

# SPIRITUALITY IN ACTION

What's going on throughout the Areas of the American Association of the Order of Malta

May 2016

## INSPIRATION FROM THE AREAS AND THE ORDER OF MALTA WORLDWIDE

**Michigan Area:** The Michigan Area of the Order of Malta had some high ranking help on April 14 when Detroit Archbishop Allen Vigneron joined the Order's monthly service at the All Saints Church Soup Kitchen in downtown Detroit. He passed out food trays, carrying some to tables and placing the food and drink before the "guests".



On the second Thursday of every month, Dames and Knights and their Volunteers travel from many different Michigan

cities to cook and serve meals to the homeless in one of the bleakest sections of Detroit. Dame Barbara Wilson never misses the opportunity to serve Jesus in distressing disguise. She is very attached to guests she sees month after month. "There is one man who wants three sugars with his coffee, (no fake sweeteners). I come to make sure he gets them."



Archbishop Vigneron expressed a desire to be involved in the Order's hands on labors with the poor and the sick. He regularly travels with the Order to Lourdes.

**NAPLES, FL AREA:** The Most Reverend William E. Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore, MD, spoke to 150 attendees at a Defense of the Faith Symposium at St. William Church in Naples, FL, on Friday, April 8, 2016. His talk, co-sponsored by the Naples Area Order of Malta and

Florida Region #5 of the Knights of Columbus, focused on the relevance of Dignitatis Humanae ("Of Human Dignity") today. Dignitatis Humanae is the official name of the Declaration on Religious Freedom issued by the Vatican Council II on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965. Archbishop Lori, as the chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, was uniquely qualified to speak on this topic.

Archbishop Lori placed the Declaration in its historical context, noting that it was the first church document dealing solely with religious freedom. When it was issued, the atrocities of the holocaust were still fresh in people's minds, religious liberty was all but denied to those living behind the Iron Curtain and secularism and atheism were on the rise. The Declaration was, in part, based on the 20<sup>th</sup> century development of the theological account of human dignity, which held that, by dint of being human, each person has an innate relatedness to God. Thus human rights and dignity are not granted by any earthly power but are God's gift.

The Declaration starts by saying that religious freedom means that "no one is forced to act against his conscience in religious matters, or prevented from acting according to his conscience in private or in public, whether alone or with others, within due limits". In addition, as Archbishop Lori put it: "When religious freedom is linked to the human search for truth and for God, we can see more readily that God, not the state, grants our basic freedoms." He then quoted Archbishop Wojtyla, the future pope, who said "Religious freedom is violated when a government constrains individuals and religious groups from following the natural law."

Archbishop Lori showed the relevance of the Declaration today by detailing three current threats to religious liberty: Islamic extremists who kill people because they are Christians, the Health and Human Services Mandate that seeks to force religious institutions to offer medical services in their health care plans that are counter to our beliefs and the same Mandate that would force secular businesses owned and run by Christians to do the same.

The Archbishop then asked us to do three things in light of these threats: "pray each day for persecuted Christians abroad and for the restoration and preservation of religious freedom at home... [deepen] our relationship with Christ and [undergo] a 'missionary conversion' such that [we] will be true agents of the New Evangelization... [and] make use of the networks already existing in the Church such as state Catholic conferences to make our views known to elected officials... be politically active in helping to raise up and elect candidates ...that will uphold the basic freedoms and values of our country".

During the question and answer session after his talk, Archbishop Lori expanded on his remarks concerning what we can be doing to counter attacks on religious liberty. He praised organizations such as the Order of Malta and the Knights of Columbus for what they do to unify Catholics in the face of the Balkanization of the Church resulting from its assimilation into American culture. He pointed to Pope Francis's New Evangelization that challenges Catholics to grow in their love for Jesus and through that growth to become ever stronger advocates for the truth. The Archbishop himself works with Interfaith Unity, a coalition of religious leaders, including Catholics, Baptists, Evangelicals, African American churches, the Church of Latter Day Saints, Jews, Muslims and many others, who come together to express our concerns to public officials. By showing public officials that the erosion of religious liberty is a core concern across a wide range of Americans of faith, we hope to begin to turn back the tide of anti-religious government action that we confront at all levels.

**Palm Beach, FL Area:** Palm Beach has many Dames and Knights who migrate from the Northeast during the months of December through April. Most of these "snowbirds" are disengaged from their Northern hands-on activities during the winter. Many had expressed a need for involvement closer to where they live during the season.

In early 2014, Jack Pohrer, GCM appointed Hawley and Jack McAuliffe as Hospitallers for the Palm Beach region. After organizing a list of members residing in the area, the McAuliffe's hosted a reception in March 2014, bringing all the "snowbird" Dames and Knights together. Working with the Order of Malta South Florida Miami area, the Palm Beach region has been quite successful.

In 2015-16, two Morning of Reflections were organized, one during the Advent season and one during the Lenten season. These were held at Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center in North Palm Beach offering easy access to members from Jupiter to Boca Raton. Several members from Miami also attended. In addition to the retreats, the opportunity to volunteer at St. Ann Place, a homeless center in West Palm Beach was offered two days a month from October through April. This outreach has been very popular with those members who are eager to serve the less fortunate in the community. The plans for next year are still in development. There are two morning of reflections scheduled and the twice monthly volunteer activities at St. Ann Place will continue.



Above, Order of Malta South Florida Morning of Reflection, March 5, 2016  
at Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center in North Palm Beach

Spirituality In Action wishes all the Knights, Dames, Malades, Caregivers, Volunteers  
and everyone on the Lourdes Pilgrimage a safe and faith inspiring journey.



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