



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

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 6

AUGUST 2022



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

I trust that you are enjoying the summer across our great Nation and the bounties that it provides.

I recently returned from gatherings with Confrères in Newport, RI, Boston, New York City and Washington, DC. It was empowering and enriching to hear of the continuing support for the Venerable Order in our communities, despite the “summer recess,” and my experience of two cancelled flights and the humidity in Newport!

A father and son, both Confrères, are so moved by the plight of the Gazan refugees, that they have committed **\$100,000 for a dollar-to-dollar match for cataract surgeries in our Gaza Hospital.**

Currently 80% of Gazans are refugees and their health care is the responsibility of the UN. Until three months ago, the UN referred patients to us just from the northern province, but due to the superior quality of our services, they now refer

How about we strive for another 17% increase in service hours AND 17% additional Confrères participating in 2022/23?

almost all their Gaza patients to us for eye care. Every month we book 250-350 patients for surgery. There are now some 700 patients who are not allowed to travel to find treatment elsewhere in the region on the waiting list for cataract surgery at the Hospital. We have increased our surgical sessions from eight to twelve and doubled the number of cataract surgeries performed. Despite all of this, the waiting time for surgery has now reached April 2024. The reason for this delay is because the UN can only afford \$10,000 for ophthalmic treatment per month.

The St John Eye Hospital Group CEO, Ahmed Ma’ali, has developed a cataract surgery campaign that will operate for three to four months to reduce waiting times for surgery to six months maximum. Two hundred thousand U.S. dollars will cover the cost of 500 additional cataract surgeries at a rate of \$385 per surgery. Our \$200,000 matching campaign will make a huge impact on the local Gaza community.

I invite you to join our father and son in matching their generous gift. You may mail a check to the Priory’s national office or make your donation online [here](#). Please mark your gift “Gaza Cataract Campaign.”



Commander Billie J. Farrell of USS Coastguard Eagle

I will be at our Gaza Hospital, on Labor Day (pending an Israeli permit to cross the border) and hope to provide an update and a personal account of my experiences in our next newsletter.

While in Boston, Richard Batchelder, Priory Chapter member, New England Co-chair, Priory Legal Counsel and Board member of Trustees of the USS Constitution Museum, invited me to join him for a celebration for the new female commanders of the USS Constitution and USS Coastguard Eagle. As with our own Order, the society recognizes and acts on the importance of inclusiveness and diversity in the 21st century. It was great not only to be part of the commemoration, but also to have the opportunity to engage in conversation with many philanthropically minded people outside of the Order, exchanging ideas and information.

On behalf of the New England Region, Richard and his leadership team committed to the creation of a Nurse and Doctor Endowment to continue their support for nurse Rawia Kamal. I will be delighted to share this excellent news with Nurse Rawia when I am in Jerusalem in September. I am sure that she will be gratified to know that funding of her employment will be guaranteed by this generous initiative.

Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue in New York City was so impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the

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BIDEN ANNOUNCES FUNDING TO HOSPITALS

When President Biden visited Palestine in July, he announced the United States would provide up to \$100 million to support the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, a group of six hospitals that provides health care services and life-saving treatments to tens of thousands of Palestinians.

The President made the announcement at a meeting with the CEOs of all six member hospitals, including Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali, CEO of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group.

"I had the incredible opportunity to tell the President about the charitable work carried out by our hospital in Jerusalem, as well as the West Bank and Gaza Strip," says Dr. Ma'ali. "The President told us about the wonderful care his sons received after the tragic car accident that killed his wife and daughter, and about how people depend on doctors and nurses in their moment of need."

Dr. Ma'ali says the President characterized the East Jerusalem Hospital Network as "the backbone of the Palestinian healthcare system," and that he would work to ensure that the "East Jerusalem hospitals remain sustainable, remain available and continue to provide high quality care that the Palestinian people deserve."

The announcement follows the President's decision last year to reverse the previous Administration's policy of ending all foreign aid programs in Palestine.

The multi-year aid package will be funded through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). A USAID press release issued July 15 states the new funding package will provide debt relief and technical assistance to the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, including modernizing and upgrading facilities as well as expanding highly specialized medical services, including ophthalmology.

"It is good to see our Government partnering with us to strengthen the beleaguered healthcare system in East Jerusalem," says our Prior Nigel Heath. "My hope is that the share allocated to St John Eye Hospital Group will at least cover the existing Palestinian Authority debt. The U.S. Priory will continue to focus on improving the daily lives of our *Lords the sick and the poor.*" ❁

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St. John's Day Evensong and Dinner Reception at Christ Cathedral in Mobile, Alabama. The event was held to benefit Nurse Abu-Baker at the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.

(From left to right) Front Row: Rev'd George Riggall, OStJ (Evensong celebrant); Maxey Roberts, CStJ; Elizabeth Lyon; Margarita Riggall; Julie Friedman, OStJ; Rev'd Roy Martin, MStJ (Evensong homilist); Charles Mosteller, CStJ. Middle Row: Elizabeth Stevens, OStJ; Carol Hunter, MStJ; Barbara Mitchell; Richard Mitchell, CStJ; Elizabeth Redditt; Frank Friedman. Back Row: John Peebles, CStJ; Micheal Morrison, CStJ; Clayton Ryan, OStJ (crucifer); Grey Redditt, OStJ; Douglas Kearley, MStJ; William Lyon, MStJ

THE GULF COAST REGION

Editor's note: This story is the second of 20 regional profiles to be featured in upcoming editions of the newsletter.

The Gulf Coast Region isn't the Priory's biggest region, but it certainly covers a lot of territory, so grab a map.

Begin on the muddy banks of the Mississippi River in New Orleans, stretch north to antebellum Jackson, Mississippi, head southward to the steamy Gulf Coast and then east to Florida's golden beaches on the west coast of the state, and you've travelled two time zones and four states, through some of the most dynamic cities in the Nation and a lot of American history.

"Centered in Mobile, the Gulf Coast Region was envisioned by our late Prior, Palmer Hamilton (KStJ), who almost single-handedly built the region into who we are today," says Dr. Charles Mosteller, CStJ, Regional Chair and a Mobile ophthalmologist.

"Palmer wasn't shy about asking people to join the Order if he thought they'd be a good fit," Charlie said. "He was truly a man on a mission. In fact, he asked me to be a Member while I was preparing him for cataract surgery!"

Charlie continued, "Probably, the common thread among us is the Episcopal Church, because Palmer loved being an Anglican and knew many Episcopalians. We are lawyers, doctors, community leaders and philanthropists, who all share a dedication to the Order, and to serving *our Lords, the sick and the poor.*"

In terms of membership growth, Charlie reports, "It was difficult to recruit new Members during the pandemic, but, even then, our membership has grown by fifty percent during the past five years."

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Strong female leadership has long been an important tradition of the Gulf Coast Region. "We have Palmer to thank for that," Charlie notes. "His insistence on gender diversity provided the impetus several years ago to recruit dynamic women like Maxey Roberts, CStJ, who now is not only our regional communications chair, but also the chair of the Priory Governance Committee and, perhaps most importantly, our Priory Secretary."

Given its expansive geography, one of the Region's biggest challenges is maintaining its close-knit collegiality. "In many ways Mobile is a small town, so it's relatively easy for our Members to stay in close touch and keep a sense of shared purpose," says Charlie. "We see one another at church, on

the golf course, at the gym, in board meetings, at civic events or even as clients and patients. We also sponsor several events throughout the year on behalf of the Order, including Evensongs and receptions on St. John's Day and during Advent."

At the same time, Charlie notes that he has to be ever mindful that Confrères in New Orleans, Jackson and the cities in Florida have the same sensibility.

"Personally, I think picking up the phone to have a chat or sending a personal email can be that 'bridge' to help stay engaged, and that's what I try to do," he says.

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BEN MAY CHARITABLE TRUST

The Ben May Charitable Trust is a Mobile-based philanthropy that has given nearly \$250,000 to the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital over the past 11 years. These generous grants have been used to partner with the Hadassah Medical Center, the teaching hospital of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, to establish a genetic research program.

Last year's gift totaled \$64,000. It funds the partnership's research to investigate Autosomal Recessive Congenital Stationary Night Blindness (CSNB), which could be caused by a specific genetic disorder found among Israelis and Palestinians.

The story of the Trust is built on the legacy of its namesake, Ben May.

May was among the quintessential Jewish philanthropists of the Twentieth Century, many of whom were either immigrants or first generation Americans, who believed in the Jewish ethos of generosity, called "Tzedakah," in Hebrew. Simply put, they believed they should use their hard-earned fortunes to change the world.

Ben May did just that.

John Peebles, CStJ, and a member of the Trust's board, tells the story:

Ben May is an example of the true American entrepreneur. He was a young immigrant boy from Alsace-Lorraine whose family sent him to live with an uncle in Atlanta, just as the dark clouds of the 'Great War' loomed on the horizon.

He went to work for a lumber mill owner in south Alabama, who exported prime southern yellow pine to Europe.

May came up with a plan to ship the lumber and avoid the exclusionary wartime tariff imposed by England and France.

That proved to be an explosively valuable idea, because when the war broke out, the Allies had an insatiable need for lumber to build the many miles of trenches that eventually crisscrossed the fields of Western Europe. May's ingenuity guaranteed the Allied Forces had the timber they needed to help win the war.

By the time of the Armistice—in the span of just three years—May had \$7 million in the bank, a huge windfall in those days.

After the war, he began acquiring land that had been clear-cut throughout the South, the industry practice of the day. Putting to use knowledge gleaned from lectures he attended at London's Gresham College, he began to re-forest the hardwood and pine forests he owned.

Over time he was able to shorten the reforestation cycle by as much as 60 percent, substantially increasing forest productivity.

Later in his career, he headed westward and saw another great business opportunity. While many sought their fortune in the glitz of gaming, May bet that Las Vegas could become a great commercial distribution hub: one that would require modern warehousing, and a lot of it.



Ben May

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He also relies on Winston Churchill, KStJ, in Ormand Beach, FL, Dr. Quinn Peeper, CStJ, in New Orleans and Kathleen Durdin, OStJ, in Tampa, all of whom organize events and other activities to keep Members up to speed in their respective locales.

"Another communications tool we're developing is a regional newsletter," he says. "Carol Hunter, MStJ, a relatively new Confrère who also serves as the communications director for the Downtown Mobile Alliance, has stepped up to be the editor. That's no small task to take on, but there's no doubt her efforts will go a long way in helping people stay engaged and involved."

The Region has a long tradition of community service, which, Charlie notes, was largely curtailed by the pandemic. "Winston chairs the St John Volunteer Corps, and is reconstituting the Corps post-pandemic," Charlie notes. "He has long been actively involved with programs at the Veterans Administration, and I know he is looking at other opportunities now that other community organizations can be designated as part of our service commitment."

For several years the Region has also been part of the initiative shared with the Charleston and North Carolina Regions, to provide funding for a nursing staff position at St John Eye Hospital.

"Most recently, I'm particularly proud of the generosity of our Members in supporting efforts to fund the study room for doctors and nurses at the Hospital," Charlie says. "Of course, the bench in the Hospital's Muristan Garden has special meaning to our Region's Confrères, since it is in memory of Palmer."

So what's next for the Gulf Coast Region?

"Engagement. Engagement. Engagement. It's our three legged stool," says Charlie. "That means adding new Members who share the kind of enthusiasm and commitment the Confrères in our Region are known for."

"At the same time, always in our sights is the challenge inherent in serving Members in such a large territory, keeping them engaged and focused on our mission. To some extent all of the Regions have that concern, and that's why Maxey is leading the charge to review regional structures in her role as chair of the Governance Committee."

"In the years I've been a member of the Order, I've never been more confident in our leadership. I think our Prior is setting a course that will lead us well into the future, strengthening our commitment to serve *our Lords, the sick and the poor*, and, at the same time, enriching our lives of service and dedication. It's truly an honor and a privilege to be a Confrère." ❁

BEN MAY CHARITABLE TRUST *continued from page 5*

It is true huge fortunes were made in the gambling industry. But it was the vast supply chain of goods heading eastward from California's booming factories and rich farmland, along with the burgeoning growth of imports from Asia, that turned Las Vegas into the fulcrum point of a vast, new logistic network.

And another fortune was made.

During his life, May's philanthropic interests were very eclectic, from funding libraries to educational initiatives, but much of his focus was on the health sciences and the state of Israel.

Notably, he funded the research of Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin; provided substantial financial support for the work of Paul Dudley White, M.D., a noted Harvard cardiologist and proponent of "preventive cardiology;" and, along with Charles Brenton Huggins, M.D., who won the Nobel Prize for discovering that hormones could be used to control the spread of some cancers, helped found the Ben May Institute for Cancer Research at the University of Chicago.

He was also deeply involved in supporting the work of the Weizmann Institute of Science, a world-renowned Israeli public research university.

Remaining true to May's values, the Trust has endowed the Ben May Center for Theory and Computation at the Weizmann Institute and, over the years, has supported a variety of other initiatives in Israel, including our hospital's partnership with Hadassah.

"One might conclude that Mr. May's primary goal was to amass great wealth, and that's something he certainly did," says John. "But in the universe that was his life, it was in no way the most significant component."

"The fact is, Mr. May's true ambition was to change the world, and that legacy is what the Trust pursues. I believe the work of the St. John Eye Hospital aligns perfectly, 'serving *our Lords, the sick and the poor*,' and I'm glad the Trust can be part of that great vision." ❁



Richard Batchelder and Nigel Heath in Boston Harbor

St John Hospital team that they very generously provided \$90,000 for a new Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) machine—much needed for day-to-day operations.

Fantastic Treasure, but also fantastic Time and Talent continues to be generously given by our Confrères across the country.

The St John Volunteer Corps just reported the volunteer hours of our Members for the year ending St John's Day 2022, and since formation of the service program, over FORTY-SIX THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED HOURS have been selflessly given by you and your fellow Confrères. There was a 17% increase in service hours in 2021/22 compared to the previous year, and an additional 4% of our Confrères participated.

How about we strive for another 17% increase in service hours AND 17% additional Confrères participating in 2022/23?

There is an opportunity for us all. Help serve a meal for veteran families at Fisher House, pack food boxes at local food banks or be a buddy for a veteran at a VA facility. If you don't have time for scheduled activities, write a card to a veteran or a child waiting for surgery at the Eye Hospital. ALL OF US can find time to do something. Whether it's many hours or a few minutes each week, it all can make a REAL difference in the lives of *our Lords the sick and the poor*. Your Regional Chair and regional Volunteer Coordinator can guide you on how and where to participate.

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

PRIORY CREATES NEW EMERITUS GENERAL CLASS MEMBERSHIP

Perhaps you were looking for something to cure insomnia, or maybe you just enjoy reading about organizational governance. If you *have* closely examined the revised Priory Bylaws that were approved by Members during the Priory's Annual Meeting held in June, you may have noticed inclusion of a new level of membership for our longer-serving Members in good standing.

The Emeritus General Class Member is a Member of the U.S. Priory whose combined age and years of membership equals or exceeds 90, who is current with their annual Oblation at the time of the reclassification, who has been engaged in service to the Order and the Priory throughout their membership

and who has been invited by our Prior to become an Emeritus General Class Member. In other words, transfer to this new status is not automatic, but made by invitation from the Prior in recognition and appreciation of a Member's involvement and years of service to the Order and the Priory.

If you believe you meet the qualifications for Emeritus status and you wish to be considered for reclassification, please contact the Priory office—in writing—by email at PrioryUSA@saintjohn.org, or mail at 1850 M Street, NW, Suite 1070, Washington, DC 20036. Your request will be forwarded to the Prior for consideration. ✱



PRO FIDE

I have found that there are three times a year when people tend to take stock in their lives and ponder whether or not there needs to be a 'course adjustment' in their day to day living...

I have recently passed the second anniversary of my appointment as the Sub-Prelate of our beloved Order. We all have different roles to play in this life, and some of us have several roles. For instance, I am husband, father, grandfather, son, sibling, priest and pastor. And yes, I am also honored and humbled to serve as your Sub-Prelate. As your Sub-Prelate, essentially a chaplain's role, I am charged to regularly pray for our Order, its Members, its leaders and its mission, which I do. When we gather together, I play a role in the spiritual opportunities of prayer and worship.

When I consider the hard work of our Prior and those who marshal the myriad of things in the Washington Office—I am amazed, and at times exhausted, at all they do! I am not suited for those roles, but I do think I am suited for this one, for however long it lasts.

I hope these regular reflections have been a kind of "connecting point" between what I am asked to do, and our individual Members. Toward that end, allow me to creep out a bit and offer a bit of pre-autumn counsel.

I have found that there are three times a year when people tend to take stock in their lives and ponder whether or not there needs to be a 'course adjustment' in their day to day living: New Year's, (i.e. "I'll lose weight." "I'll exercise more." "I'll be nicer to my neighbor." "I'll be more patient," etc.); the beginning of summer, (i.e. "I'll exercise more." "I'll relax more." "I'll spend more time with loved ones," etc.), and the end of the summer before fall, (i.e. "I'll exercise more ...and...well...I'll go back to church!"). It's that last one I want to hover on for a moment.

The summer has provided us all with a different pattern of living—longer days, perhaps time to (as summer should provide) visit a new restaurant, see more movies or plays, spend more time with friends and family. Perhaps, as did I, you traveled a good bit during the summer. On some Sundays, as did I, you might have missed being with your worshipping community. As summer turns to fall and the days grow shorter and the weather just a bit cooler, it gives us an opportunity to act on that internal desire to spend a bit more time thinking on those moments shared within our worshipping communities.

For Christians, I like to describe our coming together as being with a "Church family." So, for the rest of this little reflection, when I use the word "Church," feel free to shift it to your own spiritual home, (synagogue, mosque, temple, etc.). I suppose many people consider Church to be a place to go on occasion. Maybe their Church attendance has slipped into a kind of perfunctory obligation ("I go, well, because I am supposed to, or my spouse drags me along, or the kids 'need it.'") Really, your local Church should be a kind of second family, not some kind of disembodied collection of folk who gather to sing and pray each week. It should be a real lifeline, connecting points for things of the heart and soul, things earthly and things eternal.

When it comes to my own connection with the "second" family, I spend a lot of time with them! Now of course part of that goes with my vocation; but as my years increase (priest or no), I find that most of my social time, deep conversations and interactions, and most of my intimate friends are actually in my Church family. When I have cause to celebrate, I often share it with this "family," and when I have cause for concern or need for prayer or support, I turn first to this "family."

Paul writes in Ephesians *"The Church...which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way,"* (Ephesians 1:22). Paul is not writing about the Church building, or programs, or support groups. He is writing about the "gathering of Christ's followers." He reminds us that this "family" really reveals to us the fullness of Christ's presence. When we are with the family, we are being immersed in Christ. Of course His presence never departs nor diminishes, but when we are away we have less of an opportunity to witness its fullness.

Jesus told us again and again, *"Whenever two or three of you are gathered together in my name, there I am with you,"* (Matthew 18:20). Isn't that an amazing promise? Whether it's for worship or education, prayer or conversation, food or fellowship, service or mission—when you (when we!) come together with our brothers and sisters in our Church family, Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of all Creation, God Himself incarnate is there, right there, in the midst of us!

Consider, if you will, one of my favorite stories about a clergyman who made a call on one of his members at the turn of the last century.

The priest's member had stopped showing up to be with his Church family. There were no phones, or emails, or text messages in those days, so the pastor set out to visit his truant member personally. The fellow welcomed him into their home. It was a chilly night, and the host offered a cup of warm

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tea, then they settled into some comfortable chairs in front of a warm and crackling fire.

They caught up a bit, and then things got quiet, when the parishioner knew what was up, and asked his priest, *"Honestly pastor, why can't I just stay at home and worship God in my own way?!"*

The pastor waited a bit, sipped his tea, and stared into the burning fire. A few moments later, without saying a word, he got up, went over to the fire, opened the screen and began to separate the piled-up coals that were providing light and warmth to the room. He moved each coal out from another until they were set **alone** along the grate. As he did, the fire began to die down, and the warmth in the room went nearly completely away. The two of them watched, as the separated coals turned from blazing colors, to dark, cold hunks.

His member looked up and smiled, *"I'll see you Sunday, pastor."*

So fall is here again. You have lots of choices about how you will spend your time, lots of opportunities to be away from your worshipping community, but also many, many opportunities to be with that family. Consider this as you make your plans for the fall. Think of this family of yours and ways you can spend not less time, but, as your priorities are ordered, more time with your fellow believers and "second family members," and in doing so, with God Himself! For indeed, when you do so, the great God of all creations is right there in the midst of your gathering! What better way to spend your time?

Pro Fide,
The Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr., OSTJ
Sub-Prelate

2022 SERVICE OF INVESTITURE AND REDEDICATION WEEKEND

Please watch for your invitation to the 2022 Service of Investiture and Rededication Weekend, October 21-23, 2022, in Houston, Texas, which began arriving in mailboxes last week. The Houston Planning Committee has been hard at work putting together an exciting schedule that provides the opportunity for Confrères to reunite with friends and fellow Confrères, dine in "the culinary capital of the south" and visit a few of Houston's world-renowned museums.

We will also celebrate 140 years of unity, hope and service at the St John Eye Hospital as we explore the valuable work we have accomplished in fulfilling the mission of the Order, our renewed support of the Priory's contribution to it and our

ongoing work to reach our full potential to serve *our Lords the sick and the poor* in the Holy Land and in our communities here in the United States.

Confrères have two options for registering for the weekend—return the reply card enclosed with the invitation by mail using the reply envelope, or visit the registration page on the Member Dashboard to register online. Please remember that all Confrères must be current with their Oblations in order to attend this special event. Please contact the Priory national office should you have any questions.

We look forward to seeing y'all in Houston! ❁