



FOR THE FAITH AND
IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY



St John

Eyes on the Future

THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

PRIORY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

We recently celebrated St. John's Day 2023. On this day, Confrères from Order of St John establishments around the world, celebrate the birth of John the Baptist, the patron saint of our Order together with our history and mission.

When Henry VIII broke from the Church of Rome in the sixteenth century, the adoration of saints was one of the areas that met with official disapproval, and the Feast of St. John the Baptist largely disappeared from Protestant countries. With the revival of the Order in the nineteenth century, this traditional celebration day was adapted into an annual event, to commemorate the Order and rededicate Members to its original charitable purposes.

In England, the Annual Service of Commemoration and Rededication takes place at St. Paul's Cathedral, but its origins date back in the Order's medieval past. The Feast of St. John the Baptist was usually celebrated everywhere in England on June 24th and was a major festival on the church calendar. The ceremony combines all the grandeur and pageantry of the Order of St John's historical past with a contemporary message relevant to Members of the Order and the St John Ambulance today.

These celebrations further demonstrate our "One St John" philosophy. While Order establishments around the world have different ways of celebrating this historic day, all of us have the same goal *to serve our Lords the sick and the poor*, ultimately inspired by Christian principles expressed in the original monastic hospital of St. John the Baptist led by Brother Gerard, a lay brother of the Benedictine order in eleventh-century Jerusalem.

Thank you to Michele Blair for representing our Priory at a St. John's day celebration and Investiture in Ottawa, and to John Busterud, who while in London represented our Priory at St. Paul's Cathedral.



John Busterud, KStJ, with banner esquire Benjie Fairbanks Weston at St. Paul's Cathedral.

I hope you will take some time to reflect on the Order's long and rich history and the profound impact our Order has across the globe in providing care to those who need it most.

Our website and Member portal continue to grow with exciting new features such as Confrère biographies. Many thanks to Glenn Davis and his committee and watch for many more additions in the near future.

I will be honored to represent our Priory at the end of November this year in Jerusalem as we celebrate 1,000 years since the eight-pointed cross was first stationed over a hospice in Jerusalem. If you are interested in attending this celebration, please contact our national office. I will also visit our Hospital in Gaza again, our new clinic in Kufor Aqab and the new Hospital that is being established in Nablus, in the northern area of the West Bank.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum,
Nigel G. Heath, KStJ
Prior

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BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

REFLECTING ON OUR FIRST NATIONAL DAY OF SERVICE

May 20th was a historic day for the Priory in the USA as we embarked on our first-ever National Day of Service. The day was filled with camaraderie, connection and a shared sense of purpose as Members of the St John Volunteer Corps came together with a common mission, serving *our Lords, the sick and the poor*. Even though this was the first attempt at coordinated, nationwide service, the results were remarkable, with stories of newfound connections and joy in helping the communities in which our Members live.

One of the most inspiring aspects of the National Day of Service was how it brought together individuals from across Regions. In a country as large as the United States, with some Regions comprising more than half a dozen states, it is easy to feel disconnected from other Members. The National Day of Service gave volunteers a chance to get out of their normal service routines to work side by side to make positive impacts in their broader communities. As they worked together, sharing stories, experiences and expertise, it was clear that these new connections were not merely surface level, but would be building blocks of a stronger and more cohesive Priory.

These stories exemplify the power of coming together in the service of humanity. Individually, Members can serve at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. In a fellowship of service, though, Members were able to truly have an impact on their communities. In Durham, North Carolina, 11 Confrères turned out to help at an urban farm cooperative just outside the city. As they planted trees and assisted in the construction of a large greenhouse, Robert Alves, MStJ, discovered the 100-acre farm sits on land his ancestors had owned. His SJVC Confrères were able to share the experience of visiting the gravesite of his 4th-great-grandparents and building a spirit of comradery together with each other and with the community that runs the farm.



The North Carolina Region at Catawba Trails Farm

In Boston, Confrères served meals for about 60 homeless veterans. Though providing a warm meal for these veterans was important, the Confrères really understood the importance of engaging with the vets—helping these marginalized men and women be seen. Though our nation's heroes, our veterans, are often “invisible” to the world, our Members saw them as people. “In the shelter, the least, the last, the lost and the lonely are received as guests,” said the Rev'd Robert Windsor, Sr., CStJ. This day of service went far beyond charity to justice, where the giver was transformed by the receiver.



Prior Nigel Heath packs boxes at the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank

As Members in San Francisco served by putting together hundreds of packages of fresh produce with boxed and canned food, the volunteers took time to reflect on the good cause they were helping. They also spent time getting to know each other better. Mary Tunnell, MStJ, noted this was a beneficial activity in itself. She remarked, “We all broke bread together in two ways: sharing bread as a symbol of familiarity, of welcome and of openness. This was a gesture signifying peace and friendship. But also, we broke bread as described in the New Testament by distributing food to others.”

The overwhelming sentiment expressed by all who participated in the National Day of Service was a sense of connection and fulfillment. The impact of these collective efforts was evident not only in the food boxes filled and resale items cleaned, but also in the personal growth and the strengthened sense of purpose felt by each individual. Through this shared dedication and hard work, Members of the Order of St John demonstrated that when people come together for a common cause, they can accomplish great things and make a lasting difference in the lives of others. As we reflect on the success of our first National Day of Service, we look forward to future opportunities to serve together. ❁



OUR LOS ANGELES REGION: HOST OF INVESTITURE WEEKEND 2023

If you only have 36 hours to spend in LA, *The New York Times* recommends a lunch stop at the In-N-Out Burger on Sepulveda. It's just five minutes by Uber from LAX.

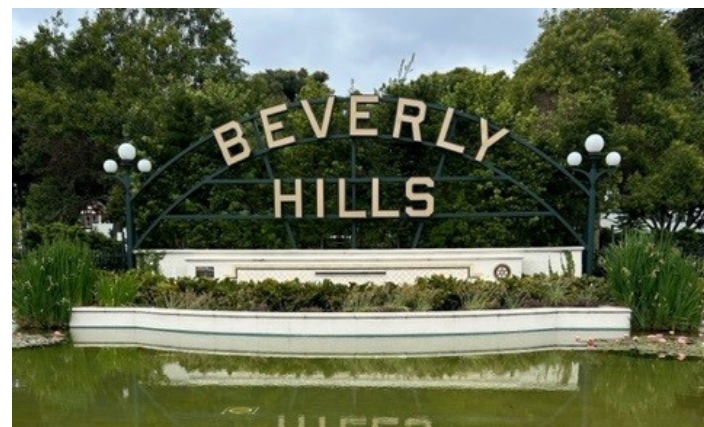
The writer extols something called "Animal Style," not quite a hamburger but a bun-free patty folded into a lettuce leaf, with tomato, pickles and perfectly grilled onions rolled into it.

Look closely and you'll even find a Bible verse incongruously printed on the edge of the wrapper.

Suffice to say In-N-Out can be a spiritual experience. Some claim the burgers and fries are heavenly.

But when you arrive in LA for Investiture Weekend this fall, the Members of the LA Region hope you can tap down your appetite long enough to check into Beverly Wilshire Beverly Hills.

They have assembled a list of spectacular restaurants where you can lunch al fresco and savor the sights and sunshine of a radiant fall afternoon in Beverly Hills.



"It's important to remember Beverly Hills is really a small town with an ethos quite different than the sprawling city that surrounds it," says Brian Landers, Regional co-chair. "It's incredibly safe. The people are friendly and hospitable. Most everything is within walking distance of the hotel and what isn't, is just a quick Uber."

"It is such an honor to host this year's Investiture," he says. "We're the newest Region in the Priory—we became a Region just three years ago with 24 Members. We've grown tremendously since then, more than doubling our membership to 64 Confrères."

"We may not be as big as some that have served as host Regions, but I know we have the critical mass in talent, commitment and enthusiasm to make this Investiture a great success."

Historically, Los Angeles has long been important to the Order's western development. Actor Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., was an early Member, and other Members with New York connections helped the Order maintain an LA presence for many years.

But eventually, the center of gravity began to shift to San Diego, where a small group of committed Confrères turned their Region into a Priory powerhouse.

"The idea of creating a Los Angeles region really got off the ground when Chris Billick, CStJ, Geraldine Kennon, CStJ, and Tom Roedl, CStJ, who currently serves as Region co-chair, were given a six-month commission to get the ball rolling," says Jim Terzian, CStJ, who wrote the original plan to build a region in 2014.

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All Saints' Episcopal Church in Beverly Hills

"With their efforts and the support of the San Diego Regional chairs, we were able to form a steering committee that led to the creation of the dynamic Region we have become today," Jim says.

Tom says the steering committee recognized it had an opportunity to create a Region that set the Order's values as its North Star.

"We began looking for people who were seeking an integral connection between faith and action, perhaps best expressed as a way to do something greater than themselves," he continues.

"Both Geraldine and Jim had long-standing ties with All Saints' Episcopal Church in Beverly Hills and knew parishioners who fit our profile. The parish has a reputation for community service, so it seemed a perfect target for our recruitment efforts.

"Today, 16 of our Confrères—a quarter of our local membership—hail from All Saints' Beverly Hills. And that's just one of the reasons why All Saints' Beverly Hills is a perfect host parish for the upcoming Investiture."

Logistics is another reason why All Saints' was chosen. It's an easy walk up Rodeo Drive from the hotel. It's a beautiful example of Romanesque style architecture with the capacity to seat Investiture guests, and its choir is legendary among choral aficionados in the Anglican Communion.

"Our Confrères at All Saint's have really picked up the ball and run with it," says Brian. "From development, to events planning to the Investiture service itself, our All Saints' parishioners are leading the way.

"There's so much going into making this year's Investiture unique to Los Angeles. Our reception on Friday evening will be at the Ebell, an Italian Renaissance-style campus built in the 1920s that many will recognize from movies they've seen.



"Another nod to Hollywood is a private tour at the legendary Paramount Pictures. We've also booked a curated visit to one of the world's greatest museums, the Getty, with its exquisite gardens and breathtaking views of the entire city. We have also added a service project to the Weekend's agenda, and will be assembling care bags for the Downtown Women's Center here in LA," he continues.

"And, for something more laid back, visiting Confrères can take a leisurely hike in a stunning garden just a few blocks from the hotel, with wide paths winding through hundreds of beds of late blooming roses, old growth cacti and indigenous plants extending two and a half miles along Santa Monica Boulevard.

"Combined with accommodations at the iconic Beverly Wilshire, this Investiture promises to be one of the best ever. I know our Region's membership looks forward to giving all of our Confrères a royal welcome befitting Hollywood, a generous dose of Southern California hospitality, perfect weather and an unforgettable experience only LA can offer." ❄️

DON'T FORGET...

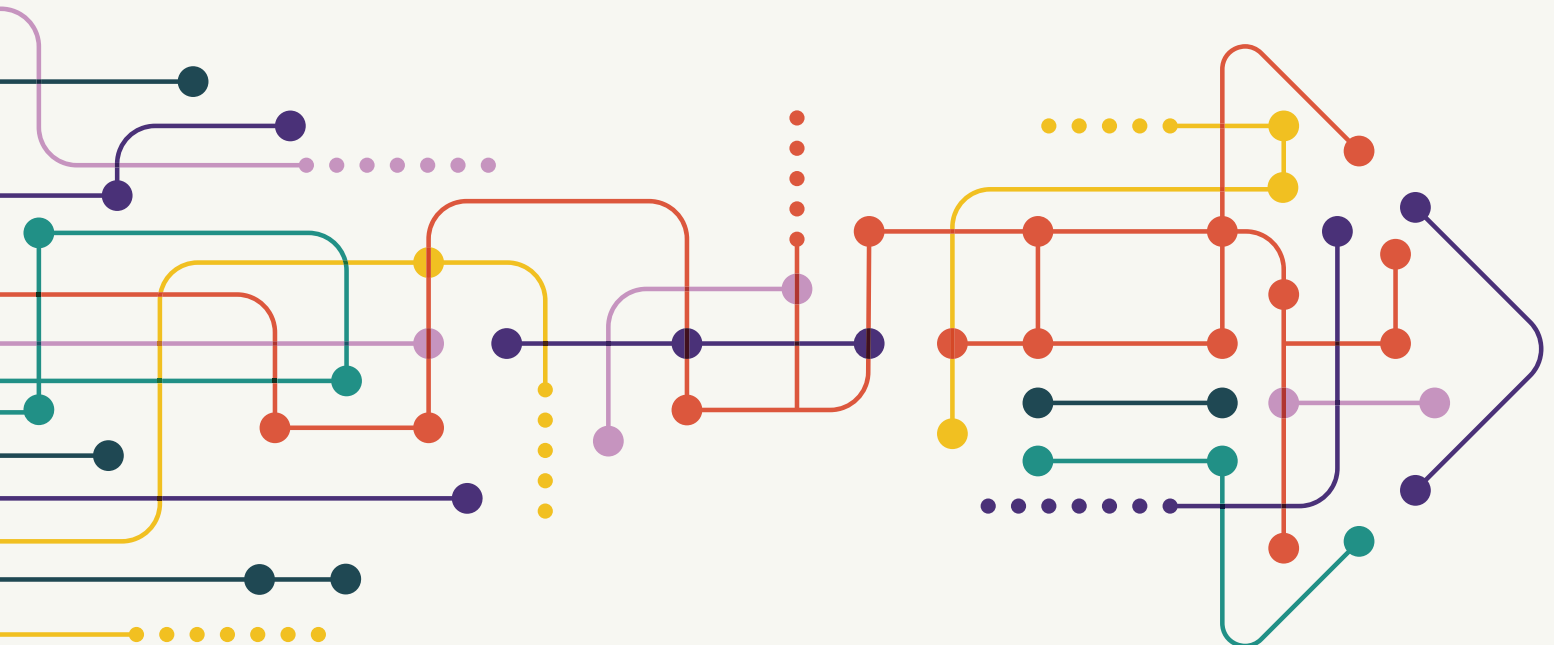
Your contact information is key to staying engaged with happenings around the U.S. Priory. It is important that you update your Member record on the Member Dashboard to reflect any moves, new email addresses and, most importantly, your birthdate (this is for Priory office use only to enable the U.S. Priory to provide demographic data to London). You can also add the name of your spouse or partner and even upload a copy of your personal profile. Just login to the Member Dashboard using the Member Login button on the Priory website at www.saintjohn.org. Click on "Update Profile" to make any updates and don't forget to click "Update" at the bottom of the page to save your edits. ✱



THIS JUST IN...

Did you know that you can now print from the online Member Directory? Whether you are looking for the list of Members in your Region or even your state, a list of Members who are a certain Grade, a list of Members appointed this year or a list of Members whose last names begin with the letter Z, you are able to search using the Member Directory and then print your search by going to the bottom of the page and clicking

"Download Results as a PDF." Or if you would like to print the entire online directory, you may do so by clicking "Download Full Directory." The results of both are delivered in a format that resembles a professionally printed directory, but the information is more current. What a great way to keep in touch with fellow Confrères. ✱





PRO FIDE

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God...”

Matthew 5:9

This beautiful “blessing” from Jesus surely speaks as much to our time as it did to those who first heard the words on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

As Members of our beloved Order, we are actually intimately connected to the work of peace—and perhaps most intently the work of peace in the land that is called Holy. It is hard at times to fully understand the deep divisions and conflict that inhabits the Holy Land. Sometimes, but not always—visiting the region might bring clarity to what we might believe to be the best path forward.

I shared a bit with you in my last column about some observations during my recent pilgrimage with members of the Church I serve, St. Martin’s in Houston. I also said I would have a bit more to share in the next issue of *Eyes on the Future*.

On one of the days, after traveling to and spending time with the staff and patients at the Arab Health Center in Bethany, where our oblations support the outreach efforts of the Eye Hospital there, I came back into Jerusalem and had a spirited conversation with our colleague and partner, Dr. Ahmad Ma’ali, the CEO of St. John Eye Hospital Group. Among the many things we discussed, he told me about a recent encounter with a British official who had come to spend some time in Jerusalem. In their first meeting, the official told Dr. Ma’ali, *“I know the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and it is not as hard as everyone thinks.”* Dr. Ma’ali replied, *“Let me invite you to hold that thought for one week, and then let us talk about your solution.”* A week later, the official came back to Dr. Ma’ali and said, *“I know why you told me to wait a week. I have no idea what the solution is!”* “Exactly,” Dr. Ma’ali said, *“It is much harder than anyone could imagine.”*

But, we do not lose hope do we? A few days after my visit with Dr. Ma’ali, with the help of a faithful, Episcopalian and longtime member of St. Martin’s, the former Secretary of State, James A. Baker, III., my wife, Laura and I were granted a memorable visit with His Majesty, Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, the King of Jordan, on March 6. King Abdullah ascended the throne on Feb. 7, 1999. He is a member of the Hashemite dynasty, the reigning royal family of Jordan since 1921. And he is, without question, a long-time friend to the United States and a voice for stability and peace in the Middle East. He believes passionately in the need for peace and wants to see the long history of conflict and war between Arabs and Jews end.

After a brief exchange of introductions, the King immediately began to share his personal efforts in bringing together Arabs and Jews who believe in and want peace. He expressed his



His Majesty, King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein welcomed our Sub-Prelate, the Reverend Dr. Russ Levenson, Jr. and his wife Laura, for a visit at his palace in Amman on March 6th of this year.

own deep concern that the conflicts that have plagued the Holy Land for generations are reaching a generational tipping point from which it may be hard to return unless some sort of lasting peace agreement is reached.

He said for the first time in his 25-year reign, there are large numbers of Arabs and Jews flocking to participate in the peace discussions he is hosting—because—in his words, *“Both sides are fearful that things will get much worse if something is not done soon.”* The King praised the cooperation and leadership of the American government and said while nothing is imminent, those who are attending these meetings—both Arabs and Jews have agreed *“... on this matter of peace, we are brothers.”*

The King predicted (correctly, I might add) that the overlap of Ramadan and Passover would mean more unfortunate violence—even death, and that proved to be true. Yet he said, *“We cannot let our efforts for peace be sidelined by these isolated incidents ... we have to count to ten and stay at the negotiation table.”* When I asked him if the more extremist groups (for instance Hamas) were welcome to the table, the King said *“No, not on either side ... we want to work only with those who want to pave the way for peace.”* Clearly, the King is committed to a peaceful solution, and taking a key leadership role in that process. Indeed... *“Blessed are the Peacemakers...”*

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People like us who believe in peace—shall continue to provide care for all who need it regardless of their race or religion, cross boundaries and try and empathize with the other side....”

action you can take—beyond even your full comprehension—by supporting the Hospital, the Order and all of its work not just in the Holy Land, but around the world—we are, in fact, engaged in the blessed work of peacemaking—and Jesus says—that means not just to be a member and supporter of our Order—but—in Jesus’ words)... *“children of God....”*

Before we parted ways, I was able to pass on the greetings of our Order, and thank him for the support he and his family have given to the Hospital over the years. The King’s father King Hussein bin Talal, donated his corneas to the hospital at the time of his death.

As I reflected on all of this with Dr. Ma’ali after we returned to the U.S., he reminded me that we—actually—whether we know it or not, are indeed playing a role in the peace-making process so very far away from our day to day lives in the west. *“How?”* you might ask. Well, let me allow the good doctor to speak...

He wrote me, *“People like us who believe in peace—shall continue to provide care for all who need it regardless of their race or religion, cross boundaries and try and empathize with the other side....”*

So there you have it my fellow Confrères ... if the unrest in the Holy Land seems beyond any immediate

Toward that end, let us continue to press forward in the work He has given us to do... and let us continue to sacrificially support the work of our Order with our time, our talents and our Oblations—as we are called to do.

And I would be a poor Sub-Prelate indeed, if I did not remind you to do one more thing—something you can do any time, at any place—***pray for peace.***

Perhaps this prayer can be one that you use. Typically, the call is to pray for “the peace of Jerusalem.” The peace that is needed extends far beyond the walls of this ancient city to all those precious places that were touched by the feet and words of the Prophets of Old, the Apostles of New and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

A Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, You loved this land. Give me a heart like Yours to love this land and its people—all its people. Lord Jesus, I may never visit this land, and I might not fully understand that for which I am praying, but I ask that You reveal Your heart to me. I pray for the peace of the Holy Land and all of its peoples. May those within its borders come to know one another as Your children. May the words used to bless others with peace—shalom, salaam and peace—reign in the hearts of all who live throughout the Middle East. May Your abiding peace finally find its home in this land that is Yours. We ask this in Your Precious and Holy Name, the Prince of Peace, Lord Jesus. Amen.”

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum
The Rev. Dr. Russ Levenson, Jr., OStJ
Sub-Prelate