

## The Coming of the Lord

By Fr Andrea Spatafora M.S.F.

Principal Chaplain



Advent is one of the most beautiful liturgical seasons, a time of joy and of hope. The word “Advent”, from the Latin *adventus*, means “coming” and for many Christians it simply means the time of preparation for Christmas, for the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

In fact, Advent is divided into two parts: from the beginning to 16 December and from 17 to 24 December. The first part reminds believers that human

history will be fulfilled with Christ’s final glorious manifestation. The readings of this time of Advent evoke the end of the world and in so doing affirm that Christ is the universal saviour. The second part of the Advent season constitutes the immediate preparation for the feast of Christmas.

The liturgical readings invite us to welcome Christ in our hearts through the proclamation of the message of John the Baptist, patron saint of our Order, and through the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph. Saint John the Baptist, the last of the prophets of the old covenant, called the people to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah by the conversion of their sins.

The Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph welcomed God’s Word in their hearts by faith and they responded to God’s call. Advent also reminds us that the Lord is not absent in this time between his first coming in humility and his final coming in glory. The Word made flesh is present among us; he comes to us every day of our lives. He invites us to open the door of our heart to him.

May Christmas not be simply the celebration of the birth of Jesus two thousand years ago, but may it be the celebration of the mystery of the Incarnate God who took on our human nature so that we may share his divine glory. ❖

# Epistula

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# Helping the less Fortunate through Health Care and Education

By Luigi Castagna

“We are ordinary people bound together by the two-fold commandment of Our Lord; Love of God and love of neighbour. For these reasons we give of ourselves in the cause of our brothers and sisters less fortunate than we are.” *Fr. Andrew Cuschieri*

The Canadian Association of the Order of Malta has developed a long-term relationship with a number of agencies supporting healthcare, education and social development in the area around Cochabamba, Bolivia. Thanks to the fund raising activities and leadership of a late member of the Canadian Association, Fr. Andrew Cuschieri, the town of Colcapirhua, on the outskirts of Cochabamba, benefits from a well functioning general hospital (Hospital Cuschieri) and two comprehensive schools. These institutions are governed by the Archdiocese of Cochabamba and supported by The Human Family in Christ



Society, a Canadian lay organization founded by Fr. Cuschieri in 1989. The Society has been raising funds for its building projects, their ongoing maintenance and for the sponsorship of healthcare and educational needs of the poor. Relying entirely on volunteer staff, Fr. Cuschieri's organization has no overhead: donations are received from across Canada, in the

knowledge that all the funds raised will benefit the recipients directly.

Two schools and a hospital have been built in the district of Cochabamba, Bolivia. The schools, Colegio San Lorenzo and Sagrada Familia, teach students from kindergarten



through the end of high school. The schools run in two shifts, the morning shift instruct secondary school students, while the afternoon shift elementary school students learn basic academic skills. The enrolment for both schools now exceeds 2,500, a testament to the quality of the academic experience.

The hospital in Colcapirhua is small but well equipped. It contains operating rooms, a delivery room, an emergency room, pediatric care rooms, offices for general medicine, an out-patient clinic, pharmacy, laboratory, dental office, x-ray room, ultrasound, physiotherapy and ophthalmology departments. Much of the hospital's equipment is donated surplus from Canadian hospitals and retiring doctors and dentists. Clinics are also run in outlying areas associated with the hospital.

The Canadian Association has been contributing to the sponsorship program for children in Colcapirhua, administered by the hospital, for the second consecutive year. Each sponsored child is ensured good nutrition, health care and education.





In recognition of his work, Fr. Cuschieri was awarded the Order of the Condor (*El Condor de Andes*), the highest civil decoration issued by the Bolivian Republic.

Father Cuschieri was diagnosed with an untreatable form of lung cancer (malignant mesothelioma) before completing his plans for development of the Bolivian mission.



After a rapid and debilitating deterioration of his health, he unexpectedly recovered. He was able to direct the completion of the hospital, of two schools, and of several churches, before his death two years later.

Many of his close associates and friends consider his recovery miraculous.

The scope of Fr. Cuschieri's work was expanded in the Summer of 2000, when the Canadian Association sponsored two University of Toronto medical students and facilitated their participation in a pilot project for public education on Chagas disease in Cochabamba. Another member of the Canadian Association, Willem Langelaan, has successfully implemented an agricultural project in cooperation with Agroecologia Universidad Cochabamba (AGRUCO), an agricultural research and development institute at the San Simone University in Cochabamba. The objective of the project is to reduce hunger and poverty in farming communities in the Andean region of Bolivia. Women are empowered to use their traditional knowledge of seeds, planting and harvesting techniques that are essential to the thriving of their communities. The project is supported by a grant from CIDA. ❖





# Lourdes Pilgrimage 2010

By Roman Ciecwierz

The order of Malta's 52nd annual international pilgrimage of the Order to Lourdes will take place 30 April - 4 May 2010. In excess of 6,000 Order members, malades and volunteers, from some 35 countries attend annually. They all join in prayer and procession to honour the shrine where 151



years ago, a fourteen year old girl named Bernadette Soubiroux, had received visions of the Virgin Mary. Since then, the site has become one of the most visited religious shrines in the world, and pilgrims come from every corner of the globe to seek peace and succour, in a place where the sick are surrounded by love and care. Every pilgrim, whatever his need, is aware of the serenity

of the environment. As Knights and Dames of the Order of Malta the Lourdes pilgrimage reminds of duty to our Lords the sick and fulfills our commitment to participate in this, one of the Order's greatest works. The role of pilgrimage and the care of those who undertake Christian pilgrimage has been central to the ethos of our Order from its beginnings, and thus provides members with a direct link to our very foundations so many centuries ago.

"The Order of Malta pilgrimages must be stages, or rather steps in the spiritual ascent of the members of the Order. The fruits they produce are measured by the growth in their Christian life and in their commitment to works of charity," says Archbishop Angelo Acerbu.

"Passing through the very large crowds multiple times during the day, as I walked with malades or on my way to and from duty, it became very clear that this was a place of deep faith. On the Saturday evening as I ventured to the medal presentation ceremony for first time volunteers, to be attended by the Grand *Continued on page 6*







## The Order of Malta in Modern Times

As members of one of the oldest religious Orders of the Catholic Church, we have a duty to look to the needs of those less fortunate than ourselves. Founded in Jerusalem, our 900-year old tradition attests to our extensive work in humanitarian and health care activities.

Today the work of our 59 Grand Priorities, sub-priorities and national associations is carried on in over 120 countries, aided by our accredited Ambassadors, who work as a humanitarian diplomatic network.

The Order's mission, which seeks to glorify God by promoting the sanctification of each member, is two-fold: to give an example of living by Christian principles, which is what 'tuitio fidei', in our motto, really means, and to serve our Lords the sick, which is 'obsequium pauperum'. That we refer to the sick as 'our Lords' has its roots in former

times in the Order when it was impressed upon all those early, dedicated knights that they were to demonstrate their humility towards their fellow man, and also in recognition of the Gospel teaching of Christ: 'What you do to the least one of these, you do to me.'

The Order's humanitarian tradition is renewed daily in our hospitals, health centers and clinics, with the commitment of our 12,500 members and 80,000 permanent volunteers assisted by over 20,000 doctors and paramedics. Ordinary or extraordinary, the mission never changes. Nor do its recipients - the elderly, the disabled, refugees, the homeless, terminal patients, lepers, children and substance abusers. In addition, Malteser International, the Order's relief corps, tackles the great emergencies - natural disasters, epidemics, armed conflicts. ❖

## 2009 Works and Ministries on the West Coast

Members of the Order on the West Coast of Canada continued their ministry to the sick and poor in a wide variety of activities this year, including:

**January 31** Eye clinic offered under confrere David Neima at The Door is Open.

**February 14** 51 sets of eyewear delivered.

**February 27 - March 1** Annual retreat at Mission. "The Richness of Silence in Prayer" preached by Fr. Abbot.

**August 15** The Pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, Heritage Park Mission, where we administered to the sick and the elderly by providing a coach from Vancouver.



**September 13** We participated in a celebration Mass at the Cathedral celebrated by His Grace the Archbishop, assisted by

other bishops to commemorate the 25th anniversary of our late Holy Father's historic visit to Vancouver in 1984 and to launch a travelling exhibition of artifacts and memorabilia throughout the province and the Yukon.

**November 28** Eye clinic offered under confrere David Neima at Our Lady of Sorrows.



**December 12** Advent Day of Recollection at Sts. Peter and Paul, lead by Fr. John Horgan.

Throughout the year, attendance at various masses for days of recollection at Sts. Peter and Paul, lead by Fr. John Horgan. ❖



## resident's message

By Peter Quail

The year 2009 has been an important one for the Order and no less for the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta.

Starting in Venice in January, many ideas were presented for the development of the Order over the next 5 years. Over 400 delegates from all over the world attended. One of the matters discussed by one group was that the International Association of Catholic Bioethicists should be adopted as part of the Order's work. This has now been formally accepted by Rome.

In April, the Order's Brigades had their annual dinner and awarded decorations to the members who do such valuable work in looking after the sick and aged in Quebec.

In May, a pilgrimage was made by members to Lourdes where members and their friends worked with the French, British and Irish Associations.

In July, the International Association of Catholic Bioethicists held its bi-annual colloquium in Cologne. This was headed by Dr. William Sullivan, the Executive Director. Special thanks are due to Dr. Ursula Sottong and Baron Peter von Furstenburg for all the hard work that went into making this such a success. The subject was how to deal

with the problems involved with people with Alzheimers. Over 70 people participated from all over the world.

In August, Patricia and I went to Chicago, where our 13th grandchild born to Vanessa and Joshua (a member of the Federal Association), attended the baptism of Christopher Xavier Raphael at the Dominican Church of Saint Vincent Ferrer.

In October, we had our investiture for 6 new members at the cathedral in Ottawa followed by a formal dinner at the Rideau Club.

On November 11, for the first time, the Order of Malta made a presentation to the United Nations. H.E. Albrecht Freiherr von Boeselager, the Grand Hospitaller of the Order, gave a speech in which he called for the council to address the violations perpetrated against civilians and humanitarian activists.

In early December, I traveled to Ottawa to invest Archbishop Michael Miller of Vancouver as a chaplain of our Order, followed by a lunch at the Rideau Club with Msgr. Alan McCormack, Father Spatafora, Mr. Andy Doyle, Wedigo Graf von Schweinitz and myself in attendance.

In closing, I thank all those who participated in these many activities and some that I may have missed throughout the year. We are looking forward to a no less busy and fulfilling year in 2010. We are looking for suitable candidates who might be approached to join the Order. ❖

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*Continued from page 4*

Master, I had to wiggle through the crowds that assembled for the candlelight procession. The main square was packed; the lines along the river Gave were unending, and the atmosphere was electric. The daily scene of thousands of people, young and old, well and sick, walking and in

wheel chairs spoke volumes of the spiritual nature of this place." In this spiritual adventure, find a fundamental experience of the heart.

Please contact the Executive Director for more information and to sign on to the 2010 journey to Lourdes. ❖

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