MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

I offer my congratulations to all who were invested or promoted at our Boston Investiture and a sincere thank you to all who enabled it to happen. It was a wonderful example of time, talent and treasure, along with a fourth ‘T’—teamwork, all coming together with a common goal. After fifteen months representing U.S. Confrères and serving our Priory, it was a great honor to finally be installed as the U.S. Prior in the presence of so many of you, both in person and remotely via the live feed.

I certainly felt the poignancy of the day and all that we as Confrères have committed to do at home and around the world. I could not help but think about how the lives of every one of us have changed in so many ways since we last gathered. Likewise, twenty years ago all of our lives were changed by the tragedy of 9/11. As we sat safely distanced in the pews of Trinity Church and waited for the service to begin, there was the opportunity to reflect on our blessings, about what we were there to do, and about how together we were committing to do all in our power to ensure that unity triumphs over division, love triumphs over hate, and hope triumphs over fear.

I thank all who took up the invitation to introduce their children to our endeavors to serve our Lords the sick and the poor through the SJVC Kards 4 Kids project. Continuing the spirit of this initiative I encourage you all to continue to think about how you might find ways to serve our Priory in your communities. Similarly, I urge that we all be ever mindful of diversity—the subject of this year’s Chivalry discussion—and the ways in which we can ensure a greater awareness and understanding of its importance within our Priory and all aspects of our lives.

The grandeur of a magnificent Investiture weekend that came to fruition thanks to many hours of hard work by the Boston Planning Committee, our staff and countless others, was a fittingly beautiful celebration of all that we have and hope to achieve. But once our dinner jackets and cocktail dresses are back on their hangers, it is not time to sit back and relax; it is the beginning of another year of being a Christ-like servant to all the fellow travelers we meet on our journey.

Some regions already work alongside our sisters and brothers in our Alliance Orders in service activities. I hope that more will follow suit and submit applications for such activities to the SJVC. Paul Martin, our Priory Liaison to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM), is working with its three Association Presidents to explore our common goals and to identify expanded opportunities for collaboration with our Catholic sisters and brothers in this Alliance Order. Recently Paul asked all our Regional Chairs to consider arranging Evensong Services with local members of both our Orders on Wednesday, October 13, the commemorative feast day of Blessed Gerard, the founder of our Orders. My thanks to Paul for preparing a common service that will allow us to unite in prayer across the country representing an important sign of our unity. I encourage all who can to participate. Your Regional Chair has further details.

Thank you, Boston, for ensuring that we are suitably fired up and ready to hold out our hands to those who need us to help them bear the load. I look forward to hearing the stories of how our communal time, talent and treasure have created opportunities to serve our Lords the sick and the poor when we gather in Houston, Texas, in 2022!

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum,
Nigel G. Heath, KStJ
Prior
CEREMONY, SPLENDOR AND SERVICE
INVESTITURE IN BOSTON

In an Order with roots that go back more than 900 years rituals and ceremonies are a reminder of its significant history. As with so much else in 2020, the Priory in the USA had to give up its annual gathering. Instead we were brought together with a virtual services and Zoom connections. Being together, being physically present with each other this year, marked another important step forward in our history. The rhythms, sounds, and movements of our annual Investiture returned once again, even if some things were a little different. With the constant revisions to protocols and procedures in the weeks before the investiture, our Director of Ceremonies Margaret McLarty noted, “The fact that it was an elegant and meaningful service is a tribute to the many volunteers and staff of the Priory. Everyone made significant contributions to its success.” All those who were in Boston as well as those watching online agreed it was a service to remember.

Though continuing travel restrictions sadly made it impossible for the Order’s Great Officers to join us in Boston, the annual Service of Investiture and Rededication was no less magnificent. Seeing our current and all former Priors processing into Trinity Church followed by their armorial banners was a moving reminder of the growth of the Priory in the USA over the last 25 years. Although Nigel has been leading our Priory for more than a year now, it was important for us to formal commemorate his appointment and installation in community and to witness this next step in our ongoing history.

Of course Investiture is a time for pomp and ceremony as we celebrate the history of our Order, but it is also a time for inspiration and rededication to the Order’s work. In his homily, our Sub-Prelate asked “Who will live because of you?” In a time

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such as this, rather than considering if we are wrong or right on points of policy or matters of convention, Members of the Priory should be asking themselves this question.

The long procession of postulants coming forward to be invested as new or promoted Members of the Order are a testament to that charge from the Sub-Prelate. Each came forward with a promise to serve those in need on behalf of the Order. In a setting as beautiful as Trinity Church, which was opening its doors to us as their first event since being closed last year, it was easy to remember that these promises were being made for the faith, as well.

Though it can be tempting to see this long line of postulants as a mass of men and women being inducted into the Order, it is important to remember that these are individuals who have come to membership through their own stories. As we remember the thoughts going through our own minds when we were first invested, we remember the weight of tradition and expectation, but also the comfort of being in a community so dedicated to a single purpose, to a single vocation. Each of these stories is a Confrère who is committed to this life of service together.

As the service wound up with prayers and national anthems, and remembering the lives of Confrères we lost over the last year, it was easy to remember why this service was so important. Again, in an Order with hundreds of years of history, we grow accustomed to the rhythms of ceremony and tradition. But after a year scarred by pestilence, death and increased social isolation, we were reminded that we are a community. We are part of a larger body committed to a larger goal. As our Sub-Prelate challenged us, we are always considering “into whom we will breathe life by our love, by our service.” As a community, together, we choose to act in the service of humanity.

MEMBERSHIP AND CHIVALRY LUNCHEON PANEL

Background

Prior Nigel Heath, KStJ, has established a priority to create and sustain a diverse membership in the U.S. Priory. This coheres with Grand Council’s focus on growing the St John community with a more representative balance of gender, age, race and ethnicity. Subsequently, a sub-committee on diversity, reporting to Registrar James Terzian, CStJ, was established to recommend a roadmap for Chapter.

The Prior’s commitment to diversity, understood in light of chivalry, gave rise to the theme of the luncheon held after the 2021 Investiture. Four panelists were invited to address four chivalric virtues and put them in modern context: Leadership. Service. Prowess. Faith.

The Prior moderated the panel, recognizing that Members of the Order, like our predecessor knights, are chosen to summon leadership, service, prowess and faith in pursuit of noble missions.

LEADERSHIP: Dr. David Pyott, OStJ, CBE, and Hospitaller of the U.S. Priory, exemplifies the virtue of leadership not only through his highly successful business experiences, but also through not-for-profit endeavors. He shared stories about his own upbringing which have influenced his leadership style, seeking diversity not only in the workplace, but at the board level. Having lived in many different cultures, learning many languages, David brought the message home that a diverse representation of membership in our Order enriches the institution and its ability to serve diverse communities.

He stressed that the leader knows that diversity of membership in the Order is not a topic du jour or a passing phenomenon. It is, he stated, “all about ability to adapt and strive for the highest values and performance.”

It requires attention and hard work, he acknowledged. “We have a great mission and we deliver great value with limited resources, but we clearly need the views and experiences of new Members from different backgrounds.” As Hospitaller, he welcomes an increase in diversity among the physicians and healthcare practitioners serving St John Eye Hospital Group. He concluded, “We just need to make it happen!”

Chivalric leadership.

SERVICE: Dr. Christie Morse, MStJ, pediatric ophthalmologist, stated “Service is an important part of chivalry and the St John Eye Hospital supports that virtue every day through the provision of charitable care.”

She knows what it is to “live” service. She does it every day. Caring for the vulnerable young, her sensitivity to the need to provide eye care to children of diverse backgrounds is deep. She noted that as the pandemic unveiled the inequities in health and vision care, she joined with colleagues to start the Children’s Vision Equity Coalition “to advance equity in children’s vision and eye health through education, access, policies and partnerships…”

She spoke about a little 3-year-old boy with crossed eyes. He is now receiving treatment to cure his vision as a result of the coalition. His parents were overjoyed, as was everyone listening to this one example of service.

Christie also emphasized her commitment to providing a diverse workplace. She observed in her practice that young children and their families usually relate best to people who look like them. “Diversity brings new and different ideas into my practice,” she noted, “makes my patients more comfortable, and ultimately allows me to provide better care to my patients.”

Chivalric service.

PROWESS: Matthew (Matt) Eversmann, MStJ, embodies the chivalric qualities of prowess, dramatically exemplified in the 2001 blockbuster film, Black Hawk Down. He shared, “On the eve of my first deployment to Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1993, I saw a verse of scripture on a memorial wall at Ft. Bragg. (Isaiah 6:8.) ‘Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I; send me.’”

Matt expressed his belief that this scripture denotes the greatest definition of selfless service. “We need to put needs of others first.” It is what happens on the battlefield, he explained. “At the crucial moment we depend on ranger buddies no matter what, regardless of skin color, ethnicity or gender, etc.”

Matt had been called to support the national mission during the Cold War. He quickly learned that all the new identities percolated in this “melting pot” of diverse individuals dedicated to the mission. As a group their desire to serve was the “tip of the spear” and a tremendous inspiration for them to push themselves to be prepared for battle. Chivalric prowess.

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Matt’s passion to interview and collect stories of active military members inspired writer James Patterson to co-write the book *Walk in my Combat Boots: True Stories from America’s Bravest Warriors* (Little, Brown & Co, 2021) with him. Examples of prowess among the ranks of men and women in all levels of the military are brought into the light through this labor of love.

**FAITH: Pro Fide** was addressed by The Rev. Eleanor Ellison, OStJ, former ecumenical and inter-religious officer, parish priest and Episcopal school chaplain. She reminded all that *Pro Fide* and *Pro Utilitate Hominum* are two sides of the chivalric coin. The Christian principle to love God and neighbor is foundational to chivalric behavior, to be honored by Christians and adherents of diverse faith traditions who become Members.

Noting that the code of chivalry is a moral construct, wrapped in the ideas of honor and noble behavior, she reminded listeners that the chivalric code was grounded in the ethos of Western Christianity in the Middle Ages. “But what about today?” She said we have a far wider interpretation of what it means to be faithful, and a wider understanding of what it means to be chivalric. For example, we have come to understand that women can be chivalric!

Engaging partners and inviting members from other faiths to serve the Order was a theme she continued. She lifted up the example of Episcopal schools to emphasize how exposure to and everyday living among persons of other faith traditions adds tremendous value. “We are all God’s children.” *Pro fide.*

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**SJVC COLLECTS KARDS 4 KIDS AT BOSTON INVESTITURE**

The St John Volunteer Corps (SJVC) has had a wonderful year growing the U.S. Priory’s activities of volunteerism and the depth of our Corps, all this despite the pandemic which has gotten in the way of all our lives. SJVC collected a handsome number of hours (7000+) directly touching those in need in our communities throughout the Regions of the Priory this past year. The Handbook has been diligently developed by the SJVC National Committee and revamped, into a better resource—better for those in the Regions who are currently volunteering, and those who want to expand volunteerism and new activities (13 new activities have been approved this year). Please take a look at the SJVC Handbook online, and reach out to your Regional Chair if you would like additional information and to get involved.

We have Confrères who are able to devote many hours each year, and others who are only able to give just a few. Both types of volunteering are very important in order to reach as many of those in need as we can, and to grow our volunteer base. With this in mind, SJVC rolled out a new program prior to Investiture which has been met with great success: KARDS 4 KIDS for the St John Eye Hospital. Confrères from all Regions via their Regional Chairs, were asked to have the younger members of their families or friends’ children make cards for the younger patients of the Eye Hospital with the guidance of the Confrère. The cards are meant to deliver good tidings from one child’s hand and heart to another child who has arrived for an ophthalmic appointment, hopefully helping to dispel any worry or anxiety from the young patient. The children here in our Priory who made the cards, perhaps have had their first contact with the Order of St John in such a positive way that it will be an association hopefully for them for rest of their lives.

The Regions answered the call and the SJVC collected a great number of KARDS 4 KIDS at the Boston Investiture which now will be sent to the Eye Hospital where our youngest and dearest patients will receive them from our Priory.
The fourth St John Ophthalmic Association (SOA) USA Symposium was held September 10th in Boston. Established in 2015, SOA is formed of ophthalmologists, optometrists, other physicians and healthcare practitioners from across the world. The group exists to coordinate the post-graduate ophthalmic activities and advance teaching, training and research of St John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG). It is our goal to reinforce SJEHG as the preeminent teaching hospital in the Holy Land.

Dr. Bruce Spivey, KStJ, Honorary Treasurer, U.S. SOA, kicked off the symposium with an entertaining and informative history of the Order from 1099 to 2021 and the Hospital history since 1882. His valuable perspective laid the groundwork for helping participants understand the background that is pertinent to the SOA.

Dr. Charles Mosteller, CSTJ, Secretary, U.S. SOA, gave insight into U.S.-based activities and membership development. He highlighted the growth in the U.S. organization since its launch event held in Chicago in 2018 and plans for future development and programming. The next meeting of SOA will be held during the American Academy of Ophthalmology’s Convention in New Orleans in November.

In a pre-recorded message, London-based Order Hospitaller Dr. David Verity presented the global vision for SOA internationally, highlighting the organization’s accomplishments to date and ambitious goals for the future: “SOA is working to bring together the best of St John in one organization to promote and develop our medical expertise and teaching, both regionally and further afield,” Dr. Verity stated in his talk. Building on recent SOA symposia in the U.S., Australia and Canada, Dr. Verity will offer new symposia in the UK and Sweden in 2022.

The SOA series of symposia offers an opportunity for some of our talented ophthalmologists in the Holy Land to showcase their work and research. Dr. Hana Hussein, a glaucoma specialist at the Eye Hospital in Gaza gave a glaucoma case study that was moderated by Dr. Christie Morse, MStJ, a pediatric ophthalmologist in New Hampshire. Dr. Raja Al Masri, from the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem, presented an ocular oncology case that was moderated by Dr. Suzanne Freitag, MStJ, an oculoplastic surgeon at Massachusetts Eye & Ear Hospital.

As our Prior stated during the 2021 Boston Investiture Weekend, the Order is working to increase its membership of people from diverse backgrounds, religions and ethnicities. In this context, there is great opportunity to expand membership from the healthcare profession because the ophthalmology and optometry professions have major representation of women and minorities in their ranks who rapidly grasp the needs of the SJEHG given their professional experience.

The symposium concluded with an appeal to support the U.S. Priory Nurse and Doctor Initiative with continued donations that are much needed to pay staff salaries. Many Regional Committees have already started funding outreach for the Initiative with 12 staff members being funded to date. With always present cost pressures as we serve needy populations at low or no cost, the Hospital is dependent on donations from the Priories.

For more information about SOA or to view the symposium in its entirety, visit http://www.soa.global.

U.S. Priory Hospitaller David Pyott, CBE, OStJ, leads the St John Ophthalmic Association Symposium.
"WHERE HOPES AND FEARS MEET"

James 2:14-18 and John 13:31b-35

On the Occasion of the Investiture Service for the U.S. Priory of The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem
Trinity Church in Boston
11 September, 2021
The Reverend Dr. Russ Levenson, Jr., OStJ

Portions of the sermon delivered for the Investiture service.

Twenty years ago today, only miles from where we sit, on the morning of September 11, 2001, United Flight 175 and American Airlines Flight 11 departed Logan Airport. American Airlines Flight 77 departed Dulles Airport, and United Airlines Flight 93 departed from Newark. Within hours, all four would be instruments in the worst attack on American soil in our Nation's history.

In the end, 2,996 members of the human family would perish. We were, on that day, besieged with fear. And yet, at the same time, we were filled with hope—hope that somehow, someway we could and would emerge from the literal ashes of fallen buildings and lost lives.

Today, two decades later, we still live in a world of fear and hope. You need only scan a newspaper to see the truth of that claim. How are we to respond?

Moments ago, I prayed these words, asking God's blessing upon our common work as members of this beloved Order, “…to work for all in sickness and distress; and to dedicate ourselves afresh to his service…”. What does that service look like?

It is evidenced by a faith that produces works; and works that are the fruit of love. We are reminded in the Book of James, “What good is it to have a faith that produces no works?... So faith, by itself, if it has no works is dead.” We are called to put those works into action by following the mandatum novum, the new command of Jesus given on the night before His death. “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Notice Jesus’ clear words. “By this” others will know we are followers of Christ, not denomination, not doctrinal allegiance, not moral purity, not theological orthodoxy. These may be part and parcel of the Christian faith, but none of them mark the earnest disciple of Jesus, only love does.

We are part of a historic and noble Order, but our nobility is not grounded in ceremonies and banners, in titles or decorations. Our nobility does not even spring from our appointment by our Sovereign Head, Her Majesty the Queen. What makes all of “this” make sense; what makes all of “this” have a purpose; what makes all of “this” noble is the living out of our faith and our commitment to our motto—Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum.

In the face of a dark world of woe, a world of fears beyond these doors, we respond with hope—the hope of God as made known in the love of every man, woman and child, of every race, and faith and nation. But we must do more than love. We must also commit ourselves to incarnational service.

In this rededication service, we pray, “Look upon our lives, O Lord God, and make them thine … that we may walk in thy way … and faithfully serve our neighbor.”

Serving. We cannot love without serving, and service without love is anemic in its power. We are called to do both, to love and to serve.

The most famous rector of this church was Philips Brooks, who served this great church from 1869 until 1891. The author of “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” he poetically wrote of the Incarnation Moment and its offering to humankind; that very One in Whom hopes and fears collide. “The Hopes and Fears of All The Years are met in Thee.” Our fears are assuaged and our hopes are confirmed when we plant ourselves within the God Incarnate, Christ Himself.

So, my friends, may we do the things you and I were created to do—love and serve one another. May we be bold enough to step outside of our comfort zones and reveal to others the One to Whom they can take their fears, and One that gives them reason to hope.

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1 James 2:14.
2 John 13:34-35.
It would be easy to forget what we are ‘all about’ in these few days we are sharing together. There is much for which to be thankful. There is much to celebrate. But let not those diminish the greater reason for our gathering. Perhaps this story will help us remember our purpose.

As most of you know, Louis Pasteur, the pioneer of immunology, lived at a time when thousands of people died each year of rabies. Pasteur had worked for years on a vaccine. Just as he was about to begin experimenting on himself, a nine-year-old, Joseph Meister, was bitten by a rabid dog. The boy’s mother begged Pasteur to experiment on her son.

When he injected Joseph for ten days, the boy lived. Decades later, of all the things Pasteur could have had etched on his gravestone, he asked for three words: Joseph Meister Lived.

Let me close by asking you this question. Who will live because of you? Into whom will you breathe life—by your love, by your service? Is that not what we mean by Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum?

For all of our fears, that is our greatest hope. Love is the place where fears and hopes meet, and in that meeting, the goodness, the peace and the love of God reign. Amen.

U.S. Prior Nigel Heath, KStJ, invests Sub-Prelate Russ Levenson as Officer of the Order of St John.