

SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER  
OF SAINT JOHN OF JERUSALEM  
OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

*Journal of Spirituality*

# Formation and Service

ROMA 2010

N. 11



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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years the three Classes of the Order of Malta have grown in number. In fact, thanks to the decisive impulse of H.M.E.H. the Grand Master, Aspirancy to the First Class is flourishing again, while the number and the geographical diffusion of the Class “in Obedience” is ever growing. And next to the fruitful presence of the Knights and Dames of the Third Class, there is the considerable variety of the Volunteers engaged in the Order’s activities.

All of them, although in different ways and degrees, relate to the fundamental characteristic of a religious Order with a specific charism, which marks the Order of Malta. Such a membership involves a special engagement in one’s spiritual life and in serving one’s neighbour. Comparing this positive reality with the conditions, often dispersive, of the society in which the members of the Order live and work, has led us to ponder on the joint names of “*formation*” and “*service*”.

It is not strange that in the proceedings of the International Strategy Seminar of Venice of January

2009, which looked at the future of the Order of Malta, formation was a domineering note, entwined with the perspective of acting, that is, of serving.

This same concern can be found in the articles that some distinguished Members of the Order have dedicated to the theme of this Journal, which was first conceived in Lourdes, during our May Pilgrimage. It is therefore entrusted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, that She may benevolently assist those who will read it.

**While completing the editing of this issue, the glad news that His Excellency Mgr. Paolo Sardi has been made a Cardinal came through. We therefore are happy to greet him as our *Cardinalis Patronus*.**

A.A.

*Fratres ad servitium pauperum venientes:*  
**SOME CURRENT ASPECTS IN THE RULE**  
**OF RAYMOND DU PUY**  
(translated from French)

We cannot ask ancient texts to give us a specific answer to current questions, because the issues we are dealing with are not posed in the same terms. Analysing the Order's early documents we find no direct indication of "formation and service", the theme of this "Journal of Spirituality". But we must nevertheless refer to them because they express our Order's prime ideal and help us to reply to the fundamental question of our identity.

This is not the place to deal with the complex issues of the Rule of Raymond du Puy; we shall only say that this document, written in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of Raymond du Puy, establishes the conduct of the first hospital in Jerusalem and the duties of those joining it. Solemnly approved by the Roman pontiffs, from Lucius III (1184) to Boniface VIII (1300), it was considered the only Rule the Hospitallers followed. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century on, most of the concrete regulations indicat-

ed in the text had become obsolete and were replaced by others. Nevertheless, the first article of the Rule of Raymond du Puy has continued to be cited at the beginning of all the Order's legislative collections, up to the Code of Rohan in 1782:

*“In the name of God, I Raymond Servant of Christ's poor and Warden of the Hospital of Jerusalem, with the counsel of all the Chapter, both clerical and lay brethren, have established these commandments in the House of the Hospital of Jerusalem: Firstly, I ordain that all the brethren, engaging in the service of the poor, should keep the three things with the aid of God which they have promised to God, that is to say, chastity and obedience, which means whatever thing is commanded them by their masters, and to live without property of their own: because God will require these three things of them at the Last Judgement.”*

## **The Primacy of Service**

Accustomed as we are to the presence in the Church of congregations with a particular purpose, hospitaller or educational, we tend to lose sight of how original and innovative this statement was in the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was the first time, as far as I am aware, that a religious order was defined by the actions it performs, that is service: *fratres ad servitium*



*pauperum venientes*. The Order is distinguished by its devotion to the *service of the poor*. The traditional elements of the religious life, asceticism and liturgical prayer, are subordinate to this service that becomes a path for the sanctification of its members. It is totally original since the “specialist” orders we are so familiar with today, hospitaller and educational, have only appeared in modern times. The hospitaller vocation thus constitutes the Order’s *sine qua non* identifying element. The notion of service or commitment to service is not just one of the many possible themes of a “Journal of Spirituality” devoted to this subject, because personal and direct commitment to a concrete service is always the first and most fundamental need among all those postulated for entering the Order. The Professed, Members in Obedience and Members of the Third Class, each according to his or her possibilities and rank, all must live the service that forms the Order of Malta’s foundation.

## **The Defence of the Faith**

The concept of faith only became an integral part of the Order’s statutes in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, on

Rhodes. Instead, the concept of “defence” first appeared at the time of Raymond’s grand mastership. A “servant” of the poor, the Order’s Master is also their “guardian”. The suppression of the Templars, an order with an exclusively military vocation, at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, prompted the Order of Malta to identify itself more clearly not only as a hospitaller order, but even more – and often primarily – as a military order, a “bulwark” of Christendom. The Order has now returned completely to its hospitaller origins, and it is with this mission that it can maintain its tradition of defending the faith in the “*battle for the integral advancement of human beings*”, the “*battle for the defence and development of the human person*”, in Pope John Paul II’s intense message to the Order<sup>1</sup>.

## **The Religious Vows**

The Rule of Raymond du Puy is one of the earliest examples of the codification of the Evangelical Counsels according to the three vows of Chastity, Obedience and Poverty, a codification that was only

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<sup>11</sup> Address for the Jubilee of the Order, 19 October 2000.

to become widespread in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It should also be recalled that the Hospitallers radically distanced themselves from the monastic or canonical tradition, since their vows were taken directly “from their superior’s hand”, and did not involve “permanent residence” in a specific place: the Hospitallers did not consecrate themselves to God in a specific monastery or church, but pledged themselves to a mission, the service to the poor, wherever it might lead them. The Order of Malta’s tradition “qualifies” the Vows in a particular manner. Obedience clearly stands out as “the most important of them” and refers to Christ’s obedience to His Father, the foundation of every religious consecration<sup>2</sup>. Chastity, according to article IV of the Rule of Raymond du Puy, strongly inspired by the Augustinian Rule, is understood not only as sexual abstinence, but more broadly as the general behaviour of those religious who are in permanent contact with the world instead of being protected by enclosure. As for Poverty, it is defined by the phrase *sine proprio vivere*, “(to live) without owning anything”; the emphasis is not placed on

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<sup>2</sup> Vatican Council II, Decree on the Religious Life *Perfectae caritatis*, 14.

the value of poverty per se – as it was later in the Franciscan tradition – but rather on detachment from worldly possessions. This traditional interpretation of the vows still seems appropriate today. The Professed still base their consecration on Obedience and it is the spiritual foundation of the “In Obedience” Class. The Professed have always followed the Evangelical Counsels of Chastity and Poverty in their quality as religious “in the world”. For the other Members, the call to sanctity in all their acts and the invitation to consider themselves “custodians” of goods received, are capable of profoundly forming their spiritual life.

## **Clerical and Lay Brothers**

The Order founded by Blessed Gerard consists of clerical and lay brothers; the lay brothers govern whereas the clerical brothers carry out everything pertaining to their specific ministry. However the clerical and lay brothers constitute a single *fraternitas* and the common pledge of service is stronger than the distinction between them. Hence the Hospitallers detach themselves from the practice of the monastic or canonical environments, where the difference

between monks and lay brothers, or between canons and coadjutor brothers, is markedly in favour of the clerics. Today the Order is clearly identified as a lay religious order, notwithstanding the presence of a certain number of priests among its Members. Whether they be Chaplains Professed, *ad honorem* or Magistral, they can all aspire to the Order's ancient ideal to live their ministry within its "*fraternity*" as a pledge of service - concrete service - among the poor and the sick and spiritual support for its Members.

## **Brothers and Confreres**

The oldest texts tell us that the Order's *fraternitas* does not only consist of Professed brothers: at the time of Blessed Gerard and Raymond du Puy it also included "confreres", lay faithful who mainly assisted the Order in its possessions in the West. These *confratres* were more than simple benefactors, because they made a promise "*to God, to Our Lady, to Sir Saint John the Baptist our Patron and to our Lords the Sick*"<sup>3</sup>: Raymond himself considered them "as if they

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<sup>3</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> century Statutes.

were serving in Jerusalem”, *quasi ipsi militent in Hierosolimis*<sup>4</sup>. The confreres, closely associated with the Order, slowly decreased in number until they disappeared after the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that a class of Members, associated with the Order without taking the three Vows but anyway linked to it by a pledge or a promise, again appeared and in a significant manner. We can consider these Members as equally constituting the Order’s original identity. They represent a very specific element, since the concept of the “Third Order” only appeared at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the Premonstratensians and at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> with the Franciscans and Dominicans. Today the Order has a considerable presence of Members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class, but we must not forget that, without that core of the Professed, the existence of the other Members would lose any meaning of belonging to a religious order; and belonging to the Order would mean nothing else but a honorific decoration accompanied by charitable work. Perhaps it is equally useful to note that those first “confreres” strove to

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<sup>4</sup> Delaville Le Roux, *Cartulaire*, 46; circa 1123.

offer a tangible service to the Order, such as maintaining and protecting its assets, or with an active presence in the Order's various houses. In this way they were different from simple benefactors, who received the Order's prayers without being associated with it. On the contrary, "confrere" meant "pledge of service", and this should still apply today.

## **The Hospital House**

Before all the designations of "Priory", "Commenda" and so on, the name used in very early times and up to the 14<sup>th</sup> century was that of hospitaller "house", *domus*. It refers back to a spiritual tradition in which the religious *domus* is an expression of fraternal life, *unanimiter in domo*, to the image of the first Christian community in Jerusalem as described in the Acts of the Apostles. In the mediaeval context, the *house* also refers to the "familiarity with the lord" granted to vassals and servants. This notion, like that of *fraternitas*, can be useful today to define the spiritual bond that exists between all the Order's Members, from those of the Third Class up to the Professed. The religious community life in the strict

sense only existed in a very remote time, in the Jerusalem Hospital; it very rapidly took on a less severe aspect and today the dispensation from community life is expressly laid down in Art. 9 § 1 of the *Constitutional Charter*. It is clear that there is a concern to create times and places for life in common, for discerning and accompanying vocations, as well as for training the Order's Members who bear responsibilities. But instead of aiming at artificial forms of "community" religious life, there is a greater interest in restoring a true notion of *fraternitas* among the Order's Members through reasserting their reciprocal bonds, looking after each other better and promoting a stronger communion of prayer, so that all the Order's bodies, whether a National Association, a Sub-Priory or a Priory, can become a true common *house* for all Members.

## **Formation?**

We should not be surprised if this concept does not exist in ancient texts. In Cluny in the 12th century, the Novitiate only lasted a couple of weeks if we are to believe the Epistolary of Peter the Venerable!



The idea of a long novitiate for the religious, or a seminary with a lengthy training for priests, only appeared much later in the modern age with the reforms decreed by the Council of Trent. At the time of the Catholic Reform, the Order had in effect tried to meet these needs, publishing various introductions to the “duties” of a Knight of Malta throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>. But the concept of formation, and even more of continuing formation, was practically unknown in the Middle Ages, where there was only the apprenticeship in which you learnt by imitating the masters and ancients. And yet, even if we do not possess a *ratio studiorum* of the first Hospitallers, we can read “between the lines” of the ancient Statutes and see the Order has always been very conscientious about how its Members perform their services. Physical aptitude, an efficient administration of the goods entrusted to you and taking good care of your appearance are rather elementary guidelines but they testify to the profound desire for the essential service, *servitium pauperum*, to be

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<sup>5</sup> His Eminence Card. Sardi cites some in his Introduction to the «Journal of Spirituality», n. 10, and Msgr. L. M. de Palma has devoted a study to this theme, *Il frate cavaliere*, Ecumenica editrice, 2009.

performed efficiently. Our present formative needs must indubitably be inspired by the same desire. For a *tuitio fidei* commensurate with the “*battle for the respect of human values*”, for an *obsequium pauperum* appropriate for the needs and conditions of the third millennium, all the Order’s Members need a continually updated formation, whose prime objective remains that of being “ready to serve”. Today as in the past, every Member of the Order must consider himself as a brother among other brothers pledged to the service of the poor, *fratres ad servitium pauperum venientes*.

Rev. Bruno Martin  
Conventual Chaplain *a.b.*

## SERVICE IN THE RULE OF ST BENEDICT

*Constituenda est ergo nobis dominici schola servitii.*

(“Therefore we must establish a school of the Lord’s service”, RB *Prologue*, 45)<sup>1</sup>

A casual reader of the Rule of Saint Benedict (hereafter RB) might be tempted to give only a quick glance at some chapters in very middle of the Rule which appear to deal with purely practical matters. These are Chapter 35 on the weekly service in the kitchen, Chapter 36 on the care of the sick, Chapter 37 on the treatment of old men and children and Chapter 38 on the weekly reader in the refectory. In fact, these chapters are among the more important in the Rule, summarizing as they do Saint Benedict’s teaching on service. This presentation will deal mainly with Chapters 35 and 36 but reference will be made also to Chapters 37 and 38.

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<sup>1</sup> The Latin and English quotations from RB are taken from J. McCANN (ed.), *The Rule of Saint Benedict in Latin and English*, London, Burns Oates, 1952. There are several more modern editions and translations of the RB available, one of the most important being, T. FRY O.S.B.(ed), RB 1980, *The Rule of St Benedict*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1981. This edition was produced to mark the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St Benedict.

Chapter 35 is concerned not only with regulating the details of how the monks are to take turns in the preparation and serving of the food of the monastery<sup>2</sup>. The main theme of the chapter is the monks' willingness to serve and be served as the decisive psychological and spiritual basis of every one of the practical provisions of the Rule. Service of the confreres can only be understood when seen in the context of obedience and if understood as having the same value as the service rendered by public and private prayer.

St Benedict begins Chapter 35 with the words *fratres sibi invicem serviant...*, ("Let the brothers serve one another...") He presupposes that mutual service as described, for example, in the Pauline letters is one of the salient characteristics of the Christian community<sup>3</sup>. Importantly, this service is not confined to lofty aspirations or eloquently formulated theories but is grounded in the concrete reality of everyday practical living and its requirements. For St Paul, joy too is an important aspect of this practical service because in

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<sup>2</sup>There is some discussion as to whether or not the weekly servers were also responsible for the preparation of the food.

<sup>3</sup> See Gal 5:13 "...*through love become slaves to one another...*".

the last analysis it is the Lord himself who is being served and it is the Lord himself who is our example in this service. The servant Christ who washed the feet of his disciples is the model of the serving monk. In their everyday service of one another the monks imitate this servant Christ.

While eminently practical in its description of the handling and cleaning of such things as vessels and towels<sup>4</sup>, Chapter 35 echoes the provisions made elsewhere in the Rule for the monks' liturgical service. As much as prayer and liturgical worship, physical service is a charism, a gift from the Lord<sup>5</sup>. The same divine energy that motivates and makes possible the worship of God in the monks' prayer and liturgical service, makes mutual service possible in all other areas of the monastery, makes the building of community possible. Thus, the weekly service in kitchen and refectory follow the rhythm of liturgical service in the monastery church and, significantly, usually begins on Sunday, the main weekly commemoration of the Lord's Resurrection. On Saturday evening, the

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<sup>4</sup>“...when the server is ending his week on the Saturday, let him do the washing. He shall wash the towels which the brethren use for drying their hands and feet...”.

<sup>5</sup> RB 35,7.

monks ending and those beginning their week of service are, like Christ, to wash the feet of all. On Sunday following the first prayers of the day, those ending and beginning their week of service are to bow or even prostrate themselves before the other monks in the church and ask for their prayers. Those ending their service use a prayer-formula similar to that which concludes the Divine Office – *Benedictus es, domine deus, qui adiuvasti me et consolatus es me...* (“Blessed are you, Lord God, who have helped and consoled me”) – while those beginning their week use the same invocation that begins most of the offices in the church – *Deus in adiutorium meum intende; domine, ad adiuvandum me festina...* (“O God, come to my aid. O Lord, make haste to help me”). Similarly, in Chapter 38, the monk who is to read for the week in the refectory asks for the prayers of all using another formula from the beginning of the first office of every day, *Domine, labia mea aperies et os meum annuntabit laudem tuam...* (O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall announce you praise...”).

Underlying this liturgical framework in which mutual service takes place, is the monk’s realization that it is only with the help of God’s grace and with

the prayers of his brothers that his service will be possible, that only with this grace and these prayers will this service be profitable. Again, the purpose of the reading in the refectory is not just to pass the time or provide entertainment. Physical nourishment is accompanied by spiritual nourishment – *edificatio* – and the same spirit of silence and reverence that reigns in the church should reign in the refectory – *Et summum fiat silentium, ut nullius mussitatio vel vox nisi solius legentis ibi audiatur* (“And let there be the greatest silence, so that no whisper, and no voice but the reader’s, may be heard there”)<sup>6</sup>. The service rendered to God in the formal liturgy is also rendered to Christ in the brothers who are eating and drinking. This takes concrete form in their care that no-one lack anything, in a sensitive anticipation of the needs of others. Since all is grace, since there is nothing that we have not received as gift, no brother should need to ask for anything but his needs be anticipated and met by the others.

Because of the importance of such service, every member of the community is obliged to take his turn in the kitchen. The only exceptions are those

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<sup>6</sup> RB 38,5.

who are sick or who, like the Abbot or Cellerar, are too busy with other important matters. Speaking earlier on in the Rule of the monastery as the school of the Lord's service, Benedict understands this term to mean not only a place in which something is learned but also in the sense of a group that does or learns something together<sup>7</sup>.

The aim of mutual service is love – *caritas* – while at the same time and in a real sense of “learning-by-doing” the practice of that *caritas* is the way one learns. Since ultimately all service is service of the Lord, the Lord himself is the reward of service.

Service in the Rule of St Benedict is characterised by mutual respect and mutual obedience. Clearly, the practical measures decreed for the cleaning of utensils have an hygienic purpose but there is also underlying these provisions a respect for the individual and a respect for the “sacramentality” of everyday things<sup>8</sup>. Those served and those serving are

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<sup>7</sup> RB. *Prologue*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> In another chapter, Chapter 31 on the Cellerar of the monastery Benedict says that this official must *omnia vasa monasterii cunctamque substantiam ac si altaris vasa sacrata conspiciat* (“...look upon all the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as upon the sacred vessels of the altar...”), RB 31,10.



temples of the Holy Spirit and to be treated with appropriate consideration. Thus, except on days of strict fast, the weekly servers and the weekly reader are to be saved unnecessary hardship by being given a piece of bread and a drink of wine before they being to serve the meal or to read.

However, it is in Chapter 36 of the Rule, which deals with care of the sick that Saint Benedict speaks most eloquently about respect and obedience. All of Chapter 36 is permeated with an awareness that while Benedict wants his monks to see in every brother the person of Christ, this is particularly the case when one is dealing with sick brethren. In a very special way Christ is to be seen and served in the sick – *ut sicut revera Christo ita eis serviatur...* (“...that in them Christ may be truly served...”)⁹.

Monastic obedience is given to God in Christ, as presented in the teachings of the Scriptures and of the Tradition of the Church, to the Rule of St Benedict, to the Abbot, to one’s confreres and to one’s neighbours. Monastic obedience in the RB is presented as an open-hearted willingness and growing

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⁹ RB 36,1.

capacity to hear and respond in love to the legitimate demands made by all of these. It is essentially – and it becomes – a loving willingness to seek the good of others above one’s own advantage: and all of this with Christ as our model. Monastic service as described and prescribed in the RB is the logical but also charismatic concretization of this obedience.

In a special way service of the sick is an expression of obedience to the Gospels, an affirmation of the real presence of Christ in our fellow humans. Thus, visiting the sick is visiting Christ himself and, *quod fecistis uni de his minimis, mihi fecistis* (“What you did to the least of these little ones, you did to me”)<sup>10</sup>. The sick themselves, however, are no mere recipients of acts of kindness or help but have their own responsibilities in this Christ-centred service. Benedict asks them to bear in mind that they are being served for the love and honour of God. The respect shown to them is returned by their not distressing those serving them by making unreasonable demands. Benedict is sufficiently realistic to acknowledge that the sick can be difficult and those serving them are also to

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<sup>10</sup> See Mt 25:34-40.

remember that patiently bearing with these difficult people brings greater reward. Twice in Chapter 36 the Abbot is reminded that it is he who is responsible for ensuring that the sick are properly cared for. The person in the monastery who represents Christ, that is, the Abbot, is at the same time responsible for the service of Christ, not only in the church, the refectory and the everyday work of the house, but also in the persons of those who most concretely represent that Christ who needs to be served, that is the sick.

The short Chapter 37 deals with the treatment of old men and children. Admitting the usual human tendency to make allowance for these categories of person and not departing from this, Benedict still embraces them in the provisions of the Rule. The humanity displayed by his instruction that neither the very old nor the very young should be subjected to the relative rigours of the monastic diet displays the same humanity with which the weekly servers are treated. The general principle, *consideretur semper in eis imbecilitas... sit in eis pia consideration...* (“Let there be constant consideration for their weakness... Let them receive compassionate consideration...”)<sup>11</sup>, can

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<sup>11</sup> RB 37,2 ff.

be applied to every member of the monastery and under every circumstance.

All service in the Rule is in some way service of Christ, be it in the formal service of the liturgy or in the service of Christ as present in one's Abbot, one's fellow-monks – particularly the sick – guests and the poor. The model of this service is Christ himself. Service is undertaken in obedience to Christ as expressed in the Scriptures, in one's superiors, one's confreres and the demands of everyday living and concrete exigencies. The attitude of the one serving is that of humble awareness of the fact that all is grace.

*Dom Henry O'Shea, O.S.B.*  
Magistral Chaplain

## FORMATION AND SERVICE

(translated from Italian)

Considered in the abstract the theme is vast. However it acquires more specific outlines if we only ask ourselves about the nature of the service for which, consequently, a certain formation has to be envisaged. Every Knight is well aware of the kind of service required from those who approach the Order. It was already clear in the first regulatory text that has been handed down to us: the Rule of Raymond du Puy, second Grand Master of the Hospital of Jerusalem (1120–1158/60). I want to deal with this text in my paper, mindful of what Ecumenical Vatican Council II states with regards to religious families who want renew themselves. After having stressed that it redounds “*to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work*”, the Council recommends a “*constant return to the original spirit*” (n. 2) and, consequently, “*let their founders’ spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions - all of which make up the patrimony of each institute - be faithfully held in honour*” (n. 2, b). It can be very helpful to review the Order’s characteristic

aspects in the light of this ancient text, which contains the first inspiration of the Hospital of St John in Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>.

Already in the first article of Raymond du Puy's Rule, those who worked in the new religious family were described as *fratres ad servitium pauperum venientes* ("brethren who come to serve the poor"). The annotation is extremely interesting. The first and foremost reason why these religious came together was thus neither prayer, nor penitence, not asceticism, nor contemplation of the mysteries of God. Undoubtedly these forms of spiritual commitment existed, but they were practised in terms of the best "service to the poor", in terms that is of *obsequium pauperum*, the specific pathway to perfection in which the religious of St John were called to achieve sanctity.

The importance of this charitable charism is also proved, to those studying the Order's origins, by the fact that its other historic purpose, *tuitio fidei* (albeit soon imposing itself on the concrete life because of historic circumstances) only appears in

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<sup>1</sup> For this brief investigation I used Msgr. B. Martin's recent, interesting study entitled: "*La règle de Raymond du Puy et ses éléments de valeur permanente*".

the legislative texts much later, and precisely towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (cf. *Stabilimenta Rhodiorum militum*, 1489-1493). This does not mean that the “defence of the faith”, for opposing onslaughts from the Islamic world, had not become an indisputable part of the Order’s character. Obviously the concrete implementation of this defence has changed radically since Napoleon forced the Order to leave Malta (1798); it no longer involves the use of arms, but expresses itself in its efforts on behalf of people and their fundamental rights.

Pope John Paul II, welcoming in year 2000 the members of the Order for their Jubilee Pilgrimage, clearly said that: *“I am referring especially to the prophetic service for the marginalized and excluded which you carry out with the zeal of an authentic battle for the integral advancement of human beings. Thanks to this noble battle for the defence and development of the human person, a mission to which your Order has been dedicated for many centuries, you have been able to raise the banner of love in many parts of the five continents, where sickness and poverty degrade people and, unfortunately, threaten their future”* (n. 3, 19 October 2000).

This is the “service” to which the Order of Malta’s members have to feel committed and for

which they have to prepare themselves. And the formation to which the title of the article refers is directed at this. Very helpful again, in tracing the features of this training, is the Rule of Grand Master Raymond du Puy. It opens with a short formula, which on a superficial level could appear obvious: *In nomine Domini. Amen.* This is the great door that opens up service to the poor, the Order's distinctive feature; the formula clarifies that this service is essentially inspired by faith. The Knight of Malta turns to those in need and devotes himself to them because this is the will of God, who already in the Old Testament commanded that: “*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*” (Lk 10:27). The Knight bends lovingly over the sick because in the New Testament Christ identified himself with them (cf. Mt 25:36-40). Hence from the beginning the Order's members found it natural to call those who needed their care with the amazing title of “Our Lords the Sick”, something that is now traditional.

It is not surprising therefore that Raymond du Puy describes himself as *servus pauperum Christi* (“servant of Christ's poor”). It is the consequence of what has just been said: if the sick are “Lords” and if



Christ is seen in them, then the Knight is a servant who is dealing with Christ himself; who is dealing with the *pauperes Christi*. For the Knight following Christ, walking along the path of religious perfection is achieved in serving the sick and the poor. He must prepare himself for this during his training by cultivating humility and by being willing to take care of the needs of others (“servant”).

Another characteristic emerging from the Order’s early Rule is that service is not rendered in an individualistic and independent manner. The text specifies that even the Superior’s decisions are taken “*with the counsel of all the Chapter, both clerical and lay brethren*”. Such a democratic governance was unusual in those times. In particular, it was not usual for the lay component to be predominant: instead from the very beginning the hospital was made up mainly of the “lay brethren” who were consecrated to God for the specific purpose of serving the sick and the poor. The “clerical brethren” were an additional component responsible for the liturgical and pastoral tasks reserved for ecclesiastics. But all lived together in the *domus hospitalis*, trying to imitate the original community, in which “*the community of believers was of one heart*

and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common” (Acts 4: 32). It is not necessary to stress how fundamental this sense of community was, this cooperation with the other members of the Order. One has to prepare oneself for this, since the effectiveness of the service one wants to render to those in difficulty depends on it.

Obviously, the evangelic counsels were soon seen to be indispensable for living and working together. The Rule of Raymond du Puy is one of the first regulatory texts that unites the three counsels – Chastity, Obedience and Poverty – with a formulation that was to become habitual in many other religious families. The text prescribes that *omnes fratres ad servitium pauperum venientes tria quae promittunt Deo teneant cum Dei auxilio, scilicet castitatem et obedientiam (...) et sine proprio vivere, quia hec tria requiret Deus ab eis in ultimo examine* (“all the brethren, engaging in the service of the poor, should keep the three things [...] which they have promised to God, that is to say, chastity and obedience, [...], and to live without property of their own: because God will require these three things of them at the Last Judgement”).

One also has to prepare oneself for these undertakings. The Order's rituals mainly emphasized the preparation for obedience. This is not surprising when we remember how indispensable the habit of discipline was to enter a military order. But the practice of chastity was also stressed, because the Knight of the Order had to live in constant contact with the world. Hence the Rule of Raymond du Puy prescribed that the Knights should try to be in two or three when going into castles or cities, watching over each other's behaviour. In particular, it specified that they should: "*let no women wash their heads or their feet, or make their beds*" (n. 4). Finally, with regards to poverty, the Rule is explicit: "*Let them not claim more as their due than bread and water and raiment*" specifying that "*their clothing should be humble, because Our Lord's poor, whose servants we confess ourselves to be, go naked and dirty. And it is a thing wrong and improper for the servant that he should be proud, and his Lord should be humble*" (n. 2).

One last point: an examination of the documents dating back to the Order's origins shows that the ancient *fraternitas* did not only consist of "Professed Brothers", but also embraced lay brothers who, because of the support they gave to the Order's

initiatives, were considered “confreres”. We are not talking about simple benefactors, because they pronounced a “*promise to God, to Our Lady, to Sir St. John the Baptist, and to our Lords the Sick*”. Raymond du Puy himself considered them closely linked with the Order *quasi ipsi militent in Hierosolimis* (“as if they were serving in Jerusalem”). This presence, practically dying out in subsequent centuries, reappeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was further increased in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Everyone realises the importance of cultivating the communion of the lay brethren with their “professed confreres” since their presence in the Church is justified by their sharing of the Order of Malta’s charism. Therefore the considerations given above are also valid, with the due adjustments, for those who, albeit not “religious”, share the commitment of the professed in their “service to the poor”.

The Decree *Perfectae caritatis*, whereas it invites those engaged in the renewal of religious life to return continuously to the “*original spirit of the institutes*”, also recommends “*their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time*” (n. 2). Those planning the Order of Malta’s future must also be responsible for this “adaptation”. It is precisely in this context that

the new “Regulations and Commentary” is being brought out to accompany the efforts of all the Order’s Members. It is important to reserve a suitable space for studying this text, which will certainly contain interesting stimuli for reflecting on the Order’s increasingly incisive presence.

*Card. Paolo Sardi*  
*Cardinalis Patronus* of the Order



**DOCTRINAL PREPARATION FOR SERVICE**  
**IN THE ORDER OF MALTA**  
(translated from Italian)

On the theme of continuing formation in the doctrinal field I would like briefly to illustrate three aspects.

1) *Tuitio fidei*, or the defence and dissemination of the faith that, with service to the poor (*obsequium pauperum*), is the essence of our commitment, presupposes knowing the content of faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in 153 ff., characterizes faith as a grace (gift of God) and a human act (citing St Thomas Aquinas who said “*Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace*”). The truth to which one assents is the Word of God, entrusted to the Church, protected and transmitted by the Church. From the beginning it has explained the content of this faith as the Creed of the Apostles and the various formulas of the baptismal confession. The Ecumenical Councils or the Magisterium – ordinary or solemn – of the Church have added nothing but communicated a great deal with formulations or definitions

prompted by the manifestation of the various heresies or developed by theological reflection or Christian spirituality.

2) The human act of faith that responds to the divine gift is carried out in the assent given to the content of faith. Much is spoken today about inter-religious dialogue. In the current multicultural and multi-religious context, St Peter's exhortation to "*sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope*" (1 Pt 3:15) is more relevant than ever. Many Catholics hang back when exhorted to bear witness to the faith. What makes them uncertain are doubts, explicit or not, such as: Is this still pertinent after the latest Council? How do we square this with the other religions, which the Church now states are valid? Has relativism or subjectivism now become acceptable even though the Pope often condemns it as dangerous and threatening? And, finally, do lay people really need to study these theological matters? Isn't it enough to go to mass?

These hasty questions show how relevant the "defence of the faith" is today. We live in a context of relativism – presented as tolerance and originating



from agnosticism – and strong secularism. This does not lead to the anticlericalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but rather to protests in various countries – European or not – about the presence of the Church in society (such as the desire to ban religious symbols from the public area, the legislative decisions or the legal judgments of European bodies against the presence of the crucifix in schools and public places). Certainly, the pluri-religious context and the recognition of an appropriate secular dimension commands us to respect the conscience of others. The Church does so with ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue (urgent but difficult as in the case of some Islamic groups not representing Islam as a whole). But the ecumenical attitude must not become indifferentism in individuals: These are things I don't understand; I respect everyone, so I don't have to cope with people or situations that require too much effort.

3) *Tuitio fidei* is a commitment that has to be updated because the social and cultural context is in constant evolution. Study combined with meditation and prayer is useful for this end. I would recommend, for example, reading the Gospels for feast days before mass and after, reviewing them in the light of the

homily; studying the Pope's teaching in the Wednesday catechesis; studying the position of the episcopate (often shedding light on current problems of civil coexistence); reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In conclusion, I want to stress that this constant doctrinal updating must not be isolated from the social and even political dimension. The Order's Members are required to follow current affairs as believers. Although conditions vary from nation to nation, the Order's Confreres and Dames should always seek out the "poor" to whom we must offer our "obsequium" in a tangible manner (also through the work of the Associations or Pories).

If we strive to perform both tuitio and obsequium with generosity, we can also benefit from Jesus' promise: "*Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father*" (Mt 10:32). There is no more beautiful a promise.

*Archbishop Amédée Grab*  
Bishop Emeritus of Chur  
Conventual Chaplain *a. h.*

## CONSECRATION TO GOD IN THE CHARISM OF THE ORDER OF MALTA

*“The Order of Malta is not a golf club”* we are reminded often by our current Grand Master, Fra’ Matthew Festing. How right he is!!! The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta is a lay religious order of the Roman Catholic Church. It is not some social club to which one applies, hopefully enjoys, and retires from when no longer useful in a social or business sense. Membership in a religious order of any kind involves the ongoing consecration of one’s life to God. Once undertaken, it is a life-long journey that ends only when one is finally called to see the face of God.

*“True to the divine precepts and to the admonitions of our Lord Jesus Christ, guided by the teachings of the Church, the Order affirms and propagates the Christian virtues of charity and brotherhood. The Order carries out its charitable works for the sick, the needy and refugees without distinction of religion, race, origin and age.*

*The Order fulfills its institutional tasks especially by carrying out hospitaller works, including social and health assis-*

*tance, as well as aiding victims of exceptional disasters and of war, attending also to their spiritual well-being and the strengthening of their faith in God*’ (Constitutional Charter of the S.M.O.M., Art. 2 § 2).

Every religious order has as its primary objective to praise God and as its second the sanctification of its members. Sanctification, the making holy, is achieved through consecration. *“You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God”* (Lv 20:7). When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, *“the Lord appeared to him: and said unto him: I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be perfect”* (Gn 17:1). This is the model for the consecrated life. To “walk before me” is to be understood as having an habitual sense of the presence of God, or doing the right thing and avoiding wrong, out of respect to the will of God; a consideration of God in all actions, public and private. “To be perfect”, what does this mean? Does it mean: *“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”* (Mt 5:48)? Of course the model of sanctification is perfection. If it were otherwise, it would be out the God’s character to give us anything but a perfect command and perfect standard. God has given us his son, Jesus, to be our exam-

ple, his perfect law to be our rule and it is up to us to aim at this perfection through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Church teaches that all people are called to be holy (*Lumen Gentium*, Chapter V). This teaching states that all within the Church should live holy lives and spread holiness to others. Theologians stress that a Roman Catholic should expect no different behaviour from the average Christian than from the “saints”. It ties perfectly with the theological concept of perfection. This universal call to holiness is rooted in baptism which joins one to Jesus Christ who is God and man, thus uniting one to Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The late Pope John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, that holiness is not only a state but a task, whereby Christians should strive for a full Christian life, imitating Christ, the Son of God, who gave his life for God and for his neighbour. This involves “training in the art of prayer”. His Holiness said that all pastoral initiatives have to be set in relation to holiness, as this has to be the topmost priority of the Church.

The Catholic position on salvation can be summed up thus: We are saved by Christ’s grace

alone, through faith and works done in charity inspired by the Holy Spirit. The purpose in life of all baptized persons is sanctification. Realizing that we are not perfect, we must enter into a partnership with God concerning holiness by making our lives available to be his holy vessels. Most of us have failed to completely live up to our end of the bargain by not taking the high road of moral excellence either through ignorance or through disobedience.

For someone to be thoroughly sanctified to the Lord's service, one must first realize the almightiness and all-sufficiency and glory of God. Consecration has two basic elements that demand our attention and understanding. First, God has consecrated us to the work of His service on earth by the blood, death and resurrection of His son. Secondly, there is our daily responsibility of working out our consecration in obedience to the word of God.

Consecration involves a consecration of everything to God, the consecration of life bearing the marks of dedication to God. Consecration of one's time means making time to be in the Lord's service. Consecration of one's hands means keeping them clean for God's work. Consecration of one's feet

means using them to lead to holiness. Consecration of one's property recognizes that we are only stewards or trustees of the goods we possess and that God has a claim on it. Consecration of one's intellect means that our thinking and study will produce true wisdom. Consecration of one's voice means using your voice to further God's message. Consecration of the lips means not lying or bearing false witness. Consecration of the heart means a wholehearted devotion to God and protects from divided loyalties. Consecration of one's love means that our affectional nature is so consecrated to God that we love God and the things of God above all else. Finally, consecration of the personality means that one's deportment is totally non-conformist and refuses to conform to the ways of this world. It is, however the consecration of the heart that enables everything to come into place.

Part of the motto of the Order of Malta, *obsequium pauperum*, dates back to the first known Rule of the Order of Malta, composed sometime between 1125 and 1153 A.D. This rule refers in its opening chapter to *fratres ad servitium pauperum venientes*, brothers who came in service of the poor. You can see that

from the very beginnings of the Order that the Members saw their role in the Order as a consecration to serve the poor and the sick. Care was always provided for both friend and foe alike. Nothing has changed with the passage of time. Each Member of the Order, regardless of his or her class is asked to consecrate himself or herself to serving the needs of our lords the poor and the sick.

*“In search of a tangible response to the love of Christ, the first members of the Order recognized the Lord and served Him in sick pilgrims in the Holy Land. ‘Obsequium pauperum’ has its origin in the divine compassion for the misery of the world, which obliges the members of the Order to serve Jesus Christ, who is present in the sick.*

*With respect to the other purpose of the Order ‘tuitio fidei, the members of the Order recognizing the image of God in each individual, are especially called upon to become involved in those situations where human life is threatened in its God-given essence and dignity.*

*Consequently, the Order is the tangible way for its members to fulfill the supreme commandment of love for God and neighbour, to honour God, to grow in holiness in the imitation of Christ and in communion with the Church.*

*The charism of ‘obsequium pauperum’ leads members to*



*encounter the Lord in the sick through personal service. All members are, therefore, called on to practise, personally and regularly, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy*”. (Code of the S.M.O.M., Art. 236 §§ 1 – 5).

Throughout history Members of the Order have lived out this charism of the Order. This is and always has been an hospitaller order. While on Rhodes and Malta and even before, the Grand Masters traditionally spent at least each Friday working in the Sacred Infirmary caring for the sick. Knights were required to spend time in the wards when not away on active duty. Nothing has changed. Our current Grand Master spends nights feeding the homeless in Rome, working anonymously in Lourdes and visiting the sick in the Order’s many hospitals. Knights and dames at every level look forward to hands-on service throughout the world.

*“You promise and vow unto God and Our Lady, and Saint John the Baptist to live and to die in obedience, and to be obedient to that sovereign whom God will give you. And then you promise to live chastely until your death. And then you promise to live without properties And moreover, we make another promise, which no other people make, that is you promise to be servants and slaves of our lords the sick”* (Customs

of the Order of the Hospital 1100-1310 A.D.).

The poor and the sick were and remain our lords. In Malta, the sick were cared for as if they were nobles. They were fed from silver plate and each was given his own bed, most probably for the first time in their lives. This countercultural behaviour sought to emulate Christ and his teachings. This service to the sick and poor enables our Members to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. This service demands a personal commitment by each and every individual Member to enter into a concrete relationship with those in need. This relationship must be one of patient love, true friendship and true respect for the one in need. This must be done freely and with a smile and true compassion. It cannot be done only for show or out of a sense of condescension.

To truly belong to the Order of Malta means to consecrate oneself to this work with the poor and the sick. The Order of Malta is not a contemplative order in the Church. Our Members are not cloistered. The Order may have been the first religious order to have its monks come out of the monastery to work in the community. While it is most beneficial to have a serious contemplative aspect to our lives, the Order of

Malta is an active lay order which grew out of the Rule of Saint Benedict with its motto *Ora et labora*, “pray and work”. Our “work” is that of serving the sick and the poor. This is carried out throughout the world where knights, dames, auxiliary and volunteers work in clinics, hospitals, soup kitchens, homeless shelters.

Since the beginning, the Order has emphasized action as its hallmark. Each Member is expected to do as much hands-on service as is practicable given his or her status in life. This applies to each and every Member from the Knights of Justice on down. Knights of Justice, as successors to the original knights of the hospital, should embrace the Order and its charisma wholeheartedly. Members of the Order who are admitted into Obedience make a solemn promise seek to live a “life of Christian perfection” and, therefore, should feel an even greater desire and obligation to serve the sick and the poor. Those that are too old, feeble or unable continue to do hands-on work are expected to continue their consecration at least through prayer and alms giving. The Order understands that many Members have family obligations which must of course come first but the conscientious Member will know how much

time he or she will be able to consecrate to God through the Order.

*“It is our duty to prefer the service of the poor to everything else and to offer such service as quickly as possible. If a needy person requires medicine or other help during prayer time, do whatever has to be done with peace of mind. Offer the deed to God as your prayer. Do not come upset or feel guilty because you interrupted your prayer to serve the poor. God is not neglected if you leave him for such service. One of God’s works is merely interrupted so that another can be carried out. So when you leave prayer to serve some poor person, remember that this very service is performed for God. Charity is certainly greater than any rule. Moreover, all rules must lead to charity. Since she is a noble mistress, we must do whatever she commands. With renewed devotion, then, we must serve the poor, especially outcasts and beggars. They have been given us as our masters and patrons” (St Vincent de Paul).*

To quote a recent statement of our Grand Master:

*“Both in Jerusalem and in Rhodes and on Cyprus and on Malta itself, and indeed ever since, we have always cared for the sick. It’s partly an extension of what we did for pilgrims going to Jerusalem all those centuries ago, now we have branches of the order in over forty-six countries. We have a huge amount going*

*on in very nearly every country in the world. I would divide what we do into three parts; day-to-day in developed countries, we have a constant every day presence, it maybe looking after drug addicts, or elderly people, some of it is working in hospitals. Then in addition to that we have in a lot of developing countries, we have ongoing projects, which maybe looking after people with leprosy, people suffering from TB, which is of course is now on the increase again, AIDS and in general medical and social care. Then the third aspect is disaster response, sometimes they are man-made, such as in war, sometimes they are natural such as the recent Haiti earthquake”.*

*“You saw me hungry and did not feed me, and inasmuch as you did not do it for one of these, the least of my brothers, you did not do it for me. And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Mt 25:34 ff.).*

The formation of our Members is of utmost importance. One who is contemplating joining the Order for social or prestige reasons ought to look elsewhere. The great prestige of the Order was earned over a period of nine hundred years through the dedication and consecration of its Members throughout the ages and not solely because of the social standing of its Members.

Prospective Members need to be formed in the

spirit and charism of the Order. This is the whole purpose of the year of preparation. This year must be taken very seriously. It is the primary responsibility of the sponsor. The sponsor must see to it that the candidate becomes actively involved in the hands-on work carried out in that region. Each Association must emphasise and foster among its Members a charism of personal service and sacrifice. The honour of Membership in the Order of Malta presupposes a strong record of service to the Church and church-related causes, in particular to the poor and the sick. The sponsor is also responsible for seeing that the candidate learns the history of the Order and its charism. Like a courtship, this is the time when both the Order and the prospective Member decide if they are meant for each other. If not already involved, prospective Members should become active in the corporal works of the Order in their area. It is only by coming to understand the importance of the works of the Order that one can hope to consecrate his or her life to this charism. It is totally understandable that this work may not be for everyone. There are many other lay religious organizations that may suit one better. This preparation, if I may say, is also

crucial for the Order's chaplains who need to be imbued with the charism of the Order if they are to truly serve our Members.

Formation does not end with the investiture ceremony. The investiture is really only the beginning of a long and hopefully a fruitful consecration to the works of the Order. Ask any dedicated Knight or Dame and he or she will gladly tell you that each time they serve a sick person they learn something. It is no secret that most Members get far more out of service they provide than they put into it.

*Bonum certamen certavi, cursum consumavi, fidem servavi – I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Tim 4:7).*

*Fra' John T. Dunlap*  
Member of the Sovereign Council





## AN EXEMPLARY TESTIMONY OF FAITH AND WORKS IN THE SECOND CLASS

On 21<sup>st</sup> November of the year 1956, without much initial notice and in a period of crisis, the Holy Father Pius XII bestowed a unique and great gift upon the Order of Malta. With his breve *Praecipuam Curam* he confirmed the establishment of the new Class of Obedience.

Many observers at the time, and even much later, believed that this new form of Membership was to be considered only as a provisional construct, brought about by the need for help with administrative tasks in the Order, which the reduced number of Professed Knights could no longer accomplish.

However, it has now become apparent that the Holy Father had something much larger in mind when he created this new Community which has since grown and developed to a point where the Seminar in Venice could go as far as the following articulation of the Promise of Obedience: *“The Promise of Obedience is an answer to a specific Vocation, given by God to a deeper life of Christian Perfection within the Order. This Promise implies a more strict binding to particu-*

*lar commands of the legitimate Superiors within the Works of the Order. And, similar to Christ's obedience to the Father from His birth until His death on the Cross, the promise also implies a relationship to the legitimate Superior in matters of spiritual life and in one's work in the Order. Those who make the Promise form a community which brings them together in brotherhood on their path towards Christian perfection".*

Nevertheless it is often noticeable that a fair amount of ignorance and lack of clarity still exist amongst the Members of the Order about the character of and objectives of Obedience. It is therefore time to launch a campaign of information throughout the Order to clarify the true nature of this type of Obedience and of the Communities which have begun to form themselves around this very special form of vocation.

When only two days before the Feast Day of St John in 1960 the Blessed Pope John XXIII received the first Knights of Obedience, he said to them: "*Obedience creates Peace*". Obedience in this sense is the love of Christ for mankind, the Peace that He set out to bring to this world by showing his own obedience to the will of his Father. Thus the Knights and Dames of Obedience must foremost give testimony

to the world that the *tuitio fidei* and the *obsequium pauperum* in our Order are an essential part of their vocation, coupled with the sanctification of their spiritual life in aspiring to the Imitation of Christ in his Love and Virtues.

The foundation of this Rule is of course contained in the *Code* of the Order where it is said:

*“that they may conduct a life leading to Christian perfection in the Spirit of the Order and in the sphere of its Works, in conformity with their personal vocation and the directives of their legitimate Superior”* (Art. 94). However, this concept must be elaborated in order to give everyone in the Order, in Obedience or in other classes, more clarity as to the true and practical nature of these requirements.

Service in Obedience to and with the relevant communities begins inside the family. The reservation *“according to their state”* (Art. 94), is not meant to be a limitation, it is rather an encouragement to practice Obedience inside their own families. Matrimony is a holy Sacrament and yet in our days it is beset by an endless chain of personal and civil shortcomings which can only be overcome by giving testimony through the example of Love of one’s Neighbour

and in the Love for Peace, both of which require the humility of Christian Obedience. In the same manner, life in the communities of work, parish and other institutions demand an equal level of obedient dedication whether these are directly required by a Superior or by circumstances. Members of the Order, and in particular in Obedience, need the help and guidelines of the Order's community and their Superiors to accomplish these difficult tasks.

Obedience also means that the Knights and Dames in this class oblige themselves "*to utilize their temporal goods according to the spirit of the Gospel*" (Art. 94). It is on the one hand very difficult to define the meaning of this Rule for individual cases as everyone's patrimonial situation is different from the next. It is also pointless to set it according to the more rigorous demands of the Gospel, because many individuals, in particular those with families are restricted in their freedom of action by the constraints of the people dependent on them.

Nevertheless, it is not beyond any seriously believing Christian to find the right model role for administering his belongings according to the love of their Neighbours as shown by the example of the

Love of Christ whom we encounter most of all amongst the Neediest and the Poorest. Knights and Dames in Obedience must foremost give example to all other Members of the Order that they have taken this promise to their heart. Their Superiors, without seeking unrequited involvement, should at all times be ready to offer their help in times of doubt and need.

It is a goal of the “Obedience of Christ” to give lasting encouragement to the yearning to serve the Sick and the Poor. Tradition in our Order calls them rightly ‘our Lords’ as they are the ones we want to serve, showing them the special kind of obedience of the servant. Knights and Dames in Obedience, through their promise, have taken an important obligation to live their Charisma by attempting to get directly and frequently involved in the care of the people in need. Through this commitment, together with the Knights of the First Class, they will serve as the beam of light for the Order’s principal mission.

In a world where help can often only be given by professionally trained people, it is an obligation of the Order as a whole and the Superiors to endeavor to find the right type of Activities and Charities that

will permit all Members, but in particular those of the first two classes to express their love for the needy without being shut out by lack of training. Members will find the joy of caring on the pilgrimages to Lourdes and other places. However, more than this is required for the Knights and Dames who have declared a special commitment through their Promise.

Giving example and testimony when following the special vocation in Obedience also means to pass on the light of the Teachings of Christ to those next to us, whether inside the Order or in other Christian communities such as the family and the parish. The Order and the Superiors should provide special courses to provide the Knights and Dames in Obedience with the necessary training to help their next ones to deepen their knowledge of our Faith.

This is also contained in Art. 101 of the *Code* of the Order which says: “*The Knight and Dames in Obedience should collaborate with their fellow members in Prayer and Works*”. Such collaboration is not only a sign of the love of Christ to be shared with others but it also points towards the need to form Communities in Pories or Subpories which will lend all of their Members the mutual support neces-

sary to live their Vocation.

It was said earlier on that one of the initial duties conceived for the class of Obedience was that of lending support to the tasks demanded from an ever shrinking class of Professed Knights. Even though this quality would not have been sufficient to give the Holy Father Pius XII enough reason to bestow this great gift to our ancient Order of St John, it should certainly be said that Knights and Dames in Obedience are under a special obligation to lend their help with the manifold administrative tasks of the Order. Many of us may not be able because of their age and other reasons to become very active on the actual frontline of the works of the Order but they may surely be encouraged by their Superiors to lend their services and professional know-how to the difficult and unrewarding tasks of keeping their beloved Order safely on its long and most successful road.

None of us know what the future will bring, but we may surely be convinced that the Class of Obedience will increasingly become a most central part in the life and times of our Order and all of us should not only be proud of this new institution but be confident and thankful to our Patron Saint and the

Holy Mother of Philermos to have provided us with such a unique instrument to enhance our walk towards the Imitation of Christ.

*Count Winfried Henckel von Donnersmark*  
Member of the Sovereign Council



## FORMATION AND SERVICE IN THE THIRD CLASS

(translated from Italian)

The Order's Members, Knights, Dames and Donats, ascribed to the Third Class, constitute numerically the major part of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. This fact alone shows the importance of this component. The Third Class is usually not involved with leadership and governance, roles preferably reserved for the First and Second class but, out of choice and vocation, are destined to directly implement the fundamental principles of *tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum*. For this reason the *Constitutional Charter* states in Art. 109: “*The reception of Knights, Dames and both male and female Donats must be preceded by a preparatory period of one year during which the candidate becomes acquainted with the history of the Order and participates in its works and programmes ...*”. It is thus not a simple act asserting an elitist and purely honorific status, but an authentic adherence to a religion to be lived to the full, based on charity.

Another basic element is laid down by the *Constitutional Charter* (Art. 2 §1): “*The purpose of the Order is the promotion of the glory of God through the sanc-*

*tification of its members, service to the faith and to the Holy Father, and assistance to one's neighbour, in accordance with its ancient traditions.*" Particular care must be paid by spiritual assistants, delegates and anyway all those with positions of responsibility in receiving and encouraging candidates. Before nominating a new Member of the Order, one must be fully aware of his or her reliability, correct behaviour, perfect honesty and convinced and regular observance of the Catholic religion. Those who want to enter only for social purposes without an authentic Christian content should be discouraged. Only thus, after a period of preparation, it will be appropriate to initiate the procedure specified in codes.

The Third Class includes three distinct grades of Members. The Donats of Devotion, are usually young people who wish to continue the service started during their preparatory period. Donats who persevere in their vocation can then be accepted as Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace. No proof of noble blood is required for this, but for Magistral Grace they are assimilated with the Knights belonging to the nobiliary classes.

The *Constitutional Charter* defines the Order of St

John of Jerusalem as “*nobiliary by tradition*”. Thus this element must not be underestimated, albeit its meaning has altered in modern times. Nobility represents a constant tradition throughout the generations, characterized by complete willingness for service and for sacrifice, as well as assisting one’s neighbour and rising above base concerns. A behaviour that, albeit fallen into disuse in modern mentality, is demonstrated silently in substance. The nobility accepted by the Order must more than anyone else express a faith authentically experienced and witnessed in their work. Certainly the ideal expressed here is not always found in concrete reality, but the formation that should be offered to the future noble Knights must extol its fundamental values together with the “ability to know how to behave”.

Thus let us welcome the Knights and Dames of Grace and Devotion and of Honour and Devotion, who will have to transmit to their confreres and consœurs, as well as to the entire Order, all the true nobility of their souls: “*You shall be noble if you are virtuous*”.

The Members of the Third Class must observe the rules of the *Code* that concern their status. They are not “religious”, like the Professed Knights, nor

bound by the promise of Obedience of the Second Class, but they belong to a religious order although in a way different from that of the Professed Knights. They are called, as Vatican Council II teaches, like all the baptized “*to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity*”. The duties of their state also involve bearing witness to the Order of Malta’s charism, serving the Church, taking part in the activities of their local church and living to the full and in a special manner the call to baptismal sanctity.

The formation of Members of the Third Class has to envisage a perfect observance of the service to which all the Knights and Dames pledge themselves. This is achieved with assiduous prayer and by living an exemplary life in accordance with the teaching of the Church, confirmed by the Order’s *Constitutional Charter* in full and faithful application of the Council’s teachings. This means that, besides their duty to follow these principles, the Knight and the Dame must bear witness to the faith and to charity, “*expressing the spirit of the beatitudes in their lives*” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 4).

The principal place for formation and application of one’s vocation to bear witness and to serve is the family, the domestic Church, that cannot be extra-

neous to the spirituality of life. The family, fundamental cell of human society, cannot be humiliated or betrayed by sharing the profane conditionings of the world. Faced with so many temptations and expedencies, a Knight of St John of Jerusalem can never agree, or simply be indifferent, to the many onslaughts of divorce and abortion, and neither should he accept the modern habit of living together without marriage or homosexual unions. The Knight fights for truth, without forgetting the love owed to his neighbour, even if errant or with serious and sometimes dramatic problems.

The defence of the faith (*tuitio fidei*) involves all the Members of the Order, and also signifies that doctrinal and moral deviances should be opposed by the Knight and the Dame, using the rationale of their Christian hope (1 Pt 3:15) and by studying the documents of the Church. Those who enter the Third Class must, like all the Order's Members, devote themselves concretely to the Order's welfare work. This does not mean that they neglect the overriding duties of their status but, generously expressing the fruits of their vocation, they must use their knowledge and abilities to enter into contact with Our

Lords the Sick and with the Poor, learning how to serve them with competence, love and respect (*obsequium pauperum*). This should occur both in daily life, by persevering in assisting and in listening, and in exceptional circumstances such as the pilgrimages and leisure opportunities.

The Order provides a practical set of regulations and recommendations for the Third Class that map out rules of conduct for the complete initial and continuous formation of the Knight or Dame. The Order of Malta must gradually make it a rule to accept as Members only people who can be totally involved in its life. Those who seek merely worldly satisfaction, which the centuries-old prestigious and noble presence of this institution may offer, must be resolutely refused. Secular conditionings and instigations can be overcome during the preparation, entrusted to the experience and competence of Chaplains and Confreres of well-proven observance, to exalt the particular and courageous choices of the Knight and Dame of the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

*Baron Guglielmo Guidobono Cavalchini*  
Delegate of Lombardy

# YOUTH FORMATION AND SERVICE IN THE LIGHT OF THE CHARISM OF THE ORDER OF MALTA

(translated from Spanish)

## Introduction

If we observe our churches during any religious celebration we have the impression that what Holy Mother Church offers is not good for the young. It's as if the "product" we offer was intended for children who have not yet developed their own judgement ability to decide what to do on Sunday mornings, or to adults who feel close to the eternal life or have nothing better to do, or are manipulated by an archaic conservative culture that alienates human beings.

Nowadays we are making the mistake of taking for granted that the Christian message is not for the young. It is almost normal for us to see a young man or woman spend Sunday morning recovering from staying up late the night before, while we would look extremely suspiciously at a young man or woman going to Mass every day.

And yet, the message of Jesus Christ is directed

to all men and women of all times, races, social conditions, and of course of all ages. God does want to speak to heart of the young too, to the young people of our times, and God does so with a language and with means tailored to their mindset.

Certain young people seem to believe that they will be young forever and that the adults' problems will not touch them. They think they do not need to build the foundations of their future life. But we must teach them to grow and mature, so that they may lay the foundation of their existence on the solid rock of Christ.

## **The Charisma of the Order**

The charisma of the Order is summarised in the expression *tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum*. A defence of faith and dedication to the poor: the strongest and most devoted in putting that in practice are the young, with their energy and liveliness. However, the young are not born cultured, they need training and guidance to fully develop their Christian charisma through the defence of Faith and the help to the poor. Formation of the young is particularly impor-



tant today, in the face of the challenges and attacks they are prone to. They need an integrated formation that includes community and social aspects as well as spiritual and personal ones.

## **Youth Formation**

Youth formation includes preparing them for supportive social activities as well as giving them spiritual and personal training. There should be groups of Volunteers in the Order who could prepare them for active and caring life through an integrated spiritual formation. In these groups, youths will find a family with aspirations and problems like their own, who will accompany them in the discovery of the true problems of the world, help them find answers to the transcendent questions of life, and support them in their fulfilment as a person and as community.

## **Formation for Social Activities**

It is essential to form youths for charitable and social activities, but it is equally important to direct these activities for disadvantaged people. Activity

without a religious content might lead to two different attitudes. On one side, depletion. If not done in the name of superior principles, charitable activities are bound to be neglected soon. And if the meaning of the Cross is not clear, and actions do not follow the call of the Lord, social resentment and political unrest may arise.

Therefore, the charitable activities of the Order should be oriented towards an unselfish service of Jesus Christ in the person of the needy. Seeing the Lord in our neighbours, working for the Kingdom of God and for His justice will encourage the young to go ahead without hesitation. We have seen so many people get tired of their charitable work because they lack a clear purpose, because they are merely seeking their personal fulfilment in their social engagement!

This is why the example of adults is fundamental. Their experience, their good example and their true devotion to the working group, as well as harmony and cohesion, will help youths to be active and volunteer even for the most unpleasant tasks. Where, on the contrary, envy, grudges and boastfulness dominate, even those with the best intentions to cooperate to the Order's charitable works will soon lose interest.

## Spiritual Formation

This commitment must pervade the spiritual formation of the young, a formation which the Order must provide so that charitable activities are not deprived of content, and that must be accompanied by hands-on activities so that spiritual formation does not remain a mere theory.

Therefore, we will need to create catechism and prayer groups to educate volunteers, in addition to the groups for charitable activities, according to the charism of the Order.

The catechesis should help the young to get to know their own faith. In many cases it will start with the *kerygma*, introducing Jesus Christ alive and resurrected, and continue with the discovery of the Word of God and of the Magistry of the Church. It will not always be easy to create these groups, because the young prefer action to prayer, and because the young come from increasingly different backgrounds. Some of them were born in Christian families that live their faith intensely and have attended religious schools or have participated in Christian youth groups; others barely know the basics of Christian faith, let alone

those who, influenced by contemporary trends, believe in the exact contrary of the Church's announcements. However, this is not a good reason to be disheartened in our intention to create these groups for the spiritual formation.

However, it is not only a matter of learning, but of living as well. Catechetical formation must lead to a greater practice of the Sacraments, especially Eucharist and Confession, and of individual and common prayer.

To live the Eucharist as the key moment of the week – or, why not of the day – will awaken the desire to grow a deeper faith and to participate in the Church's mission of announcing the Gospels and caring for the needy.

This spiritual life is always favoured by the example given by Saints; therefore it is important to promote spiritual readings, especially the biographies of the Saints and particularly of the Saints of the Order.

However, spiritual formation means not only to show the big ideals of holiness but also to help achieve them. In this sense, the spiritual director who will help the young to discover their vocation becomes particularly important.

This vocation is a dual one. On one hand, there is the universal call to holiness. Every one of us has a vocation to living a life in grace. On the other hand, every one of us receives a call from God, according to which we will direct our life in one direction or in another.

Spiritual guidance helps us to discover this special charism that God offers to us; some of us will choose marital life, others will choose priesthood and others will chose consecrated life. Many never get to know their vocation because nobody helped them to discern, because they were not shown the various possibilities they have to live their own vocation to holiness.

Spiritual guidance must help people to discover the true freedom that the young crave so much for, that freedom that is grounded on truth. It will not always be an easy goal, in very many occasions this quest will force people to go against the tide. Therefore we will need to present the new man revealed in Christ, as opposite to the model of man proposed by modern society.

It is important to teach the young to observe the reality of themselves and the reality that surrounds

them, a reality that has its virtues and its flaws. We need to teach them to discern good from evil in the society we live in, to see beyond the outward appearance, to understand the causality relationship between evil and its direct and indirect consequences.

This way the young will discover the modern idols concealing a culture of death and hedonism, and learn to distinguish what is false and perishable from what is true and permanent.

Once they have learned this, we will need to teach them to judge their situation surrounding them, so that can perform accordingly.

We should not forget that the Order's charism summarised in the expression *tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum* is not an original one, it comes from the Gospel. It is a very broad charisma among those we find within the Church. We should also consider that many of those who approach the Order of Malta have already received a formation at home, at school, at their parish or in other groups. Some of them will have a Jesuit spirituality, others a Dominican or Franciscan spirituality, others may have been formed in the Opus Dei or in their parishes according to the modality of their parish priest; some of them may be

more conservative, other less: they all must find their place in the Order. Therefore, I believe that religious formation in the various groups of the Order should not follow pre-established model and patterns, but rather be open to what the Spirit will suggest depending on situations and places. Everybody should feel at ease when working and praying together, because we are all invited to join the defence of the Faith and the service to the poor, abiding by Jesus' commandment to go out in the world announcing the Gospels with words and with deeds.

*Rev. Pedro Delclaux*  
Magistral Chaplain

## CHRISTIAN MOTIVATION IN THE SERVICE OF THE VOLUNTEERS

How should we answer, if we (as Members of the Order or its relief organisations) are asked, what the difference is between our Volunteers and, for example, those of the Red Cross, *Médicins sans Frontières* or other humanitarian organisations? Is there a difference between *caritas* and *humanitas*? How can we outline our charism in the formation of new Members, so that we can live our lives convincingly?

I am writing very much from my own experience (and experience can be everything I did wrong in the last forty years...), but I want to emphasize, that everybody has his own personal vocation and therefore a slightly different access to the Order's spirituality.

Looking back at my own motivation to join the *Malteser Hospitaldienst Austria* (Ambulance Corps), I have to admit, that the Christian motivation was not the most important. I was twenty-one years old and looking for many things – spirituality (as I understand it today) was certainly way down the list of my priorities. At that time, in 1969, religion was not so impor-



tant for me and I certainly did not imagine, that life would develop the way it did. Nonetheless, I must have made then the first step towards my vocation. The next step I made was in 1983 when I joined the Order itself, led of course, by a much deeper spiritual motivation: I was seeking for *tuitio fidei* through *obsequium pauperum*. This year followed another, decisive step when I made the First Profession as a Knight of Justice. After all these years, having done those three steps, I still feel my personal vocation to be a servant of our Lords the Sick.

To every thing, there is a season...

Becoming older, not the attitude, in respect to our Lords the Sick, should change, but the expression: young Members are capable of lifting even heavy people from a wheelchair into a bed and vice versa. Age however reduces our capabilities, so we have to change – and offer time. We can listen and talk to our Lords the Sick, we can satisfy their spiritual needs, help them to eat and so on. The form of devotion to the service changes, but the motive always remains the same – to fulfil the most important Commandments: “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.*”

*This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”* (Mt 22:37-39).

This Commandment has to be the centre of the initial formation of every Member of the Order and its relief organisations. This cannot be taught like grammar or mathematics, it needs learning by doing, learning with our hearts and minds.

Today I am sure that it is very important to give the Volunteers, who might be the future Members of our Order, not only a “professional” (i.e. First Aid, nursing, etc) training, but also a spiritual formation. Our Supreme Pontiff wrote in his first Encyclical letter: *“Individuals who care for those in need must first be professionally competent: they should be properly trained in what to do and how to do it, and committed to continuing care. Yet, while professional competence is a primary, fundamental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern. Those who work for the Church’s charitable organizations must be distinguished by the fact that they do not merely meet the needs of the moment, but they dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experi-*

*ence the richness of their humanity. Consequently, in addition to their necessary professional training, these charity workers need a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbour will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love” (Deus Caritas Est, 31a).*

In German, the words for profession and vocation have the same root: *Beruf* – *Berufung* (the syllable “*ruf*” means call). It seems very important to me, to teach young people to seek a profession which will fulfil them as a vocation does. But we have also to teach them, that besides the money-earning profession there must be some space for *caritas*, the unselfish love of our neighbour. What a challenge, to share time with friends with special needs, enjoying their lives despite or because of their handicap. What an incredible reward – to receive a smile from somebody, who should have lost his smile long ago. An important income may be useful and comfortable during lifetime, but it does not necessarily mean a fulfilled life to look back the day we are called to account by our Lord.

When we receive the insignia of our Order in the solemn ceremony in church, the priest speaks the following words: “*Jesus Christ said to those who wanted to join the group of his disciples: ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me’*” (Lk 9:23).

Listening to these words, in face of the fate of many a sick person I often ask myself, which cross could be meant: I can move around freely, enjoy all possibilities of my beautiful country – on the other side, there is, for example Volker, whom I have known for 39 years, suffering from Multiple Sclerosis for 54 years, who can barely speak any more, who needs nursing hands for every movement (but always wants to hear a joke about which he can laugh heartily)... tell me, who is bearing a cross? We should always keep in mind, that we are Simon of Cyrene (and teach the Aspirants accordingly). Our Lord has only our (helping) hands, we are his tools to reduce the suffering, to ease the misery.

There are other important chapters in the encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est*, who outline the central points for the formation and the service of volunteers: ...If I have no contact whatsoever with God

in my life, then I cannot see in the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in him the image of God. But if in my life I fail completely to heed others, solely out of a desire to be “devout” and to perform my “religious duties”, then my relationship with God will also grow arid. It becomes merely “proper”, but loveless. Only my readiness to encounter my neighbour and to show him love makes me sensitive to God as well. Only if I serve my neighbour can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me. The saints – consider the example of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta – constantly-renewed their capacity for love of neighbour from their encounter with the Eucharistic Lord, and conversely this encounter acquired its realism and depth in their service to others. Love of God and love of neighbour are thus inseparable, they form a single commandment. But both live from the love of God who has loved us first (*Deus Caritas Est*, 18).

...Significantly, our time has also seen the growth and spread of different kinds of volunteer work, which assume responsibility for providing a variety of services. I wish here to offer a special word

of gratitude and appreciation to all those who take part in these activities in whatever way. For young people, this widespread involvement constitutes a school of life which offers them a formation in solidarity and in readiness to offer others not simply material aid but their very selves. The anti-culture of death, which finds expression for example in drug use, is thus countered by an unselfish love which shows itself to be a culture of life by the very willingness to “lose itself” (cf. Lk 17:33 *passim*) for others (*Deus Caritas Est*, 30 b).

Following the example given in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christian charity is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison, etc. The Church’s charitable organizations, beginning with those of Caritas (at diocesan, national and international levels), ought to do everything in their power to provide the resources and above all the personnel needed for this work... (*Deus Caritas Est*, 31 a).

Interior openness to the Catholic dimension of the Church cannot fail to dispose charity workers to work in harmony with other organizations in serving

various forms of need, but in a way that respects what is distinctive about the service which Christ requested of his disciples. Saint Paul, in his hymn to charity (cf. 1 Cor 13), teaches us that it is always more than activity alone: “*If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing*” (v. 3). This hymn must be the *Magna Charta* of all ecclesial service; it sums up all the reflections on love which I have offered throughout this Encyclical Letter. Practical activity will always be insufficient, unless it visibly expresses a love for man, a love nourished by an encounter with Christ. My deep personal sharing in the needs and sufferings of others becomes a sharing of my very self with them: if my gift is not to prove a source of humiliation, I must give to others not only something that is my own, but my very self; I must be personally present in my gift (*Deus Caritas Est*, 34).

Our Aspirants should have a spiritual formation not only by teaching them catechistic knowledge but they should also have worked for at least three years in the Order’s relief organisations or Ambulance Corps and they should continue as Members of the Order.

From my point of view the parable of the heal-

ing of the sick of the palsy seems more important than the “Good Samaritan”: “... *and when they had broken the roof up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. ... Arise and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house*” (Mk 2:1-12). Not the faith of the sick alone makes Jesus forgive his sins and heal him from his sickness: the faith of the bearers, the brancardiers, our faith, is wholesome to our Lords the Sick! Formation and training of our Volunteers have to include Faith - and sometimes capability for unorthodox solutions.

Some activities need professionally trained nursing, which not everybody can deliver, some tasks can be done also by our Volunteers (provided, they had a solid basic training), certain assistance (such as preparing the meals) can be done by everybody. Service should be done regularly, not only once a year in Lourdes. Volunteers in the Relief Organisations as well as Members of the Order should be trained according to the possibilities and demands of the specific territorial organisation of the Order. Basic knowledge in handling disabled persons is as important as the right spirit of devotion, as described in



*Deus Caritas Est* and the Holy Gospel (see above). In the same way as our physical skills should be trained, our faith and spiritual abilities need quite a lot of care too, so that we can fulfil all requirements in our service to our Lords the Sick, as well as defend our faith.

Increasing costs for running nursing-homes urge operators to reduce the salaried personnel (in Austrian nursing-homes there is a time-key applied of 72 minutes a day per person who needs full-nursing), but caring of our disabled neighbours in a Christian sense means much more than sufficiently fed, clean and physically warm. What we have to provide is mental warmth, we have to demonstrate, that our disadvantaged neighbours are not a burden, a case, or a mere number in statistics - but our brothers and sisters, our Lords, the Sick. The formation and motivation of our Volunteers and Members of the Order has to be oriented to this target and nowhere else.

I want to close with a quote from Albertus Magnus (1200 – 1280), Archbishop of Cologne: *“Everybody helping his neighbour in his suffering, may it be mental or physical, this man has done more than somebody,*

*who has built a cathedral of pure gold at every milestone from Cologne to Rome, to be sung and read in there till the last day, because God's son says: I have not suffered death on behalf of a cathedral and not on behalf of singing and reading, but on behalf of man".*

*Gottfried von Kūbnelt-Leddihn*  
Novice Knight of Justice



## THE PILGRIMAGE: FORMATION AND SERVICE

(translated from Italian)

The purpose and aim of every Christian pilgrimage is to meet the Father by means of Jesus Christ, his mother Mary and the saints and places that remind us of divine intervention.

### The Pilgrimage in Ancient Times

The religious phenomenon of pilgrimages<sup>1</sup> is vast in both time and space; its origins go back well beyond Christian antiquity and belong to the majority of religions<sup>2</sup> with certain differences and similarities.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam all share the ascetic practice of *expatriation* or *voluntary exile*, signifying leaving for spiritual reasons

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<sup>1</sup> See N. CAPPONI, *The Pilgrimage in the Spirituality of the Order of the Hospital called of Malta*, in "Journal of Spirituality", 2, pp. 41-50; the entire fourth "Journal of Spirituality" is devoted to pilgrimages; G. TARDIVY, *The Annual International Pilgrimage of the Sovereign Order of Malta to Lourdes*, in "Journal of Spirituality", 7, pp. 69-86.

<sup>2</sup> For non-Christian pilgrimages see *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, XII-1, Paris 1984, coll. 893-901. For pilgrimages in Israel see PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of 2000*, 25 April 1998, nn. 4-8.

one's homeland with all its ties to live as a *foreigner*. In Christianity the profound reason for the *peregrinatio*<sup>3</sup> is interior and rooted in the believer's aspiration of evangelical conversion (*metanoia*).

The *peregrinatio* is thus also the root of all the historic forms taken by the religious life – of a monastic or missionary, apostolic or charitable nature albeit not translated into visible forms of expatriation or pilgrimage. In Christianity it takes on more varied forms than in the other religions, where forms of asceticism prevail.

The reference to Abraham's vocation is fundamental (Gn 12:1): "*Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you*".

Very soon tradition united Abraham's journey with that of the disciple, of the follower of Christ. The *Epistle to Diognetus* deals lengthily with the theme of pilgrimages in two chapters (V & VI) that have made it famous: Christians " *dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners [...] Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign [...] Christians have their abode in the world, and yet they are not of the world*".

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<sup>3</sup> E. LANNE, *Peregrinatio*, in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, VI, Roma 1973, coll. 1424-1432.

The term *pellegrino* (*pilgrim*) in Italian comes from *per-agrare*, which means *to journey*, with the intensive meaning of *going far away*. A *pilgrim* signifies someone who travels a long distance, who goes to a foreign country and remains there. In the Christian context these terms soon took on an interior and spiritual aspect. We can cite three examples:

- Departing for a distant place, with the idea of *leaving your homeland* and of *voluntary exile*.

- The perception of life on earth as being exiled “from the Lord”. Already present in the Old Testament<sup>4</sup>, this idea is also asserted in the New<sup>5</sup>, but through faith and hope Christians “*are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God*” (Eph 2:19). This is the paradox of existence so extraordinarily expressed in the *Epistle to Diognetus*.

- The way to a heavenly Jerusalem, the true homeland (Heb 13:14; Rev 21). The Fathers interpret *Exodus*, the long march of Israel towards the Promised Land, as an image of the Christian’s path and that of the entire Church. St Augustine repeated-

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<sup>4</sup> Lev 19:34-36; Job 19:15 and 31:32; Ps 38:13; Ps 118:54.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor 5:6, 8; 1 Pt 2:1, Heb 11:14-15.

ly evokes in his writings the theme of the Christian *peregrinus* and of the *Ecclesia peregrina*, found also in some Eucharistic prayers and often in the liturgy.

Why did the ancient pilgrims go forth?

We can cite some reasons:

*To see.* This reason is linked to the nature of the pilgrimage, going towards a place where you can *see* and also *touch* something. Pilgrims go to see a place, a relic, a personality. Origen travelled through Palestine *in the search of traces of Jesus, his disciples and his prophets*. The visit to the holy places makes us participate in the divine event that occurred there.

*To pray and to adore.* The vision of the holy places prompts prayer: this is given as the most frequent reason: you go on a pilgrimage *to pray (orationis causa)*.

*To make penitence.* During the early centuries of Christianity, the practice of penitence was public and imposed on sinners to expiate their sins; during the Carolingian age and especially after the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it was voluntarily sought as a way of reaching Christ, also through the fatigues of the pilgrim's journey: traveling without money, experiencing hunger, thirst, discomforts and hardships.

*To fulfil a vow.* The reasoning behind this is *thanksgiving*.

*To obtain grace and in particular healing.* The pilgrim's prayer is also a prayer of request: the conversion of someone close, the liberation of a prisoner.... But the most frequent request is that of healing. Many sanctuaries have become a place of pilgrimage precisely because of the sick cured there.

*To obtain relics.* This was and still is an important reason: pilgrims who visit a holy place want to take away with them something of its sanctity, either a fragment from the place or of the saint, or more frequently, a benediction made with a holy object or even an image, a souvenir.

The pilgrimage practice developed in Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but soon some important sources were warning pilgrims about possible negative consequences. St Jerome writes that “*what is praiseworthy is not to have been at Jerusalem but to have lived a good life while there*”. St Gregory of Nyssa also stresses, like St Jerome, that it is not the pilgrimage per se, but the accompanying conditions that are important: “*the places of the Cross and of the Resurrection are helpful for those who daily bear their cross and rise again with Christ*”.



## The Pilgrimage Today

The pilgrimage remains an intense experience even in our secularized society and has even had a renaissance and revival. When we set out on a pilgrimage today our motivations and the situations we experience are not that different from those of the ancient pilgrims mentioned above.

The pilgrimage still gives us the experience of leaving our everyday occupations for a certain time, of travelling with others towards a place, a destination, a direction; the pilgrimage still produces a sense of displacement that helps to free us from our habitual conditioning and facilitates meeting with the Lord.

The pilgrimage gives us the experience of relating with other people, with our sick brothers and sisters; it is an opportunity to meet and serve everyone, not only an encounter between the healthy and the sick.

Today we travel in a different way from the pilgrims of old, but we still have to face discomforts and hardships. These must be accepted as part of the spirit of the pilgrimage, that still invites us to penitence and to purification of our motivations. The penitential dimension of the pilgrimage reaches its

culmination in the approach to the sacrament of Penance: the shrines, detached and holy places, help us to strip off the old person, our egoisms and our weaknesses; they invite us to leave them all there to return clothed in the strength and light of that sanctity that has been revealed there and is still revealed.

There are many aspects of *formation* and of *service* that the pilgrimage fosters. I would like to highlight three in particular.

### ***Intercession***

St John says: “*No one has ever seen God. The only Son [...] has revealed him*” (Jn 1:18). And before that the book of Exodus was even more resounding: “*But my face you cannot see, for no man sees me and still lives*”. We can encounter God first of all through the intercession of Christ himself, his person, his body when he was on earth and his Spirit after the Ascension. The other main intercessions are His Word and the signs<sup>6</sup> that

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<sup>6</sup> Ex 33:20. There is an *abyss* between God and man, so that man would die when *seeing* God (Ex 19:21; Lev 16:2; Num 4:20) or *hearing* Him (Ex 20:19; Dt 5:24-26). Moses (Ex 3:6), Elias (1 Kings 19: 13): even the Seraphim (Is 6:2-5) veil their faces before Yahweh. Only the souls in heaven can see His face (Mt 5:8; 1 Jn 3:2; 1 Cor 13:12).

both reveal and veil Him, the sacraments in particular, as well as the least of our brethren: “*Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me*” (Mt 25:40) and life’s ordinary and extraordinary meetings and events: “*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Mt 18:20). In our interpersonal relations we do not have direct access to the other person: we can see from the expression on his face if he is sad or happy, we can guess some situations, especially if we know him well, but we can only grasp what is most intimate and personal if the other person decides to reveal it to us, usually through words but also with signs, gestures and actions. This is even truer when it involves the Father, whom we do not see and whom the face of Jesus, and what he has said and done (Acts 1:1; 1 Jn 1:1-3), reveals to us.

The pilgrimage, if performed readily and with faith, can intercede between us and the Lord and our brethren.

### ***Coming to Our Senses***

Luke tells us that a younger son leaves his

father's house and squanders his inheritance but then: “*comes to his senses*” (Lk 15:17). The son in the parable returned to himself, comparing how he lived at that place and at that time with his father's house and how he lived there. This comparison makes him say: “*I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him ...*”.

The pilgrimage, hopefully producing a sense of displacement in facing situations and experiences – and especially those of the Father's house - different from our everyday routine, is a great opportunity for coming to our senses and “returning home”.

### ***Returning to the Essential***

Pope John Paul II, in his letter to Monsignor Pasquale Macchi on the 7<sup>th</sup> centenary of the Shrine of Loreto, wrote: “*I said that shrines must increasingly become essential places, in which one experiences the absolute of God*”.

Pilgrims have to travel lightly, even for long periods, and this makes them reduce their luggage to the essential, to the indispensable in a material and spiritual sense. The pilgrimage still gives a strong invitation for a *return to the essential*, which can differ in form and substance for each person, but which can above

all be an opportunity for a return to what is essential in Christian life.

The essential in Christian life is spelt out in the summary of Acts 2:42, describing the catechesis of the Jerusalem community: “*They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers*”. These are “*the three pillars that support the world*”<sup>7</sup>: the word of God, prayer and devotion and compassionate love for our brethren. *Breaking bread*, our Eucharist<sup>8</sup>, that the first Christians celebrated in their homes, is the synthesis of these three pillars: the word of God in the first part, the great prayer of thanksgiving in union with Jesus Christ and the sharing with the Lord and with our neighbour.

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Spiritual Assistant of the Italian Pilgrimages

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<sup>7</sup> R. GUARDINI, *Lo spirito della liturgia. I santi segni*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Letter of Pope John Paul II to Mgr. Pasquale Macchi on the 7<sup>th</sup> Centenary of the Shrine of Loreto, August 15, 1993.

**FORMATION AND SERVICE**  
**IN THE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY SEMINAR**  
**IN VENICE (JANUARY 16-18, 2009)**

(translated from Italian)

## **Introduction**

The “Order of Malta International Strategy Seminar” was held in Venice from 16 to 18 January 2009. It was a very significant meeting for its aims, its organization and for the number and quality of participants (circa 400). In his opening address, H.M.E.H. the Prince and Grand Master Fra’ Matthew Festing pointed out the importance of the event “*which constitutes the largest group of leaders of the Order ever assembled to meet, share ideas and projects, and to examine what is most beneficial for the vocation and the mission of the Order in the next future*”.

The Venice Seminar was conceived to map out the Order of Malta’s future in its various institutions and actions. The choice of the venue was propitious; in the damp winter of the lagoon the misty days encouraged the participants’ industrious concentration, crowned by a solemn final celebration in St Mark’s Basilica.

Just before the Seminar, the 9<sup>th</sup> issue of the Journal of Spirituality was published, with the title “*Fundamental Directions for a Renewal*”. It highlighted some basic guidelines to be followed closely to prevent a false start. The foundations on which the Order of Malta rested as a religious order were also stressed, that is the presence of the Knights of Justice and its charism of *tuitio fidei* and *obsequium pauperum*, essential factors in planning its future. The Order of Malta’s Members must be equal to this fundamental reality, and the “*formation-service*” combination can be coupled with the ancient adage *operare sequitur esse*. Not just a slogan, it is prompted by the nature of things and by experience in every field.

In the Order’s origins we find the examples of our Patron St John the Baptist who, sanctified by the Spirit before his birth, spent a long and instructive period in the desert before becoming the Baptiser and Precursor; and of our Founder, Blessed Gerard who founded the hospital and gathered the first hospitaller brothers in an atmosphere of profound religiosity of Benedictine character. All the Knights who took up arms to defend the faith had to have a spiritual formation as well as that of the art of war. The

Grand Master of the Templars turned to Bernard of Clairvaux who gave him that treatise of high inspiration and spiritual formation: “*De Laude Novae Militiae*”.

## **Theme of this Article**

The aim of this article is to compare the “formation-service” theme of the 11th edition of the Journals with the works of the Venice Seminar. The analysis covers the 12 Working Groups, which were assigned individual themes to study. Their reports can be found in the “*Proceedings of the Order of Malta International Strategy Seminar – Venice 16-18 January 2009*” published in June of that year.

## **Themes of the 12 Working Groups**

1. *The Revival of the First Class*; 2. *50 Years of Obedience*; 3. *Developing Future Leadership for the Entities of the Order*; 4. *The Order Providing and Spreading Christian Education*; 5. “*Put on the Armour of Light*”: *The Pope’s Direct Appeal to the Order*; 6. *Promoting Christian Culture in the Secular World of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*; 7. *The Order. A*



*Haven for the Sanctity of Life*; 8. *Obsequium Pauperum: Focus on the Social and Spiritual Victims of Modern Society*; 9. *Originating from Many Traditions, Our Need to Join a Single Culture of the Order*; 10. *Enhancing Highlights in the Life of the Order: International Pilgrimages*; 11. *The Order as Promoter of Peace Among Nations Religions and Societies*; 12. *Presenting the Order as an Organisation Worthy of Financial Support from Within and Beyond its Membership*.

In some themes, the emphasis is on the Order's way of life, in others on its way of work: elements of formation and service can be found in both, as well as the link between the two. Moreover, the theme of some Groups focuses more on the inner life *ad intra*, others on specific action *ad extra*. Working Groups 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10 deal with the first aspect and Working Groups 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12 deal with the second.

**1. Working Group 1: *The Revival of the First Class*.** The priority which Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing gives to this vital point for the Order is confirmed in his opening address: "*I am resolutely determined to see an increase of properly motivated, properly instructed, enthusiastic men as Knights of Justice. Not all will make the grade. But many will. The encouragement, selection*

*and instruction of Knights of Justice will be handled partly centrally in Rome and partly by the Order worldwide”.*

Group 1 starts by acknowledging that the Knights of Justice are the base on which the Order of Malta’s quality as a religious order rests. It devotes one of the six points of its recommendations to formation. It hopes for a training programme common to all the Pories and Associations, with the project of a “convent” in Rome acting as a training house “*for aspirants, novices and those who are in simple vows; for chaplains, instructors and other officers of the Order*” and also as a retreat centre and place where the professed can periodically live a conventual life. Alongside formation, Group 1 sees *obsequium pauperum* as an integral part of the Knight of Justice’s life; he has to concern himself not only with pilgrimages but with “*all the corporal works of mercy*”.

**2. Working Group 2:** “*50 Years of Obedience*”. The formation of candidates and Members is the subject of recommendations, with a request for regulations and guidelines for spiritual life. Particular attention is devoted to the educational process during the probationary year. It is hoped to establish an Institute for

Spiritual Life to support vocations, to produce formation material and to train those in charge of formation in the local areas.

There is particular emphasis on the duty of Members in Obedience to serve the poor and sick in a dynamic manner, besides being exemplary witnesses of the faith. It is also pointed out that Members in Obedience could receive the task of teaching the faith.

**3. Working Group 3:** *“Developing Future Leadership for the Entities of the Order” – (the opportunity is taken here to make a distinction in the meaning of the word ‘formation’: it can signify acquiring a certain spiritual personality – Christian, religious, etc. – but can also mean a person’s professional development (in the educational, medical, administrative field, etc. – editor’s note –).*

Group 3 mainly, but not exclusively, deals with this second meaning in which the aim of service is implicit. In a religious order such as the Order of Malta, the leadership positions should not be of power but of service.

The Group’s recommendations include *“facilitating the identification and development of future leaders at both*

*the national and global level*". To this end it is hoped for "a plan to identify and develop future leaders of the Order" and also a leadership formation programme or centre. This Group actually suggests "an authentic physical centre" where existing and future leaders can meet "to share the Order's common spirituality, history and culture".

**4. Working Group 4:** "*The Order Providing and Spreading Christian Education*". Formation and service are intertwined in this Group's work. The spiritual formation programmes in the various areas for aspirants and new Members of the Order are illustrated; the responsibility for training volunteers and staff is also pointed out. Christian instruction outside the Order is then discussed, describing the service that can to be given in this area. This Working Group also requests an "Institute for Faith Formation" as well as proposing that a "Christian Education and Spiritual Formation Task Force" be established in Rome. An example of formation in action is the German initiative "Caravan", active in Lebanon, providing young people working there, with times for social work and spiritual instruction.

**5. Working Group 5:** *“Put on the Armour of Light”*. This Working Group, acting on the Holy Father’s invitation to the Order of Malta to *“put on the armour of light”*, expresses the conviction that the best way to respond to his call to sanctity is “a better formation”, indicating the guidelines and the means to achieve it. The formative pathway initiated when entering the Order must become more intensive. The Group considers that sponsors should have a particular spiritual formation in order to instruct volunteers and employees. In addition, the creation of *“hospitaller work opportunities for all Members of the Order”* is also recommended.

**6. Working Group 6:** *“Promoting Christian Culture in the Secular World of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”*. Looking outwards, the members of this Group realize that one has to start by training the Order’s Members and recommend a *“centrally guided and continuous formation programme”*. They also hope, *inter alia*, that the Order will establish a *“House of Studies and Formation ... for the development of training programmes for both the spiritual and hospitaller activities of the Order”*.

To fulfil their mission of defending and promot-

ing the faith, it is recommended that the Order's Members deepen their knowledge of Christian doctrine, since they are called to disseminate it, first of all within the Order and then also outwards, even if necessary with schools and universities. In particular, programmes for those "*young people who can be seen as the 'new poor' in our society*" are recommended. Other important aspects are the spreading of Christian culture, communication and steady points of reference in ethical matters, and it is observed that the Order's hospitaller works and diplomatic service could also be influential instruments in the secularized world.

**7. Working Group 7:** "*The Order: A Haven for the Sanctity of Life*". The difficult and topical theme of the sanctity of life suggests a series of recommendations to the members of this Group that go right to the heart of the bioethics issue. They repeatedly stress the relationship of these issues with the Order's charism that "*calls on us to love practically (through service) but also by bearing witness to that very human need to be loved and respected [...] Our motto (tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum) represents a partnership between service and witnessing. The one needs the other*".

**8. Working Group 8:** *“The Social and Spiritual Victims of Modern Society”*. *Obsequium pauperum*, understood as helping the social and spiritual victims of modern society, is a very important service. Group 8 makes a peremptory assertion when tackling this theme: *“All Members of the Order should make a personal commitment to carry out obsequium pauperum”*, consequently they must teach themselves to face this commitment. A greater support from the chaplains is also invoked *“to improve the spiritual content of the hospitaller works”*. It is thus recommended that religious education be considered an integral part of these works for all the Order’s Members and its organizations. In other words, all are asked to bear witness to the faith in their hospitaller works.

**9. Working Group 9:** *Harmonizing the Many Local Traditions of the Order in a Single Culture*. The direct path to this harmonization is the formation of the Order’s Members; it is thus hoped for a deeper knowledge of Catholic doctrine *“with a greater spiritual leadership to be provided by the Professed and the Chaplains”*. The Group also proposes a centralized training programme for developing a shared culture, albeit

acknowledging the difficulties. It suggests that the Grand Magistracy should be responsible for developing this culture in the Order and that its various institutions should ensure that their Members receive and understand it. The local leaders “should participate in a workshop on formation sponsored by the Grand Magistracy in either Rome or Lourdes”.

The Group points out the role of communication for achieving an harmonious culture, acknowledging the contribution of the “Journal of Spirituality”.

**10-11-12. Working Group 10, dealing with the Pilgrimages,** so dear to the Order of Malta, point out their formative and service aspects. In particular *“in the case of Lourdes, special emphasis is given to the spirit of love and service to Our Lords the Sick”*.

**Working Group 11 treats the promotion of peace among nations, religions and societies,** a task of great importance and no little difficulty. The service that the Order can render in the various situations and international institutions is knowledgeably examined. Also here communication can carry out a form-



ative function.

The duty is affirmed to state boldly Christian principles and take positions on international issues, when these principles are concerned. Besides, the need for a good formation of the Members of the Order's Diplomatic Corps is stressed by the President of the Diplomatic Commission in the meetings of the Order's Ambassadors.

**Suitable financial means** are needed to develop the Order's institutions, its activities and new initiatives, such as the proposed creation of a "convent" in Rome. **Working Group 12 deals with this service** from a professional standpoint without however losing sight of the Order of Malta's noble aims.

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***Some observations** after analysing the reports of the 12 Working Groups of the International Strategy Seminar in Venice on the basis of the "formation-service" theme of the present Journal of Spirituality:*

*An initial impression is that the recommendations of the various Working Groups, rather than proposing bold new initiatives (albeit there are some) are aimed at consolidating the*

*institutions and preparing people, in the awareness that in tackling modern challenges the Order of Malta needs to remain firmly rooted to its foundations to prevent it running in vain.*

*An aspect clearly emerging from practically all the works is the emphasis on the formation of the Order's various classes and collaborators, for their spiritual life and for the service they are asked to perform. This shared feeling of all the Working Groups is truly impressive. Hence the need for a serious soul-searching to see if this formation is really a priority at all levels, with particular reference to the probationary period for Membership in the Order at any rank.*

*A Centre of Formation in Rome is one of the most frequent proposals. The emphasis on this recommendation has been carefully recorded by Simon Grenfell, commissioned to study its implementation. He also points out the hope expressed, in different ways, by Working Groups 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, for the creation in Rome of a "convent" with mainly educational aims. The establishment of an Institute for the Order's spiritual life was also suggested and in Rome there is no lack of competent teachers from the ecclesiastic universities and religious Institutes.*

*The Grand Magistr'y's current negotiations with the Maryval Institute in Birmingham for providing special educa-*

*tional programmes should also be borne in mind.*

*The emphasis on formation in the Venice Seminar should be a stimulus for the Chaplains to improve their instruction for a more effective educational ministry, with special attention for the youth groups and volunteers. As far as possible their priestly presence should also be assiduous in the charitable works.*

*A significant number of the Order's Members, and in particular those "in Obedience", must be made aware of the need to train oneself in order to train others in the doctrinal field and some should be prompted to attend higher courses of religious instruction and even theological faculties.*

*The Venice Seminar targets strategies that will ensure the effectiveness of the Order's works and its individual institutions and activities; hence the preoccupation for its Members' spiritual and apostolic formation. In the Groups' works, even when not expressly mentioned, the service that all are asked to perform in virtue of this Membership is always present.*

*It should be pointed out that the first Group, whereas it devotes much attention to the formation of Knights of Justice and those preparing to become such, also stressed their pledge to serve in the Order's charitable works. This aspect should be borne in mind when promoting the vocations of the First Class. In all religious orders, the vocation is rooted in the specific*

*nature of the charism of each Order. In the aspiration to consecrate themselves to God in the Order of Malta, the inclination to obsequium pauperum should also be clear.*

*Various Groups propose that formation should include concrete prayer programmes, almost as if to remind us that the development of the Order of Malta requires divine assistance. The previous Journal of Spirituality was entirely devoted to prayer. Prayer should not be reduced to a closed dialogue, but must be open to industrious testimony.*

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Prelate of the Order



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Finito di stampare nel mese di dicembre 2010  
dalla Tipografia Mariti - Via di Monteverde 66/a  
00152 Roma - Tel. 0668801736 - 06538653