

Address of The Holy Father Benedict XVI to the Members of The Sovereign Military Order of Malta

Vatican Basilica

Saturday, February 9, 2013

(Libreria Editrice Vaticana)

Epistula

Vol. 11 No. 2 ❖ Sept. 2013



Dear Brothers and Sisters!

I am happy to welcome and to greet each one of you, Knights and Dames, chaplains and volunteers, of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. I greet in a special way the Grand Master, His Most Eminent Highness Fra' Matthew Festing, and I thank him for his kind words addressed to me in the name of all of you; I also thank you for the gift you wished to offer me, which I will dedicate to a work of charity. My affectionate thoughts go to the Cardinals and to my brother bishops and priests, in particular to my Secretary of State, who has just presided at the Eucharist, and to Cardinal Paolo Sardi, Patron of the Order, whom I thank for the care with which he strives to strengthen the special bond that joins you to the Catholic Church and most particularly to the Holy See. With gratitude, I greet Archbishop Angelo Acerbi, your Prelate. A final word of greeting goes to the diplomats and to all the high dignitaries and authorities who are present.

The occasion that brings us together is the ninth centenary of the solemn privilege *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis* of 15 February 1113, by which Pope Paschal II placed the newly created "hospitaller fraternity" of Jerusalem, dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, under the protection of the Church, and gave it sovereign status, constituting it as an Order in church law, with the faculty freely to elect its superiors without interference from other lay or religious

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"Your Order, from its earliest days, has been marked by fidelity to the Church and to the Successor of Peter."

Continued from page 1 authorities. This important event takes on a special meaning in the context of the Year of Faith, during which the Church is called to renew the joy and the commitment of believing in Jesus Christ, the one Saviour of the world. In this regard, you too are called to welcome this time of grace, so as to deepen your knowledge of the Lord and to cause the truth and beauty of the faith to shine forth, through the witness of your lives and your service, in this present time.

Your Order, from its earliest days, has been marked by fidelity to the Church and to the Successor of Peter, and also for its unrenounceable spiritual identity, characterized by high religious ideals. Continue to walk along this path, bearing concrete witness to the transforming power of faith. By faith the Apostles left everything to follow Jesus, and then went out to the whole world, in fulfilment of his command to bring the Gospel to every creature; fearlessly they proclaimed to all people the power of the cross and the joy of the resurrection of Christ, which they had witnessed directly. By faith, the martyrs gave their lives, demonstrating the truth of the Gospel which had transformed them and made them capable of attaining to the highest gift, the fruit of love: that of forgiving their persecutors. And by faith, down the centuries, the members of your Order have given themselves completely, firstly in the care of the sick in Jerusalem and then in aid to pilgrims in the Holy Land who were exposed to grave dangers: their lives have added radiant pages to the annals of Christian charity and protection of Christianity. In the nineteenth century, the Order opened up to new and more ample forms of apostolate in the area of charitable assistance and service of the sick and the poor, but without ever abandoning the original ideals, especially that of the intense spiritual life of individual members. In this sense, your commitment must continue with a very particular attention to the religious consecration – of the professed members – which constitutes the heart of the Order. You must never forget your roots, when Blessed Gérard and his companions consecrated themselves with vows to the service

of the poor, and their vocation was sanctioned by the privilege *Pie Postulatio Voluntatis*. The members of the newly created institute were thus configured with the features of religious life: commitment to attain Christian perfection by profession of the three vows, the charism for which they were consecrated, and fraternity among the members. The vocation of the professed members, still today, must be the object of great attention, combined with attention to the spiritual life of all.

In this sense, your Order, compared with other organizations that are committed in the international arena to the care of the sick, to solidarity and to human promotion, is distinguished by the Christian inspiration that must constantly direct the social engagement of its members. Be sure to preserve and cultivate this your qualifying characteristic and work with renewed apostolic ardour, maintaining an attitude of profound harmony with the Magisterium of the Church. Your esteemed and beneficent activity, carried out in a variety of fields and in different parts of the world, and particularly focused on care of the sick through hospitals and health-care institutes, is not mere philanthropy, but an effective expression and a living testimony of evangelical love.

In Sacred Scripture, the summons to love of neighbour is tied to the commandment to love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our strength (cf Mk 12:29-31). Thus, love of neighbour – if based on a true love for God – corresponds to the commandment and the example of Christ. It is possible, then, for the Christian, through his or her dedication, to bring others to experience the bountiful tenderness of our heavenly Father, through an ever deeper conformation to Christ. In order to offer love to our brothers and sisters, we must be afire with it from the furnace of divine charity: through prayer, constant listening to the word of God, and a life centred on the Eucharist. Your daily life must be imbued with the presence of Jesus, under whose gaze you are called to place the sufferings of the sick, the loneliness of the elderly, the difficulties of the disabled. In reaching out to these people,



you are serving Christ: "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40), says the Lord.

Dear friends, continue working in society and in the world along the elevated paths indicated by the Gospel – faith and charity, for the renewal of hope: faith, as testimony of adherence to Christ and of commitment to the Gospel mission, which inspires you to an ever more vital presence in the ecclesial community and to an ever more conscious membership of the people of God; charity, as an expression of fraternity in Christ, through works of mercy for the sick, the poor, those in need of love, comfort and assistance, those who are afflicted by loneliness, by a sense of bewilderment and by new material and spiritual forms of poverty. These ideals are aptly expressed in your motto: *"Tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum"*. These words summarize well the charism of your Order which, as a subject

of international law, aims not to exercise power and influence of a worldly character, but in complete freedom to accomplish its own mission for the integral good of man, spirit and body, both individually and collectively, with special regard to those whose need of hope and love is greater.

May the Holy Virgin, Our Lady of Philermos, support your plans and projects with her maternal protection; may your heavenly protector Saint John the Baptist and Blessed Gérard, as well as the saints and blessed of the Order, accompany you with their intercession. For my part, I promise to pray for all those present here, for all the members of the Order, as well as the numerous worthy volunteers, including a significant number of children, and for all who work alongside you. Affectionately, I impart to you a special Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to your families. Thank you.

"You must never forget your roots, when Blessed Gérard and his companions consecrated themselves with vows to the service of the poor."

Following Christ as a Member of the Order of Malta

"Put on the Armour of Light" (Rom 13:12) and "Wake Up from Sleep" (Rom 13:11) One of the paths towards christian perfection (Mt 5:48), towards living up to our call to love God and our neighbour, is Membership in the Order of Malta.

Constitutional Charter art. 2 § 1 - Purpose

The purpose of the Order is the promotion of the glory of God through the sanctification of its Members, service to the faith and to the Holy Father, and assistance to one's neighbour.

Serving the Lord by serving "the least of his brothers" (Mt 25:40), the Order of Malta realizes one of the fundamental precepts of Christian faith. The unity of love of God and love of neighbour (Lk 10:27) has always been practiced by the followers of Christ by serving the sick and the poor, whom Christ himself served and with whom He has identified himself. Since the days

of the first hospital in Jerusalem up to today, Members of the Order of Malta have responded to what Christ meant when He said: "In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did to me" (Mt 25:40).

Remembering this identification of Christ with the poor recalls our Order to its "first love", its original impetus.

To fulfill the Order's mission today Pope Benedict XVI urged the Members of the Order to "Put on the weapons of light (Rom 13:12) ...fight against the evil and sin which darken our existence". The armour of light is the weapon, the tool that allows us to carry out our double charism of *tuitio fidei* and *obsequium pauperum* and to fulfill the challenge to resist the seduction of the secular world and the culture of death. It consists of the Word of God, the Gifts of the Spirit, the Grace of the Sacraments and both the Theological and Cardinal Virtues.



Grand Magistral Villa

resident's Message

By André A. Morin, KMOB

I take this opportunity to bring up two very important matters to your attention. Firstly, there is the final report we have received following the Visitation of the Canadian Association, and secondly, our progress with the Strategic Plan. Mr. Dan Kelly and Mr. Fausto Solaro del Borgo, from the Order's government, prepared the final report. It was sent in June 2013 and submitted to the Board. It suggests, in order to promote unity within the Association, that there be meetings where members of the Board would attend in person in different parts of Canada. I am happy to report that the Board has held several meetings in this fashion in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto. We have also completed the writing of the Strategic Plan that has been distributed to members and on which I will elaborate in this message.

Initiatives related to the Order's mission are being taken in several regions where our members are actively engaged. Regional Vice-Presidents are working diligently towards developing their respective regions. They are involved with different projects as well as being concerned with recruiting new members for the Association.

The report underlines that the Association, thanks to the work of members of the Board, functions very well. Members in all regions are involved more and more with the Lourdes pilgrimage. It is also essential to continue to promote bilingualism within the Association since both English and French constitute richness for our Association.

The report also refers to the importance of the role of our Principal Chaplain, Father Andrea Spatafora,



"Vocations and recruiting remain a priority for our Association."

who diligently attended Board meetings, been a spiritual advisor to several members and ensured an efficient coordination of the work of our chaplains.

The report mentions the Order of Malta Foundation in Toronto. This Foundation has existed for more than 30 years and bears the name of the Order but is independent of the Canadian Association. The Foundation was created as a result of the sale of a building following the death of a member in the Toronto area who willed the product of the sale to the creation of the Foundation. Each year, it awards sums of money to charitable organisations whose aims reflect the mission of the Order.

Since this Foundation bears the name of the Order, the report indicated that members of the Board should be informed on an annual basis of the distribution of the monies. This year, following a meeting of the Board in Toronto, members of the Board were invited to attend a meeting of the Foundation's Board. This is a first and I thank my two confreres, Joe Stephen, Chancellor, and Valentine Lovekin, Vice-President, Toronto region, for their invitation and for their thoughtfulness in this matter.

A specific item has been added to the Strategic Plan following the visitation, and it concerns

activities related to spirituality. Our Plan now has six strategic components. One of them is concerned with vocations and recruiting. Our confrere Rory Fisher is responsible for this section with the assistance of a committee where all vice-presidents are asked for their input. Vocations and recruiting remain a priority for our Association. I ask you to always bear this in mind so that you might make the Order known to your friends so that, eventually, they might be invited to join our ranks. In future years, we will have to recruit 10 members each year. As far as vocations are concerned, I bring to your attention the important decision taken by Mr. Mathieu Dupont, Vice-President of the Ottawa region, who will begin his novitiate to become a Knight of Justice. I also want to mention the work undertaken by Mr. Christian Samoisette who has set up a training programme.

The second priority is the financial component under the responsibility of Mr. Luc Bigras. An enormous amount of work has been expanded to bring transparency and coherence in this field. According to our auditor, our finances are in good shape. A committee has been set up to remind members that they must acquit themselves of their financial obligations; otherwise they will lose their privileges as members of the Association.

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Canadian delegation to the Lourdes Pilgrimage 2013.



Continued from page 5 This committee is made up of Mr. Luc Bigras, Mr. Henry Kloppenberg and myself. It is essential that our members contribute financially so that the Association will be able to carry its mission, which is to assist the poor and the sick. I take this opportunity to invite you to plan your donations with the Order in mind or make a donation in your will to the National Foundation in Ottawa.

The fourth priority is administration. A committee, chaired by Chancellor Joe Stephen, is working to automate the Ottawa Secretariat and to write a How-to book for its administration. We have hired a new Executive Secretary, Ms Natasha Hyppolite, a student in civil law at the University of Ottawa.

The fifth responsibility is Communications under the responsibility of our Vice-President,

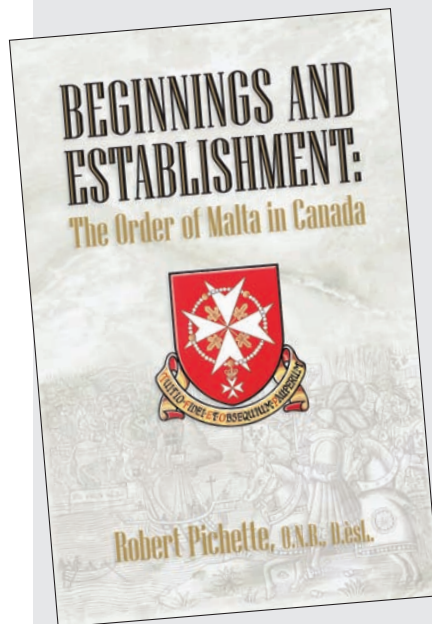
Mr. Roman Ciecwierz. He is adapting the Internet site as well as ensuring the publication of *Epistula*.

Finally, our sixth priority, and not the least, is Spirituality under the responsibility of our Principal Chaplain. Several religious activities are taking place in various areas of the country. I congratulate all chaplains for their contribution. Our Principal Chaplain relies on the assistance of chaplains in all regions in order to foster the spiritual development of our members.

I want to thank gratefully all the members of the Board for their dedication and their sense of responsibility. These volunteers are always ready to work with enthusiasm for the Association and the Order. I congratulate them for their sterling contribution.

I look forward to seeing you again at the vigil and investiture this September in Ottawa.

60th Anniversary Book to be Launched at Investiture Dinner



As part of the celebrations commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Canadian Association, a new book by Dr. Robert Pichette will be launched at the investiture dinner at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa this September. As Frà Matthew Festing writes in the introduction:

"I am very pleased to introduce this short history which outlines not only the progression of the Canadian Association over the past 60 years, but also the various links and accomplishments of those who helped, not insignificantly, with the formation of Canada and are embedded in the country's history... Beginnings and Establishment: The Order of Malta in Canada will serve to provide additional enlightenment to the diverse record of history embodied in the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta."

Copies will be available for purchase through the Canadian Association's office or online via our website: www.orderofmaltacanada.org.

Published by Canadian Association of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta.

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*Design, layout and production
contributed by Bravada
Consumer Communications Inc.*

