



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 4, NUMBER 9

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Israel-Hamas War



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Fellow Confrères,

I trust that you enjoyed a blessed Thanksgiving with family and loved ones.

I must admit that I found it harder to be joyous this year as I reflected on our colleagues and friends in the Holy Land, but there was deep gratitude for being with loved ones and entertained by the endless energy and creativity of our two granddaughters.

Today I had my regular call with Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali, the CEO of the St John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG). During the 90 minutes or so, in addition to SJEHG matters, we discussed his family of six children—all of whom are in various stages of qualifying as doctors and medical professionals—and the challenges of daily existence as they try to continue their studies at their home just north of Nablus in the West Bank. Ahmad tends his garden in his very limited time at home, which is an important escape for his mental wellbeing. He is now having to stay at the Jerusalem hospital during the week, as his commute, previously 1.25 hours, now can take 4.5 hours each way due to additional

checkpoints. In his garden, cauliflower and broccoli, which thrive in the Nablus area, are his specialty. I first worked with Ahmad some ten years ago when I was Priory Treasurer. He is a dear friend and colleague. He, like all of us, fulfills his commitment every day to *our Lords the sick and the poor—Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum*.

Ahmad reports that the conflict in Gaza and Israel has continued for the past seven weeks, with the ground incursion in the north of the Gaza Strip resulting in a large number of fatalities and injuries, as well as destruction to infrastructure.

It is reported that as many as 1.7m people have been displaced which is creating an untenable demand on UN humanitarian agencies. For updates about the situation on the ground, please refer to the website of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: www.ochaopt.org/crisis

As for our hospital in Gaza, we have not been able to carry out any further inspection of the building. To the best of our knowledge, it hasn't sustained any further damage. We are waiting patiently for a humanitarian ceasefire, during which time we hope it will be possible to provide an assessment of its status.

All our Gaza staff are residing in Rafah and other southern districts.

In Jerusalem, with movement restrictions in place since the beginning of the conflict, clinical activities for the months of October and November remain at 75% of normal activity.

We continue to coordinate with the Israeli Authorities and the East Jerusalem Hospital Network to enable surgical patients to reach Jerusalem to undertake much needed surgical interventions.

Outreach activities have recovered to almost 100% capacity as compared to the same period last year. Visits to the northern West Bank, however, continue to be problematic, and travelling is deemed unsafe for staff.

In the West Bank, we have introduced a Child Vision Screening program in the Refugee Camps, made possible by funds from the Hilton Foundation. Screenings are conducted by staff from both Anabta and Kufor Aqab, as well as the outreach teams.

So far, more than 1,500 children have been screened.

Our Kufor Aqab clinic, situated outside the separation wall, continues to provide essential services to those patients who cannot reach Jerusalem, and is operating at 100% capacity.

In Hebron, we have increased the number of surgical sessions with activity rising by 42%, compared to the same period in 2022.

In Anabta last week, some of our subspeciality doctors were able to conduct clinics. The workload continues to fluctuate between 40-50% of normal workload.

Yet again, I plagiarize our Sub Prelate, The Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr. who eloquently reminds us:

Lord Jesus, I may never visit the Holy 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 its peoples. 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.

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HERALDRY EXHIBITION

A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME AND SYMBOL

During the Investiture weekend in Los Angeles, the Heraldry Committee opened an exhibition commemorating the heritage of our Priory and the Order through their symbols. The Heraldry Exhibition was a first-of-its-kind celebration filled with history and artistry from across the Order of St John. Highlighting painting, design, woodcarving, flags, genealogy and much more, the exhibition was well attended by Members and their guests. It was an extraordinary showcase of heraldic craftsmanship reflecting the tradition, innovation, and enduring spirit of Priory.



The Heraldry Exhibition was a labor of love brought to life by the enthusiastic contributions of a small group of Members from the Priory's Chivalry and Heraldry Committee. Led by Priory Genealogist Jim Terzian, CStJ, the Committee has been working toward the publication of an armorial, a book recording the coats of arms of all the Members of the Priory who use heraldry. In doing this work, the Members came across a magnificent array of heraldic items from traditional artistic representations to modern emblazonments. Each

artifact in the exhibition had a unique story to tell reflecting the character of the people bearing the arms and the essence of these graphic representations of identity.

At the opening of the Exhibition, Prior Nigel Heath, KStJ, expressed the importance of recording the stories of our Priory. It has been more than 25 years since the Priory was inaugurated at Washington National Cathedral. Having recently lost one of our former Priors, it became clear that there is a need for recording the history of the Order of St John in the United States to maintain the Priory's institutional memory going forward. The armorial project and this Heraldry Exhibition are a part of that important work. Heraldry is significant precisely because it can act as a bridge connecting the past and the future.

The Exhibition was divided into several sections. The first highlighted the Sovereign Head and the arms of members of the Royal Family. The authority to grant arms in the UK emanates from the Crown just as appointment to the Order of St John does. There was also a section that explored the arms of the establishments of the Order—the Priors, Commanderies, and the Eye Hospital. These were displayed with explanations of how they can be used for identification, markers of who owns items and what groups to which Members belong.

The most interesting portions of the exhibition dealt with the personal arms of Members. Many American Members have been granted arms based on their membership in the Order. Once these have been assigned by letters patent the grantees, or armigers, can use them in myriad ways from bookplates to table banners and from library paintings to wax seals. The exhibition included a bookplate from the late Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., KStJ, and several full-length banners and standards from exhibition patron Brady Brim-DeForest, MStJ.

Standing in the midst of these amazing heraldic emblems and works of art, Members were reminded that these were not mere representations but living testaments to the shared history of our Order and the communities that cherish it. ✨

DEADLINE

The deadline to order a copy of the Armorial is December 8. To order, contact Jim Terzian at jimterzian@live.com.

HELP SHAPE OUR PRIORY'S FUTURE

NOMINATE CANDIDATES FOR MEMBERSHIP BY JANUARY 24

Your commitment to nominating exceptional individuals, whose lives embody the values of the Order, is a cornerstone of a thriving future for the Order of St John. New Members infuse our organization with a range of skills and fresh perspectives, and your discernment in identifying prospective candidates advances our thousand-year legacy of humanitarian service.

If you have questions about what makes an ideal candidate, how to assess their qualifications, or how to craft an effective nomination, we invite you to [join a practical 'how-to' call](#) on **November 28 at 7:30 p.m. ET**. This one-hour, nomination-focused session will be led by experienced nominators Ben Faucett, OStJ, and Jane Mermelstein, CStJ, and moderated by Jim Terzian, CStJ. Topics will include holding essential pre-nomination conversations with potential candidates, 'how-to' tips for composing a compelling citation, and ways to gauge a prospective nominee's interest without revealing your intent to nominate them.

The nomination deadline is Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. ET. Any Member in good standing who was admitted in 2021 or earlier may sponsor a candidate who has been known to them for at least three years. Additionally, any Member in good standing who has known a sponsored candidate for at least one year may second that nomination. The confidentiality of these nominations is essential, and candidates may not know of their nomination until contacted by the Priory office.

As a leader in your local community, you are in an exceptional position to identify and nominate those who embody the Order's values and will uphold its enduring traditions. New Members are the future generations of our organization, and we invite your active participation in this important annual process.

For additional resources and to learn more, visit the [nominations](#) page on the Priory website. ✨

CHANGES TO MILLENNIAL CELEBRATION PLANS

Early in 2023, several Regions in the Priory in the USA. began planning celebrations to mark the 1,000th anniversary of the establishment of what would quickly become the Order of St John. After all, it was reasoned, this was truly a once-in-a-lifetime, or once-in-a-millennium, opportunity. However, events of October 7th intervened, changing conditions in the Holy Land. The continuing conflict seemed to call for a more subdued recognition of the history of the Order and its ongoing mission to provide care for those in need.

The Gulf Coast Region was in the midst of planning a Millennium Gala for December 8th to mark the founding of the Order. It was to be a black-tie fundraiser with dinner and dancing. In light of the Israel-Hamas War and the disruptions to the Order's operations in the region, however, a decision was made to postpone the commemoration and instead recognize 1,000 years of service with an Advent Evensong. The Event Committee shifted gears and set about securing a location for the service, to be held at St. James Episcopal Church with the reception following at the home of Dr. Charles Mosteller, CStJ, and his wife Alexa. Prior Nigel Heath, KStJ, will be in attendance as he makes his way across the South. "We are honored to have Nigel as our guest for the evening," said Dr. Mosteller, Co-chair of the Gulf Coast Region. "We are looking forward to hearing about the Nablus Hospital

project, and grateful for the opportunity to raise funds for this newest initiative of the Order," he added.

Prior Heath will be the guest of honor at the Charleston Region's Holiday Party held at the home of Dr. Hudson Rogers, MStJ, and his wife, Lynn, the day before the Mobile events. "With the current events and tragedies surrounding our hospitals and places of care we support, we cannot think of a better time for the Prior to visit Charleston and give our fellow Confrères an update in person," said Regional Co-chairs Butler Derrick, OStJ, and Jill Hooper, OStJ. "We are honored to have him and look forward to sharing some Holiday cheer as well."

On December 9th, the Prior travels to Atlanta for that Region's Holiday Cocktail Buffet at the home of Sandy Thurman, OStJ. Atlanta Regional Co-chair Nancy Paris, OStJ, said, "We are so pleased to have Nigel join our gathering this year. Our Members are so very generous with their dollars, and we are looking forward to spending time with our Prior, who is so generous with his time." At this moment, when so many Confrères are wondering how to respond to the present conflict in the Holy Land, gathering in prayer and camaraderie with open hearts and a willingness to share our time, talent and treasure just might be a good start. ✨

I wish you a deeply meaningful time of reflection and peace as we enter Advent and 2023 draws to a close, and we await with hopeful anticipation the miracle of Christmas once again.

The work of our Order never ends, and with that in mind I draw your attention to my article in the last newsletter which describes the urgent need to establish a hospital in the north of the West Bank. Our U.S. Priory is blessed by the generosity of our U.S. colleagues and Confrères Molly and David Pyott and **their matching challenge gift of \$250,000 to fund the new operating theaters in Nablus.** This work and its funding is desperately needed.

Will you join me in meeting this match before year end?

This Advent I give thanks to God, for health, for family, for the many blessings of this life. Unlike so many around the world, I have food to sustain me, clean water to drink and safe shelter. I pray that I never take this for granted.

Pray... Take God's Side and Do Good...

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

WOMEN'S FORUM ANNOUNCES ESSAY CONTEST

The Order of St John and the U.S. Priory Women's Forum are pleased to announce the **Sister Agnes Prize** for an original essay or piece of research work on women in the Ancient Order of St John and its significance for St John today. The Ancient Order in this instance is the period from the 11th Century to prior to the loss of Malta in 1798. The maximum word length is 3,000 words, and this can be in the form of an article for publication or an essay, but is intended as a written exercise. The submission deadline is February 24, 2024.

This prize is open to all Members of The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem or St John Ambulance establishments worldwide. The annual prize will be €200 for the submission that best meets the criteria including:

- Focus on primarily women in the ancient order, 11th Century – 1798 OR
- Women who significantly assisted the ancient order, 11th Century – 1798
- Considers the implications of these findings for the Order today.
- Originality – newly researched findings or recently expanded findings showing insight and depth of coverage.
- Accurate citation and referencing of support for material
- Consistent system of referencing
- Use of a range of literature
- Readable, well-expressed English, correct spelling and grammar, directed to the topic
- Clear structure, organisation, and cohesion of the arguments overall
- Within the word limits: the maximum is 3,000 words. Minimum is 1,000. These do not include reference lists or bibliographies.
- Format: This could be in the form of an article for publication or an essay but is intended as a written exercise.
- Presentation: Times New Roman Font 12 or equivalent.



- Double spaced.
- Page numbering: at the bottom right-hand side

The submissions will be blind judged by three international people suitably qualified in academia and/or knowledge of the Order. A copy of the submission form is attached. To submit your entry, use [this link](#). ❄️



PRO FIDE

“From whence cometh my help....,”

Psalm 121:2

Let me be transparent with you my fellow Confrères—just completely... we are living through an incredibly painful moment in history—deep divisions

continue in the political landscape of our nation; conflict seems unceasing in places around our globe—Haiti, Nigeria, Central and South America; the war in the Ukraine is just maddening—and now—now, that land called Holy—a place to which many of us have traveled—a place where many of us have celebrated, enjoyed fellowship, prayed, worshipped is steeped in the most serious moment of conflict in the last 50 years. In the face of this—and so much more—what I am hearing and experiencing from friends, family, fellow Confrères—the members of Church where I serve can be summed up in one word... “helpless.” Many have told me they feel helpless—anxiety, fear, worry. “What to do when you can’t do anything?” is what I am hearing. Maybe you feel that.

As your Sub-Prelate, an honor for nearly three years now, it seems to fall to me to offer at least a modicum of spiritual direction. Keep in mind, there have been times in the last year when I have shared that helpless feeling—and yet I am in the “hope” business! That said, so, well is there anything you can—really do? I think the answer is a resounding “yes.” What to do?

Pray. The world that lives beyond the parameters of a belief in the Almighty is a world without hope, without a future, without that Greater Power available to humankind since we first were—in the words of Scripture, brought out of the primordial dust of the earth, (Genesis 2:7). With all of the things “swirling” beyond our control in the world—one thing to really take hold of is that most of them—if not all of them, are beyond **your control**... but they are not beyond the reach of your prayers to the One Who does, finally, hold all the cards, (forgive the crass wording there, but it’s true).

When David felt the overwhelming sense of helplessness, he sat down and wrote these prophetic, therapeutic if you will, words;

*“I will lift up my mine eyes to the hills:
From whence cometh my help?
My help cometh even from the Lord,
Who hath made heaven and earth,”*

Psalm 121:1-2

There is so much wrapped up in those few words, that there is neither time nor space to unpack them here... but suffice it to say... when you feel helpless you can pray.

Take God’s Side. We know—or we should—that when God Almighty looks down on planet earth, which He created, He sees no borders, no nations, no dividing lines—He sees His children. I was fortunate to befriend, and officiate at the funeral, of history’s “Last Man on the Moon,” Captain Gene Cernan. Captain Cernan and I had many great conversations, but when I asked him about his experiences on the moon, he would smile and say, “*I got to sit on God’s front porch.*” But then his eyes would soften, as would his words, and he would say, “*And I saw earth as God sees it...*”

There is a lot of pressure on you (this is a personal note to my reader)—on you, this day—to “take sides.” And my hunch is, it has already happened today—if not in conversation, certainly in whatever news program you have turned on today. Surely there are just “sides” to be taken—but please be careful about the cultural lines you draw—make certain they are in sand, and not in concrete. Because what you may find through your prayers (see last suggestion) is that a line in the sand, should be brushed aside by the greater goods of the faith we proclaim.

For that reason—perhaps commit to memory (and practice) this beautiful prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer*,

“Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all people may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominion and glory, now and forever. Amen.”¹

When you feel helpless, take God’s side.

Do Good. My hunch is, with few exceptions perhaps among the distinguished members of our Order, that there is little you can do about those things that are, at present, vexing the soul in national politics or in international politics—but there is something you can do—do good.

Every single day, you are given the opportunity to give into the collapse of hope in the world about us, to be part of the problem—or to be a messenger of hope, and be part of the solution. We do that in the way we treat others—full stop. Our words, our ways, our motives; the look on our face, the tone of our voice—all of these can be used to curse, or to bless, the lives of others.

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¹ *Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, p. 815.

Every single day, you are given the opportunity to give into the collapse of hope in the world about us, to be part of the problem—or to be a messenger of hope, and be part of the solution.

The day before the horrific attacks of October 7th, I was part of the Order's "field trip" to Paramount Studios. My "bus-buddy" was our beloved CEO of St. John Eye Hospital Group, Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali. We talked virtually the entire day and smiled as we took

Forgive the ubiquitous reminder—but that is why whatever you do in the way of a gift of your time, or your talent or your treasure in support of the mission of our Order is good—it just is, there is nothing "not good," about it. So, want to respond to that helpless feeling? Dig into the work of the Order all the more—do not pull back in your generosity—for with the gifts our Lord has given you, you are called simply to give in return, (see Luke 6:38). And giving to the Order and its mission—and those children of God our Order is called to serve—is always, always, **a good thing.**

May our lives incarnate the beautiful prayer of St. Francis, "*Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union... where there is darkness, light...*" Amen to that.

When you feel helpless, you can do good.

photos of one another to send to our children on the sound stages of make-believe.

The next day, we awoke, as the world did—not to make believe, but to a real world—torn asunder by violence birthed by hatred—and when we saw one another at our Investiture lunch, all we could do was shake our heads and hug one another. Later, I led our gathering in prayer.... this prayer... that I wrote, maybe it will help you in this "helpless" time...

"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 the Holy 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, our Lord, the Prince of Peace, Jesus. Amen."

My friends, my fellow Confrères, my brothers and sisters.... if you feel helpless....

Pray... Take God's Side and Do Good...

Pro Fide,
The Reverend Russell J. Levenson, Jr., D.Min., D.D., OStJ
Sub-Prelate