope Benedict has said it just right: "There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him."

Moreover, personal friendship with Christ fills us with genuine, lasting joy and makes us ready to put into effect God's plan for our life. Friendship and joy go together. If we are friends of Jesus, we are joyful. To be holy is to experience and live in joy. Yes, our commitment to Christ and the Church is to be lived in rejoicing! ❖

In Domino Confido

By John Kennedy, KMOB

Canadians cannot help but be profoundly affected by the number of military and civilian deaths in Afghanistan (now more than 150 men and women). The crowds standing guard over the "Highway of Heroes" in Toronto and elsewhere around the country bearing witness to the sacrifice of our military are moving testimonies to the grief and respect Canadians have for their fallen in this tragic conflict.

As we commemorate these heroic Canadians in our prayers, it should probably also give us pause to reflect on the many Knights of our Order, who in times past also served in lonely vigil in defense of our Faith and our Christian way of life. Because I have read some of the 900 year history of our Order, I am aware of those Captains of the Castle of St. Peter at Bodrum in Turkey who played a role not dissimilar to our Canadian forces today.

Bodrum in southern Turkey was captured by our Order to replace the loss of Smyrna in the late 14th century. It was built on a peninsula jutting out into the sea in

Auxiliaries: Celebrating 55 Years



The annual dinner for our Auxiliaries in recognition for their work over the last year was held in late April. A full house showed up to celebrate the 55th anniversary of creation of the Auxiliary Corps, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Peter Quail.

Father Claude Grou, C.S.C., Rector of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal, where our Auxiliaries were established in 1955, aptly summarized the association between the Order of Malta and the Oratory for over half a century.



Address to the Order of Malta Auxiliaries Dinner – April 23, 2010

Dear Friends:

This year marks the 55th anniversary of foundation of the Saint Joseph Brigade of the Order of Malta Auxiliaries. This same year, Brother André will officially become what he already is in the hearts of thousands of pilgrims, a Saint of the universal Church. I am both privileged and very pleased to have been invited to talk to you tonight about two subjects that mean a lot to me, the Order of Malta Auxiliaries and Blessed Brother André.

I believe a better understanding of the importance of setting up the Saint Joseph Brigade is gained by envisioning it in the context of the life and works of Brother André. Even prior to the foundation of the Oratory, Brother André was surrounded by people assisting him in his tasks. In particular, it is known that men agreed to drive him on his visits to the sick. At the time of the Oratory's foundation, these persons as a

group were working closely with Brother André to its development. Among other tasks, they welcomed crowds waiting to see Brother André and maintained order. Brother André used to invite his friends to pray with him. Many of them joined him for stations of the cross or hours of worship.

In order to meet increasing needs resulting from the development of the Oratory, more and more persons began volunteering their services. The sick were coming in numbers to the Oratory to pray, and they had to be assisted and escorted throughout their visit. A group of firefighters from Montreal agreed to provide this escort service.

Immediately following the death of Brother André, this group continued to meet in order to pray and to assist in the development. They became a brotherhood. They gathered for Wednesday worship.

On June 21, 1955, Q.J. Gwyn, Chancellor of the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta, offered to provide the required services to the St. Joseph Basilica. This auxiliary group gradually evolved and officially became the Saint Joseph Brigade in September 1983.

In 1990, the Director at the time, André Bessette, and the Assistant Director, Paul-Émile Lauzon, summarized the spirit of the brigade as follows: (inspired by the greatest Christian virtue, charity, we wish to follow on the same path and, with the purest generosity, extend hospitality to the many pilgrims climbing this mountain of faith. Millions of people are coming to Saint Joseph's Oratory, and our greatest privilege as the Order of Malta Auxiliaries is to put ourselves at their service).

The brigade follows the tradition of service which has been the trademark of people surrounding Brother André since the beginnings of the Oratory. This tradition falls

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Hospitaller Describes Haiti Mission as 'Life-Changing'

By Dr. Luigi Castagna, KM



Children singing, dancing and smiling. Every afternoon, child amputees, sick adults, volunteers and villagers would come together for a

party. It was an unexpected scene for Drs. Luigi Castagna and Peter Azzopardi and Dr. Azzopardi's wife Sisi, a Registered Nurse, who spent a week volunteering at a hospital in Haiti recently. "We became doctors because we want to help people. This was an excellent opportunity to do that," says Dr. Castagna, a Pediatric Neurologist with TSH since 1992 and the Hospitaller of the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta, who has participated in several volunteer missions over the past two decades. "Despite the circumstances, the children were still children, wanting affection and wanting to play and sing and dance."

Afternoon Dance Therapy

"The people have an incredible spirit," says Dr. Azzopardi. "It really made me thankful for what I have. Each day we had an afternoon party to help mobilize the kids and realized that sharing their good spirits helped motivate the adults. It became 'afternoon dance therapy.' It was incredible." It was the Azzopardis' first mission, an "eye opening" and "life changing" experience they say will not be their last. "Sisi and I had always wanted to do a mission and had talked about Haiti before the earthquake," says Dr. Azzopardi, Chief of Pediatrics, who has been with TSH since 1989. "It is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere and we wanted to be of help where it would have the most impact."

Organized through The Order of Malta and the CRUDEM Foundation, the trio worked at Hopital Sacre-Coeur in Milot, a northern Haitian town. Established 23 years ago, the 73-bed hospital provides care for the local

"Despite the circumstances, the children were still children, wanting affection and wanting to play and sing and dance."



community but recently set up tents to treat victims flown in from areas most severely impacted by the earthquake.

Treating Serious Injury

The trio's work included treating victims of the quake who had lost limbs and suffered injuries as well as treating the hospital's regular pediatric patients who suffered from conditions not normally seen in Canada including tuberculosis, AIDS, malaria, and elephantitis. But they also found themselves working outside their comfort zone in the ICU, treating adults. "The dynamics are different. Everyone bends over backwards to help each other whether it is their job or not," says Dr. Castagna. "Locals came to help too, bathing and feeding patients, who are strangers."

The team worked long days and saw about 45 children with amputations, 25 in-patients and 35 children each day at the pediatric clinics. Many of the young patients had an impact on the doctors. One toddler had been found five days after the quake buried in the rubble with his dead parents. Each day, a 16-year-old boy from the village—a stranger to the child—would come to visit the child for several hours, even asking if he could adopt the orphaned boy. Everyone pitched in to help one another regardless of their own situation.

"This experience will benefit our own practices here. The attitude sticks. It recharges you," says Dr. Castagna. One of the greatest needs at the hospital is for volunteer physiotherapists. The hospital is now setting up a prosthesis lab and would also benefit from those with related experience. ♦



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Medical Aid for Vietnam: An Outreach Programme

By Dr David Neima, KM

In 1995, Fr. Tien Tran and I began a charitable medical project in Vietnam. Medical Aid for Vietnam is aimed at treating the most poor and vulnerable patients in Vietnam's far-flung countryside. The original teams were composed of about ten people, but now average 40 volunteers, usually including ten medical personnel.



"By working with the Sisters or local Catholic Church we can ensure that we really get to help the most needy of the local poor."

In Vietnam there are many doctors and hospitals, however patients must pay for services, and this excludes the poor. We work with the local Catholic Church's outreach programmes for the poor, either in a local church institute or in a convent. By working with the Sisters or local Catholic Church we can ensure that we really get to help the most needy of the local poor.

Our team consists of dentists, nurses, general practitioners, eye doctors and other medical volunteers. Each team has about ten translators and several priests who offer daily mass and regular devotions during our travel. We also have about 20 general volunteers who are given various tasks to help the team function smoothly.

On every trip we have local Vietnamese doctors and nurses assist us. To fund our medical work we have fundraising banquets in Vancouver, Calgary and Chicago. The volunteers meet their own costs, this allows

us to dedicate all funds raised for the treatment of the poor.

A typical trip to Vietnam includes seven to nine outreach camps over the course of one visit that would see 600 to 200 patients per day. In total we will see between 6,000 to 12,000 patients per trip depending on the size of the team. The clinics are done with the local church clinics so follow up is established for our patients.

The eye doctors give new glasses to patients (about 1200 pairs per trip, at an average cost of 5 US\$ per pair), which we purchase from local eyeglass stores. We arrange for surgeries for those patients needing them (usually about 250 surgeries per trip, mainly for cataracts, at 100 US\$ per patient). Occasionally we will do cataract camps during a trip and we have equipped local doctors with the training and tools needed to do these surgeries themselves.

The dentists do extractions for patients who suffer from severe caries (extreme cavities) and also do some primary dental teaching. The GP's examine patients and prescribe needed medications immediately dispensed from our traveling pharmacy. As it is very difficult to get donated medications into the country we stock our pharmacy by buying medications on our arrival in Vietnam.

We have a programme to treat children with congenital heart disease, and have paid for 630 surgeries to date at a cost of about 2,500 US\$ per child. The children present to us in our outreach camps and their families have no means to pay for this life saving surgery. We also have an ongoing programme to pay for cataract surgeries as we often see many more patients needing this surgery than we can arrange to treat during the trip.

Currently we go to Vietnam in the summer one year followed by fall and spring the alternate year. Our next trip is this summer,

July 17 – August 1 and though unable to go myself I'm glad to say I shall be well represented by my wife Stephanie Lawton-Neima. Also joining the group will be Dominic Dobrzensky, and my son, Nathan Niema, enthusiastic youth volunteers in many of British Columbia's charitable activities of the Order of Malta. Both of these young men also volunteered at Lourdes this year.

Please pray for our service to the poor, especially that local officials will allow us to continue. We always need more medical volunteers, and of course welcome your donations. ❖

To see videos or slideshows of some of our trips visit: www.medicalaidforvietnam.org



"Please pray for our service to the poor, especially that local officials will allow us to continue."

Continued from page 2 within the perspective of extending hospitality to and escorting pilgrims, especially the sick. The brigade is much more than a team of volunteers. As in the case of Brother André's first companions, their service is embedded in a prayer movement and a spiritual exercise.

Dear friends, in the next few months, we will often have the opportunity to talk about Brother André. In the popular imagination, the man who alleviated the sufferings of so many persons will doubtless come to mind. It will be important to see the man who knew how to muster men and women around him to pray and to carry out together a project beyond imagination. The unassuming porter of Notre Dame College built this huge basilica in honour of Saint Joseph, proof that he was able to communicate his faith to people surrounding him.

It is at this point that he becomes a source of inspiration. In the face of challenges confronting our Church, I daresay we have reason to feel deprived, but Brother André

reminds us that this is the work of the Lord and that His work is being fulfilled. We have yet to learn how to put ourselves as much to His service as Brother André did.

I trust this event will also give a new impulse to the Saint Joseph Brigade of the Order of Malta Auxiliaries. In our society, pilgrimage sites such as the Oratory play a very important role, and together they will be able to better serve our Church if they are able to rely on one or more groups of volunteers who agree to accompany pilgrims by both their prayers and action. This aspect of our shrine's life is essential to meet today and tomorrow's needs and to pursue the wonderful insight of the man we will soon refer to as Saint Brother André, who wanted to surround himself with a dynamic team whose actions are embedded in faith.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share these reflections with you and to pay tribute to Blessed Brother André and to the wonderful team of volunteers that are allowing us to pursue his work. ❖





Continued from page 2 southern Turkey's mainland. It would become one of the most heavily fortified castles in late medieval times, boasting an English Tower, a French Tower and an Italian Tower all of which survive today. These fortifications were a safe haven for escaping Christian slaves and an early warning post for potential Turkish attacks on the island of Rhodes, the seat of the Order's Convent until 1522.

The Captains of the Castle often left a carving of their Coats of Arms to indicate that they had endured the stifling loneliness and boredom and the sudden, anxious rush of

adrenalin accompanying attacks that were a regular part of military duty at Bodrum. From among the inscriptions left by these brave warriors, we find such as "In Domino Confido (I put my trust in the Lord) and "Spes Mea est in Deo" (My hope is in God), and "Cum Christo Vigilamus et in Pace Requiescamus" ("With Christ we keep watch and in Peace we find rest").

As we keep our brave Canadians soldiers in our prayers, let us also recall those brave Knights of our Order, who so long ago also served to protect our faith and the Catholic way of life. ❖

resident's message

By Peter Quail

"Much is expected of a Knight and a Dame of the Order. We have to lead honourable lives that are above suspicion. We have to have a sense of duty to the Order and to the poor and the sick. It is a great honour to be a member of the Order and it brings with it great responsibilities.

I consider "Duty" to be the operative word. Besides all the above, we have a duty to support the Order's work financially, because without financial support, we cannot fulfil our obligations that we have undertaken both domestically and overseas.

No one should join the Order because of the prestige that membership brings with it. If for reasons of health or age, it is not possible to do much, then monetary support is more than acceptable. Besides helping the poor and the sick something every member can do, we all have a

responsibility of speaking openly in defense of the Faith and should support the teachings of the church. This can be done in a variety of ways, including speaking out in public, such as in support of the pro-life movement both physically and by gifts and such simple things as saying grace and making the sign of the cross when dining out. We all have to see that religion is kept in the public square.

Perhaps only 10% of the world's population have a living standard comparable to our own. That thought alone gives us pause to see how and where we can help others less fortunate than ourselves. It takes courage to be a Dame and a Knight, if we are to do our duty fully. In a speech at Harvard June 1978, Alexander Solzhenitsyn spoke of the decline in courage as the most outstanding feature that an outside observer notices in the West in our days. Not amongst individuals so much as by the intellectual elites and ruling groups, as they have lost direction. This should not and must not be insofar as members of the Order are concerned. We have the actions and words of Christ to guide us in our lives and in all that we do." ❖

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