



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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## 1926-2022





## MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

I was at 40,000 feet over Greenland as I returned from Gaza, Jerusalem, and London when I received the news of Her Majesty's death. While this is in many ways a very sad time, let us treasure and celebrate her many years of guidance and support that helped shape St John into a modern global healthcare organization, but one that also remains deeply rooted in its history and faith.

She served our Order with great dedication, loyalty, and passion. Service to others was her first priority, and this legacy will remain an inspiration to our Order, its Members and volunteers.

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*St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group Patron Reception Queen Elizabeth II with Rod Bull, Tony Mattar, Prince Phillip, and Lord Vestey (March 2008)*

*Queen Elizabeth II with a St John Ambulance volunteer.*



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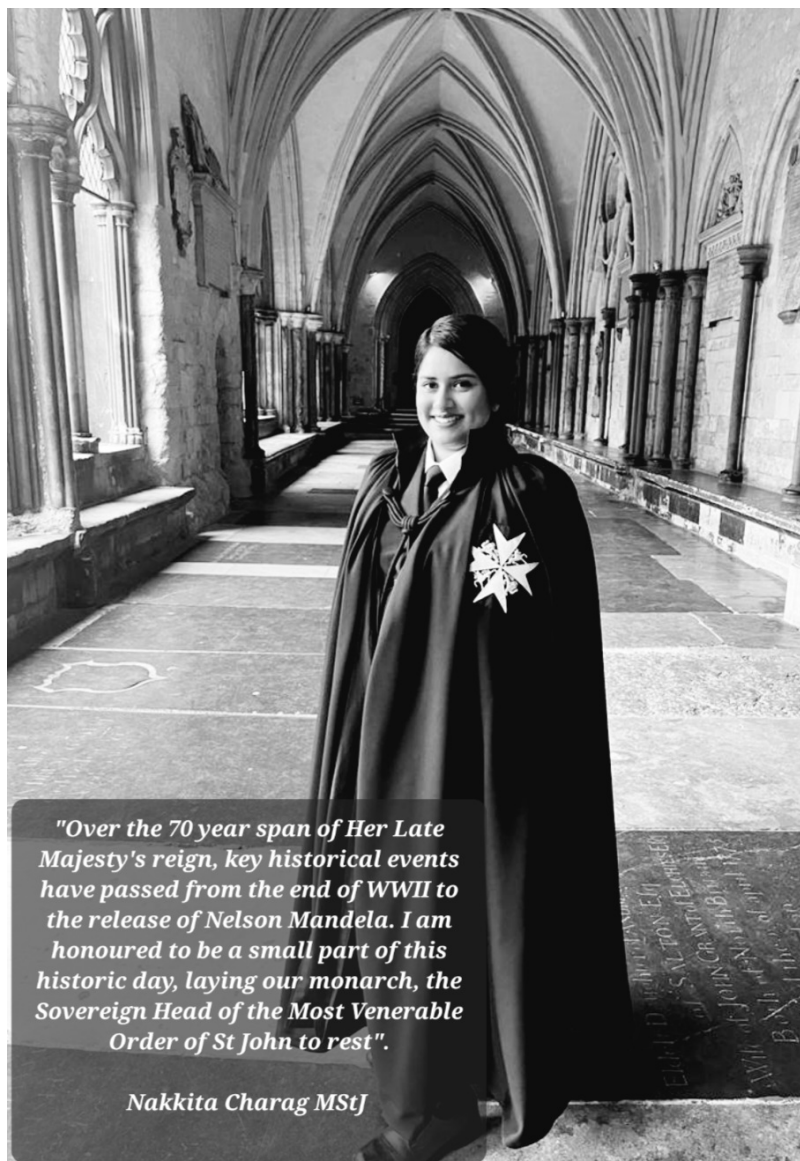
*Opening of the Darwin Civic Centre in Australia, March 26, 1977.*



*The Rev. Paul Williams, sub-dean of the Priory of England and the Islands, lead prayers at the service in St George's Chapel in Windsor.*

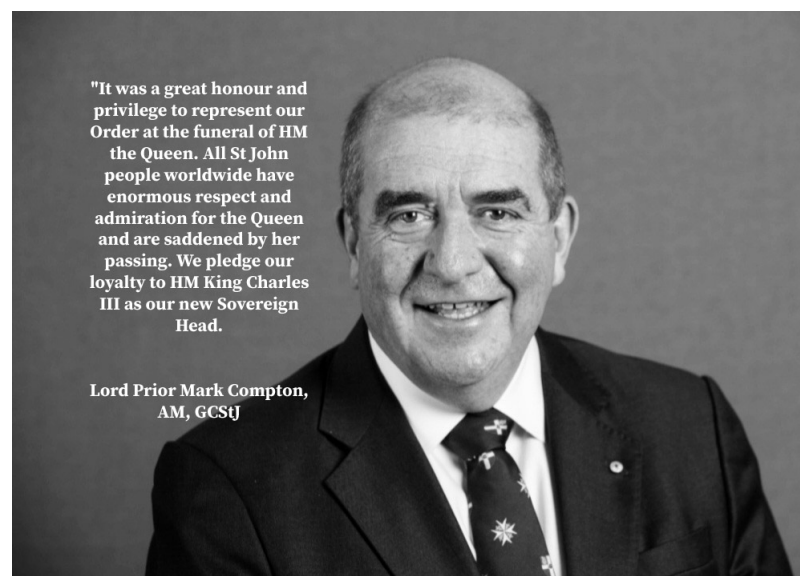


*In their St John regalia during the Queen's funeral procession, from left to right: Lord Prior Mark Compton, St. John Eye Hospital CEO Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali and St. John Ambulance Youth Advisor Nakkita Charag.*



*"Over the 70 year span of Her Late Majesty's reign, key historical events have passed from the end of WWII to the release of Nelson Mandela. I am honoured to be a small part of this historic day, laying our monarch, the Sovereign Head of the Most Venerable Order of St John to rest".*

*Nakkita Charag MSTJ*



*"It was a great honour and privilege to represent our Order at the funeral of HM the Queen. All St John people worldwide have enormous respect and admiration for the Queen and are saddened by her passing. We pledge our loyalty to HM King Charles III as our new Sovereign Head.*

*Lord Prior Mark Compton,  
AM, GCSJ*





*Queen Elizabeth II visiting St John South Africa in Cape Town with the Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip (1995).*



Many of our Regions participated in the effort coordinated by St John International for Members around the globe to sign pages of condolence that will be bound and entered in the Museum of the Order of St John. As the Sovereign Head of our Order, Her Majesty embodied our long history of dedicated service and her Christian faith was her guiding light, and Members of the U.S. Priory were pleased for the opportunity to pay their respects. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Confrère and Chapter member Rev'd Carl Turner recently led a pilgrimage for his church, St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, New York, to the Holy Land and was so impressed by the professionalism and dedication of the Jerusalem Hospital team, that we received a donation of \$90,000 from his vestry and discretionary fund for a new Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) machine. I saw this state-of-the-art equipment already in use when I was at the Hospital in September, and the images provide a whole new level of clarity compared to the technology it replaced.

Also during this visit, I was honored to open the newest addition to St. John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) network, the clinic in Kufor Aqab, Ramallah. Funded by our Priory, this

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facility will replace our mobile outreach unit that was treating 4,000 patients annually. The new clinic is expected to add up to an additional 12,000 patients per year.

I travelled in the new outreach van, also donated by the U.S. Priory, which will shortly expand and double our services in the West Bank. Currently SJEHG has 308 unique sites to visit on average once per six months. Once equipped and staffed, this great addition will enable us to routinely visit every three months.

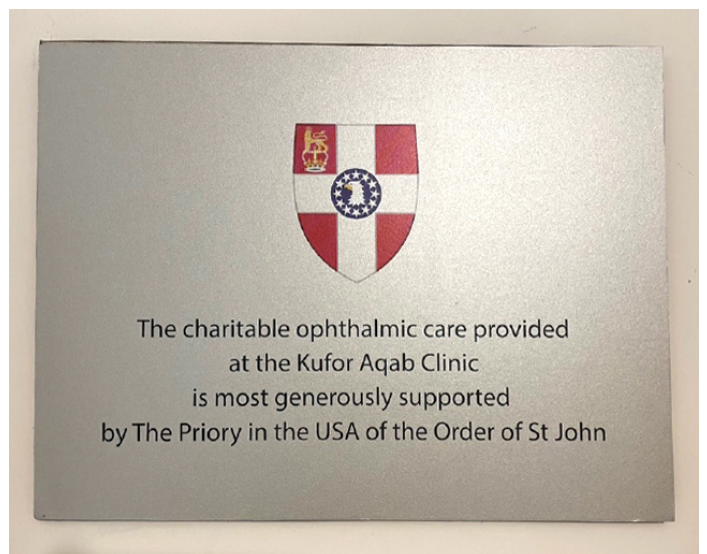
As I described in the previous newsletter, a father and son, both Confrères, were so moved by the plight of the Gazan refugees, that they committed \$100,000 for a dollar-to-dollar match for cataract surgeries in our Gaza Hospital. I was very pleased to announce during my Gaza visit, that this match had been met by the generosity of pilgrims from the recent pilgrimage, together with other donors. Thank you to Confrère Curtis Worthington for organizing the 2022 Pilgrims' contributions, and to our Sub-Prelate Russ Levenson for soliciting substantial gifts to complete the campaign.



On arrival at our Gaza Hospital, I met a young patient, Abdullah (age 15) and his mother. Abdullah had already received lens replacement surgery at our Gaza Hospital. This had helped but did not fully restore his eyesight. He also needed cataract surgery. Abdullah and his mother are refugees with very little means and his surgery was funded by the St. John Eye Hospital. He was the first patient of our Cataract Initiative, and both he and his mother were extremely appreciative of the St. John Eye Hospital and the U.S. Priory.

I announced the support of the U.S. Priory for the 500+ cataracts to the Gaza Hospital staff, who were extremely grateful, motivated, and empowered by this latest news. I was very impressed with their dedication and professionalism. Serving our Lords, the sick and the poor, indeed.

Fantastic Treasure, but also fantastic Time and Talent continues to be generously given by our Confrères across the country in many ways. Instead of a Chapter meeting at Investiture in Houston, the Grand Prior, Lord Prior, Chapter members,



Officers and Regional Chairs will work with Habitat for Humanity on Friday morning.

I hope to see many of you in person in Houston, as we rededicate ourselves to our Order and welcome new Confrères. After our service at St. Martin's, we will enjoy renowned Texan hospitality and a BBQ lunch, followed by a celebration of the 140th anniversary of the Hospital with the Chairman, CEO and Order Hospitaller.

Thank you all for your continuing support of our Order.

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

## AN EXCERPT FROM *TREASURES:* *PORTRAIT OF HER MAJESTY* *QUEEN VICTORIA*

Nearly 350 years after Henry VIII dissolved the Order of St. John in England, Queen Victoria granted the revived Order a Royal Charter on St. John's Day, June 24, 1888, reconnecting a close relationship between the Crown and the charity.

Queen Victoria is depicted in her characteristic black mourning clothes and is wearing her Diamond Crown, specially commissioned by her in 1877 as she found the Imperial State Crown too heavy and it also prevented her wearing her mourning veil as shown in this portrait. In the portrait, the Queen is shown holding the charter of incorporation, which transformed the Order of St. John into a Royal Order of Chivalry.

The Queen's late husband, Prince Albert, can be seen in the portrait behind her; around his neck is the eight-pointed cross of the Johanner Order. The eight-pointed cross of the Order of St. John is visible hanging from the Queen's blue sash.

Even though Albert had died 37 years before this portrait was painted, his wife was insistent on his inclusion, and his youthful presence is represented as an enduring feature in numerous portraits of Victoria and her family. It is only in recent years that Albert has rejoined his wife in this painting. Conservation and cleaning of the canvas in 2011 revealed his portrait, which had been concealed under layers of surface dirt.

Queen Victoria granted the Royal Charter 'in recognition of the excellent work performed by members of the Order of St. John during the past half century.' The Order was celebrated for its services to public first aid, ambulance transportation and healthcare, including the St. John Ambulance Brigade, established in 1887, and the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem in 1882. Indeed, in 1887 the Queen would have seen members of the Brigade on duty along the processional route for her Golden Jubilee.

Many members of Queen Victoria's family were also inspired by the work of the Order and became qualified first aiders, including the Princess of Wales and Queen's daughters Princesses Victoria, Beatrice and Louise. Princess Helena, third daughter of Queen Victoria, even translated Dr. Friedrich von Esmerich's first aid manuals from German into English. Victoria's official recognition of St. John as a charity worthy of royal support has set a precedent that has placed it at the heart of royal duty ever since. ❄



*Portrait of Her Majesty Queen Victoria*  
Ernest Dudley Heath (1867-1945)  
Oil on canvas, 1898



*The portrait of Queen Victoria decorates the Council Chamber, the room immediately over the arch of St. John's Gate in Clerkenwell, London.*





## PRO FIDE

***“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”***

**I John 3:18**

*“Rest eternal grant to Elizabeth, O Lord: and let light perpetual shine upon her. May her soul, and all the souls of the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.”<sup>1</sup>*

And so, we have bid farewell to Her Majesty, Elizabeth II, whose 70-year reign as Queen of The United Kingdom and other Commonwealth realms has given the entire globe an opportunity to pause and consider that which defines a life most honorable and noble.

From the moment of her death on September 8th until her burial and the days that have followed, the tributes, remembrances and reflections have been simply innumerable.

We Members of our beloved Order have reason to be grateful for her years as our Sovereign Head as well.

But when we think on words like royalty, leadership, even “head,” it also gives us a chance to consider how one uses their power. Some wield it like a sword. Others squander it like a fast eaten meal. But there are a few shining examples who use it to better the world and those within it. There is absolutely no question that Her Majesty used the power bestowed upon her to further that which is the best about humans, and Christians.

Her Majesty was a devoted follower of Jesus. She was unapologetic about her Christian faith, lived out within the Anglican room in God’s larger house. It is widely held that her well known Christmas broadcasts, delivered throughout her years of service, have meant she spoke to more people about the significance of the Incarnation than anyone else in history.

Her faith, displayed in good days and hard ones, was gently reflected and faithfully lived, as the Apostle John counseled, not just in words or speech, but in actions and in truth.

In her 2008 Christmas address, she said,

*“I hope that, like me you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an ongoing, unselfish and sacrificial life... He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served.”<sup>2</sup>*

My wife and I have, as have many of you reading I suppose have, visited Buckingham Palace. Perhaps like others of you, we visited not as guests, but as tourists. We did so only two days before Her Majesty’s death. What one sees both outside, and within its walls, is a world few can fully comprehend. There have been extraordinary figures who have lived and worked in that palace. Queen Elizabeth, I think it is fair to say, was one of those. There have also been others, not so extraordinary, because one thing we all share is our human nature.

On the day Queen Elizabeth died, a friend of mine and a member of my Church staff died, and I was called to prepare to officiate and preach at his funeral. This was an experience that a priest, Member of our Order and friend, The Very Reverend Sam Candler, MStJ, had as well with a friend of his. I will borrow Sam’s words here, that the deaths and funerals of our friends, were, in God’s eyes, no less significant than the one the eyes of the world were fixated upon.

*I think her Majesty would agree with that because one of the most striking characteristics of her reign was her humility. She often spoke of being inspired by her Lord Jesus, who welcomed and loved all people from every walk of life.*

My mentor, the Reverend Dr. John R.W. Stott, who for many years served as a Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth, told me that on one occasion he was invited as a guest to dinner with Her Majesty and other members of the Royal Family. This was not held at the Palace known to all, but a much smaller home where everyone could spend more leisurely time together. At one point, near the dinner hour, someone accidentally dropped a glass that shattered across the floor. John noticed the Queen quickly open a closet to fetch a broom and dustpan.

John was horrified and said he rushed over to the Queen, who was already in mid-sweep, to offer his own services, “The Queen should not be sweeping her floor,” John said.

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<sup>1</sup> Book of Common Prayer, p. 486.

<sup>2</sup> From 2008 Christmas Address, quoted in *The Queen’s Faith* by Geoffrey Waugh. Renewal Journal, 2022, p. 93.

She smiled and said, "Think nothing of it. I am happy to do this."

John quipped, "This must be the royal broom and bin then!" They both shared a laugh, and their friendship endured for many years, until John's death in 2011.

On September 14th, Dean Candler offered these words in his online journal, Good Faith and the Common Good,

*"None of us gets to choose which family we are born into. But almost every one of us inherits something from that family—sometimes trouble and sometimes privilege. In whatever family we are born, it falls to us to live our lives gracefully and honestly, with service and respect. Perhaps it is this feature of Queen Elizabeth II that merits the highest admiration: she committed herself to disciplined service. She would not even have been queen had her uncle not abdicated the throne. It was not what she expected, as a child. But she accepted the role, and she served with it. From speaking on the radio at a young age, to signing up in the military to service vehicles, to visiting 117 countries over time, she used her position to serve.*

*"... That is the leader we do well to admire and to respect, no matter how that leadership was acquired. We do well to admire the leader who serves. And Queen Elizabeth served, with discipline, for better or worse. Yes, many of us projected our values and hopes and disappointments upon her. Many of us watched her negotiate the same sorts of domestic and family troubles, divorces and*

*untimely deaths, that all of us have had; we watched her negotiate the same sorts of political troubles that we all know of. She did so gracefully and admirably. That grace and strength is something that can teach us all.... No institution is perfect these days, but we all need them. Within her institution, she showed the world how to serve. May Queen Elizabeth II rest in peace."*

We all, regardless of where our Lord and the circumstances of life deposit us, have opportunities to use our power, regardless of its significance. How should we, as Members of our Order, use ours?

I suspect Her Majesty clearly showed the way, taking her inspiration from our Lord who said, "The greatest among you will be your servant." (Matthew 23:11).

Her Majesty did indeed serve well. May we hold her in our minds not as a memory, but as a model, and may we honor her, not only in word and speech, but with actions and truth.

Toward that end, may I invite you to consider joining my wife, Laura, and me, as we offer a special gift, above and beyond my Oblation and other gifts designated to the mission of the Order, in memory and thanksgiving for the life and faithful witness of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. May she, indeed, rest in peace.

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