



HOSPITALERS IS PUBLISHED BY THE
**SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALER ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF
 JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA™**
 AMERICAN ASSOCIATION, U.S.A.

HOSPITALERS

VOLUME 17 SUMMER 2017



IN THIS ISSUE



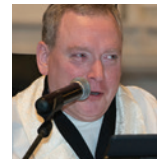
8

That time we went to Lourdes and our son was healed



12

Reflections On The Order Of Malta Lourdes Pilgrimage



14

Lourdes in a Day



19

Planting Seeds of Hope with Malteser International Americas

The Sights, Moments and Feelings of the 2017 Pilgrimage to Lourdes

by Craig and Nancy Gibson

Having returned from our 2017 pilgrimage to Lourdes, we are excited to share with you this year's extraordinary journey. There were so many highlights. We agree with the assessment of Charlotte Williams, a 2017 Team Captain, member of the Board of Councillors and a former pilgrimage Co-Chair who said, "The whole experience is a highlight." So we've reached out to a few pilgrims and asked what moved them. We hope this will provide you with a sense of the sights, moments and feelings of the 2017 Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

(continued on page 3)

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Association Web Site

Be sure to visit our Web site at: www.orderofmaltaamerican.org to find the latest information about the Association, forms needed for new members and new auxiliary members, Area Web sites and much more information about the Association and the Order of Malta. Links are also available to other Association Web sites and the Sovereign Magistry's Web site.



Summer is well upon us. The Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Help will be here shortly where two hundred members of the three US Associations will gather in a show of faith and devotion at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion, Wisconsin. This will be our second Association Pilgrimage to the place of the only recognized apparition of Our Blessed Mother in the United States.

The year continues to bring news and action of importance to the Order and to each of us.

THE COUNCIL COMPLETE OF STATE COMPLETES ITS WORK

In late April, the Order's Council Complete of State elected a temporary replacement (a lieutenant) for the Grand Master. Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto is serving as the Lieutenant until the Council is convened again in 2018 to elect a permanent replacement for the Grand Master. In the interim, work is going on with input from around the world to review and update the Constitution and Code of the Order.

VISITS FROM ROME

Speaking of Rome, we were happy to learn that the Grand Chancellor, Albrecht von Boeselager, will be visiting the Association in September. His visit will coincide with the Board of Councillors meeting; he will also meet with the Area Chairs. The Grand Chancellor has the responsibility within the governance of the Order to maintain relationships with the Associations, Pories and other entities of the Order around the world. We look forward to his visit.

In November, the Government Council will also be visiting the Association. Their visit will coincide with the November meeting of the Board of Councillors as well as the events surrounding the Investiture. It will be an honor to have them participate in one of our most important activities.

THE LOURDES PILGRIMAGE

The 2017 Lourdes Pilgrimage was a great success for those who participated and those who shared in the graces of the journey. Some amazing stories have come forward as part of the aftermath of the Pilgrimage; several are included in this issue of the Hospitallers Newsletter.

We had four hundred pilgrims from the American Association for our thirty-second Annual Pilgrimage. It was the Order's 59th International Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Nearly 4,500 dames, knights, chaplains, doctors and volunteers participated, assisting over 1,500 sick and disabled pilgrims. It was also the first official commitment of the newly elected Lieutenant of the Grand Master.

The excellent weather served as a glorious backdrop to the spiritual activities of the Pilgrimage which provided the foundation for the remarkable graces which flowed to those who were there. We thank the Chairs, Nancy and Craig Gibson, for their leadership and all those who worked so hard to make the pilgrimage a success. Plans are already underway for the 2018 Pilgrimage on May 2 to May 8, under the Chairs Cece and Michael Donoghue — mark your calendars!

ASSOCIATION'S FALL RETREAT

The next retreat will be in September and I encourage you to consider registering. Bishop John O'Hara from New York will be the retreat master. The Retreat Center at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception on Long Island is convenient to many hundreds of our members. Check the website or call the New York office.

PASSING OF TWO GIANTS

This year, the American Association has lost two of the giants of the Order, Mrs. Ann R. Peabody and Mrs. Charlotte E. Flatley. Both Ann and Charlotte were *(continued on page 23)*

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2017 Pilgrimage to Lourdes

(continued from cover)

AN ANCIENT EUROPEAN TOWN

Setting the stage for everything to come during the week was the location of the pilgrimage. Lourdes is an old, European town with winding streets and ancient buildings. Brian Muscarella, 59, is a Malade who, several years ago, had a rare spinal stroke. Within 12 hours he was paralyzed and is now a quadriplegic. This was Brian's first visit to Lourdes, and he was accompanied by a best friend, Kevin Scanlon, as Caregiver. Brian was awe struck by the setting. "Each day when I turned the corner and entered the Domain, there was this breathtaking site that made me immediately know that I was in a special, holy place," Brian said.

The location itself connected us to our reason for being there. Cece and Mike Donoghue, who were Captains of the Red Team this year and will be Co-chairs of the 2018 Pilgrimage to Lourdes, put the meaning of the trip in perspective. Cece said the most important thing to know about the trip is that Lourdes is where we, as members of the Order of Malta, live out our Charism fully in the way we care for our Malades and Caregivers. Mike commented that everybody goes to Lourdes in search of some sort of healing and that it is so joyful to be there even as we witness the challenges of many of the Malades.

THE COMMUNITY LIFTED BURDENS

While the town set the tone, the attitude the pilgrims brought with them to Lourdes created its own momentum. Much of the energy came from the community of Knights and Dames, Auxiliary, volunteers and staff who worked so hard to make the week a success. "I have never experienced such love and perfect charity," said Annamarie Adkins. Annamarie made the journey as a Caregiver to her two children, Xavier, 10, who is managing a variety of issues including asthma and food allergies, and Mary Frances, 7, who has Chronic Kidney Disease after suffering from kidney failure. "It was astounding. These people connected with my children; they loved my children. I felt completely supported; my cross was carried."

Cece said the volunteers followed in the example of Our Mother Mary, who gave a simple yes to God, that no is not in their vocabulary and that it's remarkable being in the presence of people like that.

THE CLERGY GUIDED US SPIRITUALLY

The role of the clergy is to provide spiritual guidance throughout the week. They were led by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, and Msgr. Robert Ritchie, who worked with his team to plan the many liturgies and spiritual events. All the clergy were *(continued on page 4)*





(continued from page 3)

so supportive. Mike noted how Cardinal Dolan was very personable with the Malades, always welcoming and offering a kind word.

The homilies were inspiring. Bishop Paul Bootkoski reminded us that we are all brothers and sisters in this journey together. We were very moved by the Anointing Mass celebrated by Bishop Dennis Sullivan. And Msgr. James Moroney strongly encouraged us to make room for God. “I always find the homilies very uplifting and reinforcing of my faith, providing some new insight either into Our Lady or Our Lord,” Charlotte said. “Msgr. Moroney gave a reflection on Mary when she was at the Annunciation, talking about God’s will. It’s not just the homily itself but the fact that we are hearing the homily in this sacred space.”

THE BATHS WERE AN EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Of course, for many pilgrims, a primary purpose of the pilgrimage is to go to the Baths. Brian talked about how the Baths were an exercise in vulnerability and trust. “I’m paralyzed, so I don’t feel cold on 90 percent of my body,” he said. “I just had to go with it. It’s really about trusting complete strangers. It’s about surrendering, embracing the experience.”

Annamarie went into the family bath with Xavier and Mary Frances. “It’s as close as you can get to a second Baptism,” she said. “It is an incredibly emotional and deeply spiritual experience.”

This year, with the input of many, we were able to provide a brochure designed to better prepare the pilgrims for the Baths. And from the feedback we’ve received, it enhanced the experience in a significant way. “The brochure was a really good thing,” Charlotte said. “If you haven’t been to the Baths before, there is so much apprehension. The brochure helped prepare people for the unknown.”

THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS KEPT THINGS RUNNING SMOOTHLY

As chairs, we serve as hosts of the pilgrimage, but the planning process, which goes on for nearly a year, is an extraordinary collaboration. No undertaking of this size is the result of the work of a few people or a small team. What is so amazing about the Lourdes Pilgrimage is the synchronization of so many moving pieces into one seamless machine. Each piece falls into place without any grinding gears; everything is covered by people whose experience, commitment and caring lead them to work together for the good of the Pilgrimage without concern for personal recognition. Ray LaRose, a member of the



Advance Team who works on the New York staff noted, “Nobody wants or needs their name in lights; everyone cares that the Pilgrimage is a success for the Malades and their Caregivers first, and in giving and doing to make that happen, it becomes a success for all who participate.”

“This pilgrimage helped demonstrate the American Association’s ability to operate as a team,” said Ken Craig, Co-president of the pilgrimage along with FJ McCarthy. “Everyone knew his or her job and focused on it.” In February, Ken and FJ flew to Rome for the Order’s International Planning Meeting. “We had never done that as a group,” Ken said. “By going over in person, we were able to present to the organizers in Rome the unique set of needs we as the American Association had in travelling so far with our Malades.”

The preparation paid off. According to Ken, everything, even the weather, worked to make things come together. “Everything aligned,” he said. “It was 70 degrees with bright sunshine the whole time. The schedule stayed on track, and our Malades all managed very well.”

this pilgrimage was an exceptional team effort at every level.

IN GRATITUDE

As Ken said, this pilgrimage was an exceptional team effort at every level. We want to express our thanks to each and everyone one of the team members for providing the outstretched helping hands and loving hearts that made the 2017 Lourdes Pilgrimage such a wonderful experience for our Malades, Caregivers and all pilgrims.

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OFFICE STAFF

in NYC deserves oversized credit for the extraordinary work that they did going back almost a year. They were prompt, responsive and handled everything with a smile. That is no easy task when dealing with 400-

plus pilgrims, all with unique issues and concerns.

THE MALADE SELECTION COMMITTEE, under the leadership of Dr. Tony Gagliardi, did an amazing job, and, despite travelling with a number of very sick Malades, we were blessed with few major health issues during the week.

THE MEDICAL COMMITTEE with Dr. Tony Gagliardi and Patti Vara Hickey, RN, was very attentive at each step along the way. They met each morning and *(continued on page 6)*

(continued from page 5)

kept a close eye on many special situations right up until, and even after, we landed at Kennedy Airport.

THE TEAM CAPTAINS brought depth and breadth of experience along with deep love, care and compassion into all their efforts. They guided and led the teams, from organizing the processions each morning, to sharing the many meals together and making sure that each pod was well tended to from start to finish each day.

THE AUXILIARY GROUP with Francois de Brantes and Chris Weldon was very well organized and ever ready to assist as needed all along the way.

Thanks to Msgr. Robert Ritchie, the **MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY** were at our side in full force, from the opening prayer on the plane to the final blessings of the sacred articles brought home for others. The liturgies were wonderful, the reflection groups were well organized and facilitated and the liturgical processions were a joy to watch.

SECURITY under Chris Pilalas was well handled with no problems or issues that we were ever aware of...thanks be to God!

THE CO-PRESIDENTS, Ken Craig and FJ McCarthy, provided rock-solid leadership at every step, starting with the

advance planning meetings and advance trips they made to Lourdes, to the clarity they brought to the morning meetings. They led us in processions to all activities, ready and available at each event, always with a smile and with a willingness to help or guide.

OUR ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT, Jack Pohrer, was with us each and every step with a smile on his face and love in his heart.

Finally, **DICK AND DEDE MILONE** oversaw the entire effort from start to finish, thoughtfully putting together the overall list of pilgrims and the team and pod assignments, organizing the seating on the plane, handling the challenging task of hotel room assignments and dealing with many special requests and sensitive issues that arise in any group effort with 400-plus people on pilgrimage in a foreign country.

The opportunity to serve as Co-Chairs of the 2017 Pilgrimage to Lourdes has been an honor and a blessing. We hope the experience was spiritual and joyful for all our fellow pilgrims; that everyone who participated felt warmly welcomed at every stage; and that, through the grace of our Mother Mary, each pilgrim left Lourdes renewed and refreshed in God's love. ■



■ HIGHLIGHTS

The 2017 Lourdes Pilgrimage – A View from the Top

The following is a summary of the 2017 Lourdes Pilgrimage as presented by the Order at the end of the Pilgrimage.

Tomorrow the Order of Malta's 59th international pilgrimage to Lourdes will officially close. Some 4,500 dames, knights, chaplains, doctors and volunteers took part, assisting over 1,500 sick and disabled pilgrims.

This year the Lourdes pilgrimage — from 5th to 9th May — was the first official commitment of the newly elected Lieutenant of the Grand Master, Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto. The participation of the Holy Father's special delegate, Archbishop Angelo Becciu, with their Eminences Cardinals Renato Raffaele Martino, Prosper Grech, Timothy Dolan and Dominik Duka was particularly significant.

Archbishop Angelo Becciu led the Eucharistic Procession on Saturday 6th May and the Solemn Pontifical Mass celebrated on Sunday 7th May in the packed Basilica of St. Pius X.

During his speech in the church of St. Bernadette, the Lieutenant of the Grand Master, after being greeted with prolonged applause, stated that "it is touching to see you here gathered together as we have every year since 1958. We pay homage to Mary

with renewed passion and dedication as we bring the sick and ourselves on a pilgrimage to this famous sanctuary. Forty-four nationalities are assembled here today under the octagonal cross. I particularly welcome the three new participants — Albania, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador. A special welcome also to the pilgrims from Iraq and Syria, who are with us thanks to the French Association. Senegal is participating for the first time with its own association. Together you represent countries from the four corners of the earth. "For us today," Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre continued, "the miracle is to have been invited to be present to renew our faith and hope in Mary and to bring peace and serenity to those we are assisting."

The Lieutenant of the Grand Master participated in numerous events, including the meeting of the Order's professed members, that of the chaplains and of the medical personnel. The most touching moment was his encounter with the sick, and especially with those he had been assisting up to ten days ago when he was the Order's Grand Prior of Rome.

The next pilgrimage is May 2018, when the 60th anniversary will be celebrated of what represents one of the most significant moments in the spiritual life of the Order's members and volunteers.





Oscar with his pod at the Rosary Basilica in Lourdes. Standing L-R: Carole Less DM, Amy Cattapan DM, Todd Wilkens CG, Ryan Young KM, Kim Gillespie DM, Katherine Baxter AUX. Seated: Christy Wilkens CG and Oscar Wilkens M. (Photo credit Michelle Babyak)

That time we went to Lourdes and our son was healed

By Christy Wilkens, Caregiver, 2017 Lourdes pilgrimage

On May 5, 2017, after months of preparation and anticipation, I entered the baths at Lourdes with my son, Oscar. Our pod host, Kim Gillespie (DM), was miraculously working in the children's bath at the moment we entered, and by the grace of God she and I lowered Oscar into the healing waters together. But when I left the baths and was greeted outside by Carole

Less (DM), I felt disoriented, confused, and spent, rather than at peace. I wasn't sure what it all meant and struggled to have patience and wait on God's plan, as everyone around me counseled.

In the days that followed, our pod members all commented on how alert Oscar seemed. He was, too! One member of our pod, Katherine Baxter (AUX), spent several days sick in bed without seeing Oscar and remarked on the difference once she was up and about. I chalked it up to having the undivided attention of seven (or 400!) adults — being the constant star of the show certainly would have been engaging. But also, I knew there was something mysterious in the air around us. The graces of that place are so thick you can almost cut them with a knife. He babbled, he smiled, he watched the world with curiosity and intentness.

The Saturday after we returned from Lourdes, Todd was driving our family of eight home in the van. Oscar began to fuss, and I jumped back a row

from my passenger seat to amuse him in the hopes of avoiding a full-scale meltdown (they tend to be contagious).

I talked and sang silly songs, and he began to cheer up, watching me soberly, but every time I stopped, he picked right up fussing where he had left off. Finally, I covered my face with my hands, then popped out and cried, "Peekaboo!"

You can tell I was out of ideas at this point, because peekaboo had never once worked in over a year of trying. Todd and I had tried it. Oscar's siblings had all tried it. His many therapists had tried it, even using animatronic toys to spice things up. The best you could hope for was a moment's eye contact and maybe a brief smile, but it was clear, every time, that he just didn't get it. When he smiled, he was responding to your smile, not to the sense of anticipation or to the joke of the sudden reveal. Usually, he would only look once or twice, and then only if you were particularly enthusiastic in your deliv-

ery, before staring off somewhere else in his usual hazy daze.

This time, he looked at me from the corner of his eye and smiled when I uncovered my face. Grasping eagerly at straws, I tried it again, covering my own face, reappearing with a grossly exaggerated expression and abnormally loud “Peekaboo!” His smile grew wider, and he turned his head to face me. I doggedly repeated myself, and after a few more rounds, he was still watching, sucking hard on his pacifier. His grin split open and he rewarded me with a small giggle.

We had already shattered all previous peekaboo records, and I felt excitement rising in my chest. I didn’t stop to call anyone else’s attention to it because I didn’t want to break the spell. I leaned over, and this time I covered his face with my hands. When I moved them away with a “Boo!” he squealed with delight, spit out his pacifier, and laughed out loud.

The next time I covered his face, he raised his own hand and placed it on top of mine. When I moved, he moved, and when I boomed, he chortled with glee.

We played peekaboo the rest of the way home, for five minutes straight. By the end, each time I covered his face, he reached up quickly to push my arm down himself, howling with laughter

before I even rewarded him with the big monkey-faced payoff. “PEEKABOO!”

He totally got the joke. It is the first joke he has ever gotten.

For those of you who don’t know Oscar in person, you may not have a good idea of what brought us to Lourdes in the first place. On his five month birthday, he had a generalized, tonic-clonic seizure (the kind most people think of when they hear the word “seizure”). Over the next few days, he had several more, and he was diagnosed with epilepsy. Over the next few weeks, several medications failed to control his daily seizures, and he was diagnosed with refractory (“difficult to treat”) epilepsy. Several months later, he was diagnosed with developmental delays across the board, which ominously persisted even after his seizures were under control.

Before his pilgrimage, at almost eighteen months old, Oscar was functionally stalled at a developmental level between three and nine months. His doctors suspect an underlying genetic cause driving both the delays and the seizures, but his presentation doesn’t fit any known syndromes. We don’t have a diagnosis or explanation, just an ever-growing list of symptoms and things he can’t do.



Airport selfie with “Pod-parent” Amy Cattapan. This ordinarily would have required 47 outtakes. He was smiling and looking at the camera in every one. (Photo credit Amy Cattapan)

Oscar has always been a social baby. He is calm and joyful, radiating an infectious, easygoing contentment. He is happiest around other people and engages easily with smiles and eye contact when face to face with someone.

But he also spent long periods of time withdrawn and unresponsive, exploring only what was directly in front of him or just staring with a vacant expression. At home, he was content to lie on his mat and look at the same toy for an hour or more. He tired easily and slumped when he sat. If he fussed or cried, it meant he was physically in need: hurt, hungry or tired, always that and only that. He was eerily quiet, babbling or cooing rarely, laughing even more rarely. His responses to any kind of input — visual, auditory, tactile — were slow and muddy; often he would stare at something a full 10 seconds before reaching out to touch it. He was battling not just the fogginess of his own abnormal brain circuitry, but also his highly sedating medications. He lived a lot in his own little world.

Here is a partial list of things Oscar can do since May 5, all of which he did not do before our trip:

- Respond to his own name
- Turn to look at someone speaking to him
- Make eye contact across a crowded room
- Engage in turn-taking babbling exchanges

(continued on page 10)



Oscar and his father, Todd (CG), playing at home. (Photo credit Christy Wilkens)

(continued from page 7)

- Look directly at a camera and smile attentively
- Sit up with a straight back indefinitely, without slumping or flopping over
- Push a button intentionally with one or two fingers, not a whole-hand slap
- Laugh at games in anticipation
- Imitate someone else's gesture
- Army crawl
- Push up to hands and knees
- Move from lying down to sitting unassisted
- Hold two objects, one in each hand, at the same time
- Release an object intentionally
- Put one object inside another one
- Cry with frustration when he is bored or wants attention



Was he fully and miraculously healed? No... At least not yet. These differences are not the kinds of things that are readily apparent to anyone with only a passing acquaintance of Oscar. If you ran into us in the grocery store, you would still see that he is not typical for his age.

Within a week of returning home, however, we had appointments with his physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, and neurologist, in addition to lots of visits from close friends and family. In each case, they knew we had taken a trip

and why we had gone, but I didn't say anything about the remarkable changes I had noticed in Oscar. I didn't need to. **Every person who knows him well and has spent time with him this month has commented that he is markedly different.**

At physical therapy, where he goes twice a week, his therapist's first impression the day after we landed in Austin was this: "He's very callllllm. His body is very organized." She usually has to fight to maneuver him into his various positions, and he has a tendency to buck his torso around or throw his arms and legs out spastically. He did none of that. We chatted about the trip as she worked with him, but I could tell she was distracted by his changed demeanor.

By the end of the hour, she told me, "I'm a little freaked out." Exact quote.

At occupational therapy two days later, Oscar was grabbing for small toy gears with precise one-handed grasp and aim, where previously he would have slapped at them with both hands until one fell off. He pushed a button to start his favorite toy over and over with his thumb or with two fingers. When offered a set of objects, he picked the blue one out to chew and explore, time and time again, even when the objects were presented in random order. These have been therapy goals for nine months, worked on during sessions and between sessions, with little or no progress.

At Mass that Sunday, playing with his favorite toy, he babbled and chatted so exuberantly that we had to take him out of the sanctuary. Never once in his life have we had to remove Oscar from Mass for acting like a normal toddler.

My favorite story of all, though, is what happened at our visit to the neurologist. He has seen the same neurologist since the night of his first seizure over a year ago. She sees him in her office every two months or so. She has covered every EEG hospital stay and reviewed countless hours of video footage. She knows Oscar far better than any other physician.

As soon as she walked into the room, she greeted me, then him. She commented on how alert he was, compared to his previously wandering gaze. Today he was fully engaged and watching her closely. I moved him up to the sit on the exam table, and she noted that he was sitting up unusually straight. (Another side effect of both his neurology and his medications is low muscle tone and low core strength.) I commented that he had been sitting up ramrod straight since our trip, not losing his balance or throwing his torso backward.

The doctor looked at him and smiled, saying "Oscar, you're sitting up like such a big boy! Yay!" She clapped her hands in delight.

He looked her dead in the eye, smiled back, and moved his hands together three times.

She and I looked at each other in shock and I choked out, "He's clapping." She said, "I think he did. Yay!!" She leaned over him again and repeated her movement. He smiled back and did it again.

She looked at me. "Have you ever seen this before?"

"No, never in his life. He played peekaboo for the first time a few days ago too."

"Yay!!" She repeated her encouragement a third time. And for the third time, he made perfect eye contact, smiled broadly, and brought his hands together several times. In the past, he has sometimes clasped his hands to his chest in excitement. This wasn't the same gesture. His hands were cupped loosely and his wrists were floppy, so he did not manage to produce an actual clapping sound. **But the arm movement was deliberate, quick, and controlled. His eyes were steadily glued to hers. He looked at her expectantly, as if to ask, "Are we going to do it again?"**

She sent me an email from her personal account the next day. She thanked me for the bottle of Lourdes water I gave her. She also thanked me for sparking a lively dinner table discussion with her family about the miracle of Lourdes.



The number of things he accomplished in those thirty seconds, and in the game of peekaboo, is astonishing. Deep social engagement. Turn taking. Anticipation. Crisp, coordinated, fluid movements. (Encouraging a family to speak openly about the power of God!) This boy has been measured up, down, and sideways since last May, using both qualitative professional opinion and quantitative pediatric scales. He is moving past all previous accomplishments and predictions at a breakneck pace.

I have a skeptic's heart, a cynic's mind, and an agnostic's liberal graduate education. So I know some of you are reading this and thinking, "He was probably on the verge of making all these developmental leaps before the trip. The timing is just coincidental. This is the kind of nonsense that makes it impossible to talk to religious people about anything important. They throw science out the window and twist the facts to fit their desperate need to believe in some bogeyman in the sky, because they can't just deal with life."

I see you those objections, and I raise you this solid truth: God loves you more than you can possibly imagine, even if you choose not to love him back. Nothing I can say here will convince anyone who is utterly determined to view our world as entirely mechanistic, reducible only to mathematical and rational principles (even acknowledging that those principles may never be fully discovered).

You say coincidence. I say providence. No, I will come right out and say it: miracle. No scientific principle, no medication regimen, no innumerable therapy appointments can explain what has happened with our son's development this month.

We have five other children. I've watched intimately as five other babies made astonishing developmental leaps overnight, as babies do.

This. Is. Not. That.

I know this because I know babies in general and Oscar in particular. I know this because he

has confounded every member of his medical team. But I also know what has gone on in my own heart and mind since Lourdes. I am relying on the evidence of my eyes and ears, and also on the evidence of my spirit. And a God who can take the miserable wreckage of my faith-in-name-only, my painful introversion and unwillingness to rock the boat or take risks, and turn this sad, tired, broken woman into someone who is writing swiftly and publicly, ready to shout from every rooftop "God has done great things for us"... A God who took twelve Apostles frightened for their lives and hiding in a locked room, filled them with the Spirit at Pentecost, and turned them loose to build the greatest faith the world has ever known...

That God? That God loves us beyond measure, and numbers the hairs on our heads, and whispers love and peace and healing into the smallest details of our lives, without fail and without ceasing.

That God healed our son.

Oscar doesn't actually need to be healed. Our number one goal is to get our children to heaven, to return them to the Father who loaned them to us. Because of his cognitive development, Oscar is incapable of sin, and he may

stay that way forever. As a baptized Christian in a perfect state of grace, he has a straight ticket to heaven. Todd and I have talked a lot about something Ryan Young, Oscar's charioteer, said to us about healing. If Oscar is healed (i.e., made more "normal" like the rest of us), **it is for our benefit and to increase the deposit of faith.** But it's not necessarily the surest path to heaven for Oscar himself.

So in a way, we have been given the most miraculous gift of all. Oscar is so clearly better and different than he was before the trip. Is he "normal"? No. He may still never be. But maybe God actually healed him just enough to be a witness to the power of faith and to maintain his pure, sweet soul. To continue serving as a living icon of holy brokenness, by being able to engage the world around him a little bit more than he used to, by playing the starring role in an amazing story that his mother steps out of her comfort zone to share, so that more and more people can fall in love with our beautiful Oscar... and with the God who saved him, even before he healed him. ■

Story adapted and reprinted with permission from <http://faithfulnotsuccessful.com>



Oscar (Future Knight of Malta) with charioteer Ryan Young, KM. (Photo credit Michelle Babyak)

Reflections On The Order Of Malta Lourdes Pilgrimage



We are back from our pilgrimage to Lourdes, France, and excited to share with you our experience of this extraordinary journey.

We were honored to be invited by the Order of Malta American Association to serve as co-chairs of the 2017 Pilgrimage to Lourdes. In 1858, the Blessed Virgin appeared to Bernadette Soubirous at the Grotto in Lourdes, revealing the healing waters. The theme this year was, “Our Mother Mary, Full of Grace.”

Having been on the pilgrimage many times, we knew it would again be filled with many sacred moments. However, our view from the vantage of co-chairs was an entirely new experience as we had a front-row seat to the many stories of courage, selflessness and faith that emerged throughout the week.

The American Association’s pilgrimage to Lourdes is an annual event. The purpose of the pilgrimage, which this year took place from May 3 through 9, is to give people who are very ill, known as Malades, the opportunity to experience the healing waters and a range of other spiritual activities that take place during the week. The Malades each bring a caregiver, and both Malades and caregivers travel as our guests.

More than 400 people made the pilgrimage this year, including more than 60 pilgrims from the Boston Area. “We were delighted that so many of our local Knights, Dames and Auxiliary were able to

go to Lourdes this year,” said Damien DeVasto, chair of the Boston Area Order of Malta since 2013. “The Lourdes Pilgrimage is a wonderful way for our members to live our mission. We are committed to nurturing the faith as well as to providing assistance to the poor and suffering.”

Each Malade and Caregiver is assigned to a team, which includes members of the Order, medical professionals, a member of the clergy and various volunteers. Throughout the week, the team members serve the Malades and Caregivers by bringing them to the daily liturgies, the baths, the Marian candlelight procession, the Eucharistic procession and adoration and other spiritual events.

We cannot stress enough the importance of those who came on the pilgrimage to serve. The pilgrimage is not a glamorous European vacation. These selfless individuals dropped everything in their personal lives to work, to wear a simple uniform, stay in a basic hotel and spend their time seeing to the needs of our Malades and Caregivers. And yet, to a person they would tell you they get more out of the experience than they give.

“You can’t really explain a Lourdes pilgrimage unless you’ve gone to one,” said Boston-area resident Joe Milano. Joe has been a member of the order for 30 years. He made the pilgrimage in the 1990s and again with his wife, Jill, three years ago. Even though in 2014 Joe had just undergone seven months of chemotherapy to treat his

non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, he participated as a Member of the Order, not as Malade. Joe is doing well, and this year he and Jill, who is preparing to become a Dame, went again. "There was always a Mass, an inspiring Homily or message from the clergy," Joe said. "Msgr. Moroney's talk hit it out of the park. He is a gifted speaker."

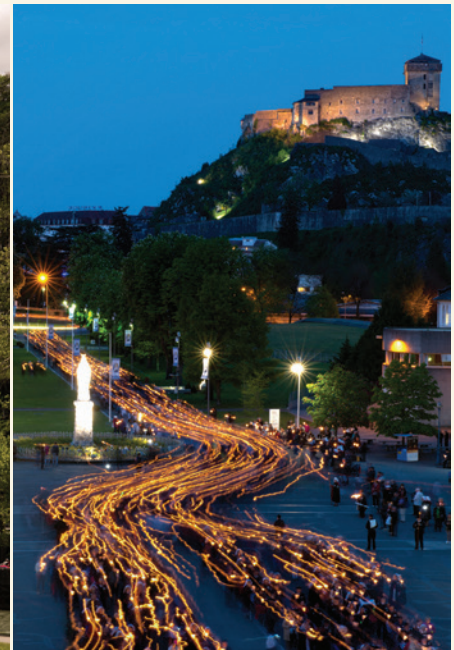
Joe is referring to Boston's own Msgr. James Moroney, rector at St. John's Seminary in Brighton. Msgr. Moroney was one of many members of the clergy — bishops, priests and deacons — who attended the pilgrimage, and we are deeply grateful for the role they played in making the 2017 pilgrimage such a success. They were completely involved, not just through programming, but through the individual pastoral support and spiritual guidance they provided every step of the way.

As Joe suggested, Msgr. Moroney gave us one of the most inspirational talks of the week. His subject was Mother Mary and how, at the Annunciation, Mary bowed to God's will. And while his message encouraging us to make room for God inspired us, Msgr. Moroney was inspired by others. "I was overwhelmed by the faith of the sick and the dedication of the scores of pilgrims caring for them," Msgr. Moroney said. "The sacrifices of the Knights and Dames of Malta combined with the hope so tangible in the Malades was a transformative experience." The monsignor noted that people think of Lourdes as bringing about a healing of the body, but other forms of healing take place as well. "Few Malades or Caregivers leave the waters of Lourdes without a miracle of faith, of acceptance of the crosses God has given to each one of them, and of renewed hope that the will of God leads to perfect joy," he said.

A moving example of Msgr. Moroney's point is the story of Gayle White and her 16-year-old son, Johnny. Johnny is nonverbal with moderate-to-severe autism. Gayle went to Lourdes as Johnny's caregiver. The highlight for her, and for other pilgrims who witnessed it, was when Johnny received the sacrament of confirmation. It took place at the morning Mass on the final day of the pilgrimage and was administered by Bishop Paul Bootkoski. Gayle said that normally Johnny would resist dressing in a suit as well as having the bishop anoint his head with oil. "He put on those clothes as if he'd been wearing a suit and tie all his life," she said. "He was beaming when Bishop Bootkoski touched his head. I think he knew what was happening. He is so intuitive and open to God." Gayle lost a son, Joe, four years ago. She said Johnny dressed in the suit looked so much like Joe. "My heart was broken and pleased all at the same time. The confirmation was a tangible healing moment for me and a powerful blessing for Johnny."

The 2017 Pilgrimage to Lourdes will always remain in our hearts. For almost a year we worked with an incredible team consisting of the American Association staff and volunteers; the Malade Selection Committee; the Medical Committee; members of the clergy; and the many Knights, Dames and Auxiliary who gave their time, love and compassion to make it possible for our Malades and caregivers to experience Lourdes. We have been truly blessed by this journey, renewed in faith and refreshed in our love of God. ■

Craig and Nancy Gibson are members of the Boston Area of the Order of Malta and co-chaired the American Association's 2017 Pilgrimage to Lourdes.





Lourdes in a Day

The “Lourdes in a Day Pilgrimage” is a project that reflects the importance of the Lourdes Pilgrimage for the Order of Malta while providing the sick and the poor with an opportunity to experience the graces and peace that can come from the celebration of Our Lady’s appearance to Bernadette. In its own way, the day is intended to “bring Lourdes to the sick and the poor” anywhere we have an Area. Mark Sullivan, KM, from Eastern Connecticut, began the project.

The idea for “Lourdes in a Day” began to form during Mark’s year of preparation where a brief discussion with Dr. Shine, his Area Chair, focused on an idea of a picnic to bring infirmed people together. The idea grew to a version of a ‘pilgrimage in a day’ in a discussion with Hope Carter at an event honoring John Santa in 2012 at Graymoor. The first “Lourdes in a Day” was held in 2014 at the National Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, MA.

Fr. Robert Dunn, ChM, has been involved since the beginning and truly embodies the spirit of “Lourdes in a Day”. As a NY Diocesan priest who suffers from M.S, Father Dunn has taken his sickness and turned it into an offering to the Lord by ministering to all Malades. Where others

can empathize with Malades about their distress, Fr Dunn connects better than anybody when he looks into the eyes of the Malades. Mark Sullivan says. “It has been my privilege to know him and to have had him as our Celebrant at all Lourdes in a Day pilgrimages.”

Lourdes in a Day accommodates those in our areas who are physically infirmed or who are simply looking for the Holy Spirit’s intervention. It serves those Malades who are not capable of international flight or long periods of time away from their homes and medical care and it provides an opportunity for local Knights and Dames, Auxiliary and volunteers to be of service to Our Lords, the sick and the poor. While the day is modeled after the Order’s annual pilgrimage to Lourdes in early May, it is in no way a substitute for the trip. Locally, it serves our diocesan Malades.

Mark comments, “Even though the day is planned for a location that is not the site of an apparition, the activities provide the Malade with the experiences of all the activities that are part of the Lourdes Pilgrimage; the day is undoubtedly filled with many graces and blessings from Our Lady and her Son.”

Bishop Michael Cote, Conventual Chaplain for the Eastern Connecticut Area and Bishop of the Diocese of Norwich, has been very supportive of the work of the Area; he has participated in the Lourdes for a Day program. The support of the Archdiocese of Hartford, un-

der the leadership of Archbishop Leonard P. Blair, has also been very helpful in getting the message out to the Catholic population as well as to the parish priests who might be able to identify potential participants. Here is an excerpt from the Archdiocesan website for the 2016 “Lourdes in a Day” event:

Known for their charism of defense of the Catholic faith and service to the sick and the poor, the Order of Malta conducts this one-day pilgrimage to allow those unable to make the trip to Lourdes, France to experience the joy, grace and healing promised by Our Lady of Lourdes. In 1858, Our Lady appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, a poor peasant girl, and revealed herself as the Immaculate Conception. Her instructions were to drink and bathe in the waters of the stream, which now holds the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes and the baths that are famous. She also asked us to pray, process and build a chapel — all done at the site of the apparition. Mass and candlelight processions are a daily celebration in this small town tucked in the Pyrenees Mountains.

You will experience many of these healing ministries as well as hear inspirational reflections during this spiritual journey. The day begins at 9:30 am with Reconciliation, and Mass with Bishop Peter A. Rosazza at 10 a.m. Lunch will be at noon and workshops for the sick and their caretakers afterwards. There is no cost and all members of the Order of Malta are welcome.

Mark Sullivan says that the success of the program requires a lot of planning and coordination. The church and other facilities that will be used must be accessible and comfortable for Malades. The Area sponsoring the event should coordinate with surrounding Areas to ensure that similar events are not scheduled within the same time period. He has put together a booklet on how to prepare and present a “Lourdes Pilgrimage in a Day” event and he is also available to advise any Area interested in developing such a program. Mark provided a brief outline of a typical “Lourdes in a Day Pilgrimage”:

- One of the priests who is very familiar with the Lourdes Pilgrimage gives a brief introduction to the story of Lourdes before the Mass, putting all in the Church in a prepared mind and spirit before this day of grace and healing begins.
- Throughout the Mass, the “Lourdes” Priest performs the many works that are bestowed on those at Lourdes.
- The Celebrant or an Order of Malta Chaplain will have an additional role as speaker after Mass. He will speak in equal parts to the Malades and then to their caregivers. This part of the day can be critical for those in attendance.
- The Knights, Dames and Auxiliary assist the Malades, caregivers and Clergy during Mass and throughout the day. Members

who have been to Lourdes should be directing teams as they know these functions. The volunteers for Lourdes in a Day perform a number of duties for our Malades.

- We lead all Malades and caregivers to the front rows and aisles of the Church. Medical personnel are interspersed with them. A Malade simply raises their hand for a doctor or nurse if needed. This must be explained before Mass by the Celebrant.
- The sacrament of Reconciliation is offered when people first enter the Church. The Celebrant and Concelebrants station themselves at confessionals near Malades and in other areas of the Church that offer privacy and proximity to the arrivals.
- After a Malade receives Reconciliation, he/she experiences the Washing portion of the day before Mass. Knights, Dames and volunteers circulate around the church and wash the faces and hands of our Malades where they are seated. The water used is from Lourdes, the significance of this is as Mary said to Bernadette; “Go... and wash yourself there. Pray to God for the sinners.” This prepares all those who come for the start of the Mass.
- The Mass begins with a procession. This may include candles that the Malades hold with windscreens that are used at Lourdes. This Mass includes the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick with Holy Chrism, which takes place after the homily. All other parts of the Mass remain the same.
- Following Mass, Knights, Dames and Volunteers serve the Malades and Caregivers at their tables at lunch, assist with any other needs, and clean up when people are finished eating.
- The reflections for the Malades and their caregivers immediately follow lunch. They may be in the same room, making it comfortable for all to stay in place rather than to be moved.
- All return to the Church at this time for Adoration and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Blessing of the Sick and Benediction. These sacraments provide the perfect spiritual activity to close out the day.
- At the end of Benediction, the Malades are given vials of Lourdes water as they leave the church through the Vestibule.

Mark Sullivan says that it is a very full day; guests, Knights, Dames, and volunteers leave steeped in prayer. For more information about setting up a “Lourdes in a Day Pilgrimage in your Area, you can contact Mark Sullivan, KM, at sllvnchrth@yahoo.com. Remember, all are welcome and must register early to be a first-hand part of this great day. ■



A Caregiver's Blog About the Lourdes Pilgrimage

The caregiver for 2017 Pilgrim Sara Santiago, Vilma Blankowitz wrote this wonderful reflection in her blog regarding her thoughts in deciding to go to Lourdes and the wonderful grace she received.

"Since I last wrote, I have traveled to Lourdes, France. I've shared in so many wonderful, miraculous and spiritual experiences. I've met some great people along the way. Before I left on my trip, I was distracted by all the prep and anxiety of the trip. I was most stressed about being away from home for 6 days. Upon my return, I was distracted by the fact that in a few weeks, I would be undergoing major surgery.

It's funny how routine life can get. It's even funnier how comfortable we become with the routine. If there's anything this trip to Lourdes has taught me, it's to STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE. By so doing, you allow yourself the opportunity to receive the many graces and blessings God has in store for you.

So let me start at the beginning: I was given the opportunity to go on an all-expense paid trip to Lourdes, France to travel as a caregiver to one of my friends who was applying for the trip through the Order of Malta. The Knights and Dames organize this pilgrimage every year and sponsor several sick/disabled people, along with their caregivers, to experience the beauty, spirituality and healing of Lourdes, France.

At first, I was conflicted about being chosen to be a caregiver. Although I have been there on several occasions to help my friend

with medical issues, I didn't feel I was her "caregiver" as I understood that word to mean. So I told her I wasn't interested in applying. At her insistence, I submitted the application and several months later got word that we had been approved to participate in the pilgrimage. I have to admit, I wasn't the least bit excited. My routine was being challenged. In addition to my routine, I had to break the news to my husband who suffers from PTSD since 9/11. Ughhhhh! As time went on and after I received my passport, God gave me the grace to accept the gift and blessing. I actually started getting excited about it.

... For now I'd like to fast forward to a month after my return home. The experience was one that neither words nor photos can aptly express. The magnitude of the "domain", the presence of God and the Blessed Mother around us, the sense of community with fellow pilgrims from other distant lands was mind blowing.

What truly touched my soul was the fact that despite the state of the world, I feared nothing, I worried about nothing, I focused on nothing else but the faith I love so much. That, my friends, is a gift I can never ever repay! As a result of my experience at Lourdes, I have returned to my routine with a deeper devotion to the Blessed Mother, with a desire to maintain the palpability of God's presence around me every day and a thirst to continue on pilgrimage! This would have never happened had I let my fear take control. FEAR — FALSE EVIDENCE APPEARING REAL! It's not from God — let it go!

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us! St. Bernadette, pray for us!



Miracles do happen: "a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a Divine Agency."

Dear Karol,

I hope you're enjoying your Summer. I wanted to thank you for bringing my prayer requests with you to Lourdes. One of the people on the list is an elderly patient of mine and she has made dramatic health improvements. I told her about your trip to Lourdes and that you were bringing a prayer request for her with you. She is absolutely convinced that the Blessed Mother answered our prayers.

She was in kidney failure and close to needing dialysis and has recovered completely.

Thank you so much.

Matt

The Order of Malta Engages in Humanitarian Work Throughout the World



The Order of Malta is active throughout the world in delivering medical, social and humanitarian services in many places throughout the world. The following articles from the Order's website provide an overview and a specific example of what the Order is doing today.

THE OLDEST CHRISTIAN MEDICAL MISSION IN THE WORLD

The Order of Malta is permanently present with medical, social and humanitarian projects in most countries in the world.

Its 13,500 members, 80,000 permanent volunteers and qualified staff of 25,000 professionals — most of whom are medical personnel and paramedics — form an efficient network that includes everything from emergency relief for refugees and the displaced living through war and conflict, to intervention in areas hit by natural disasters, hospital work, medical care and social services. Its programmes, run independently or within a framework of partnerships with governments and international agencies, are now active in 120 countries.

Aid for the victims of natural catastrophes and armed conflicts has intensified in recent decades. Through its national Associations, volunteer corps and worldwide relief agency, Malteser International, the Order of Malta provides emergency medical and humanitarian aid and works with the affected populations to implement reconstruction and disaster preparedness programmes.

The Order assists refugees across the world in countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of arrival. With a goal of long-term development, the Order of Malta stays after the crisis has passed with the objective of reducing poverty and vulnerability.

The Order of Malta's social care programmes reach out to thousands of people in need of dedicated care. These are the daily acts of support and kindness which do not attract great attention but which display the ongoing commitment to care of the Order's members and volunteers.

The Order of Malta both supports and directly manages several hundred medical centres, 20 hospitals and 110 homes for the elderly, as well as first-aid and ambulance crews.

MEDICAL CENTRE RUN BY THE ORDER OF MALTA TO OPEN SOON IN TIMOR LESTE

Medical centre run by the Order of Malta to open soon in Timor Leste

A new medical centre offering primary health care is about to open in Dili, Timor Leste, one of the poorest countries in Asia. The facility will treat approximately 200 patients a day serving one of the most disadvantaged communities of the capital Dili. Focusing on care for women and children, the clinic comprises examination and procedure rooms.

In a country where 1 in 6 children do not reach their 1st birthday due to treatable illnesses and malnutrition, the clinic will provide an opportunity to fulfil the Order's mission to help the poor and the sick.

Since Timor-Leste became independent in 2002, the Sovereign Order of Malta has undertaken many humanitarian initiatives across the country through its Embassy and the Australian National Association.

The Order's Embassy supports the medical infrastructure of the island, through projects such as funding the construction of a tuberculosis clinic at Venilale and a maternity hospital at Malabe, as well as donating a container full of birthing equipment to the Ministry of Health for the hospital in Baucau.

In 2014, the Order of Malta inaugurated an orphanage for 26 children aged from 6 to 18. The facility, managed by the Dominican sisters, is in Hera, a few kilometres from the capital Dili. It is surrounded by agricultural land which can help to make the structure self-sufficient and at the same time enable the children to learn a skill. ■

For more information on the work of the Order in providing help for those most in need, go to the Order's website at www.orderofmalta.int

Timor-Leste, or East Timor, a Southeast Asian nation occupying half the island of Timor, is ringed by coral reefs teeming with marine life. Landmarks in the capital, Dili, speak to the country's struggles for independence from Portugal in 1975 and then Indonesia in 2002. The iconic 27m-tall Cristo Rei de Dili statue sits on a hilltop high over the city, with sweeping views of the surrounding bay.

Population: 1,261,072 (July 2016 est.)

GDP: \$2.501 billion (2016 est.)

GDP per capita: \$4,200 (2016 est.)

Religions: Roman Catholic 97.6%



■ HIGHLIGHTS

The Auxiliary in Lourdes – Changes Over Time

Over the years, the mix of Lourdes pilgrims who make up the pods serving the Malades has changed along with the demographics of the membership of the Association. The Order and the Association have placed a greater emphasis on the need for Knights, Dames and Candidates in Formation to participate in the Lourdes pilgrimage. Every member is expected to have participated in at least one Lourdes Pilgrimage in their year of formation or during the first three years of membership. Experience shows that Lourdes participation provides the pilgrims with a clearer view of what the Order is all about.

The Auxiliary have often been referred to as “the arms and legs of the Pilgrimage” because they are expected to provide a resource on the pods as charioteers and pushers; in order for an Auxiliary member to be selected to participate, he or she must be able to meet the physical requirements of such an assignment. Auxiliary members wishing to be considered for the Lourdes Pilgrimage should already be active within the Area where they reside.

As the average age of new members has been falling, fewer Auxiliary are required on the Pilgrimage because the younger Knights and Dames entering the Order are more physically capable of serving as pushers and pullers on pods within the teams, providing “arms and legs”. This demographic shift has resulted in the limitation on the

numbers of Auxiliary who could attend the Pilgrimage in order to open spaces for newer Knights and Dames.

With the limited number of spaces now available for Auxiliary on the Lourdes Pilgrimage and the growth in the numbers of Auxiliary overall, the Board of Councillors took action at its September 2016 meeting to begin a shift. Effective with the 2018 pilgrimage, any Auxiliary member who is age forty or over who has participated already at the lower Auxiliary rate in a Lourdes Pilgrimage at least once, will now be expected to pay the full price for participating in all subsequent Lourdes Pilgrimages.

A strong and active Auxiliary Corps is an important component of the American Association. Auxiliary members play an active role within the Areas in the hands-on work of the Area. In many cases, they have their own activities, their own projects, under the leadership of the Area. One of the stated objectives of having an active Auxiliary is to provide the opportunity for people to experience the work of the Order and the Area without having to make a lifetime commitment that comes with becoming a Knight or Dame in the Order. Over time, it is hoped that this opportunity will lead many Auxiliary to seek membership as a Knight or Dame.

For more information on joining the Auxiliary Corps, see the Area Chair in your home location or contact Maria at the New York office.

ASSOCIATION CALENDAR

August 3-6
Wisconsin

Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Help

August 15
Assumption

September 7
New York City

Board of Councillors Meeting

September 8
Our Lady of Philermo

September 11-22
Pilgrimage to Fatima,
Lourdes and others

September 22-24
Huntington, NY

Retreat at Immaculate
Conception Seminary

October 8-17
Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

November 1
All Saints Day

November 2-4
Investiture Weekend Events

November 2
New York City
Board of Councillors Meeting

November 3

Annual Meeting, Investiture, Annual Dinner

November 23
Thanksgiving Day

December 3
First Day of Advent

December 8
Immaculate Conception

December 25
Christmas

January 10
Palm Beach, FL
Board of Councillors Meeting



Planting Seeds of Hope with Malteser International Americas



Throughout the Western Hemisphere and around the globe, our critical work is so important around the world and in the U.S. where people look to us to live out their faith and provide relief to all of God's children, no matter where they live or the color of their skin. Our relief work strengthens impoverished communities and helps struggling families live once again with dignity. And we do this all as an expression of our deep Catholic faith.

But we face a great challenge and we are hoping you will help us overcome it.

Malteser International is well known across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. For over 60 years, we have been known for responding to natural and manmade disasters like the earthquakes in Nepal and Haiti or the Syrian refugee crisis. In addition, last year, globally, more than:

- 1.6 million sick and wounded people were treated in our medical facilities around the world.
- 161,000 people were provided with access to fresh, clean water as a result of our projects.
- 186,000 mothers were provided with prenatal and postnatal care to protect themselves and keep their children healthy.

But, here in the United States few have heard of us. That's why we need to get the word out to faithful Catholics here about Malteser International Americas. It's a large feat and that's where the Order's Knights and Dames — our very own Giving Gardeners — come in.

And the Giving is simple; it doesn't cost a thing. All it requires is your faith in our work and your ability to affect change by doing two simple things this summer: 1) visit our Giving Gardener site <https://orderofmaltarelief.org/giving-gardener> and email us to receive seed paper that actually has special wildflower Seeds of Hope embedded in it. When you plant and water them, you'll be surprised to see beautiful flowers come into bloom, full of life and inspiration! And 2) share the other one with a friend or family member, and use the occasion to tell them about Malteser International Americas. On the back of each seed paper is our logo and website address. Please encourage your loved ones to visit our website

to learn more — and hopefully they will sign up for more seed packets to share with their loved ones, creating an ongoing Giving Garden of Hope!

When you plant this seed paper and help spread the word about Malteser International Americas, you plant Seeds of Hope that bloom not only in your garden and in the hearts of faithful friends, but also in surprising places.

- In Haiti, Seeds of Hope are planted every day. We are training 900 small-scale farmers in sustainable agriculture using model gardens to help them to improve their farming skills, harvest bigger and better crops, and teach them how to avoid erosion and protect the land so they can sustain nutritious crops every year! We're also setting up a greenhouse and training women to sow their very own Seeds of Hope to harvest more diverse fruits and vegetables to improve their nutrition and to increase their families' income. In all, we expect these efforts to benefit more than 70,000 people living in desperate poverty!
- In Colombia, Seeds of Hope come in the form of honey bees. Many of the families we help are rural farmers, who only grow what their family needs to just survive. Sadly, their basic crops of starchy vegetables have suffered from dramatic changes in the local climate. Many small farmers are struggling to put food on the table to feed their children because of the higher temperatures, severe and lengthy droughts, lack of water sources, and dying crops. Thankfully, our projects move farmers from subsistence farming to sustainable farming, and from traditional farming practices to alternative ways to provide for themselves, such as beekeeping! In Colombia it takes only \$46.50 per person trained to pass on skills like beekeeping and crop diversity to transform lives. You can find a short video illustrating how this initiative is providing hope, changing lives, and bettering futures at: <https://orderofmaltarelief.org/giving-gardener>

In these countries and other places, we plant Seeds of Hope for farmers who will then go on to train friends, neighbors, and children, spreading the benefit exponentially. But, planting the Seeds of Hope has the same dynamic and works here at home, as well.

The Haitians have a familiar proverb that translates as "many hands make light work." Working together, each doing our own part, we can accomplish many great things.

So, please, spend a few minutes thinking of someone who might be interested in learning about our work, sign up to receive seed paper as a gift to start a conversation about all the good Malteser International Americas does here and around the globe, and encourage them to visit our website and join our efforts. We need all the help we can get!

To reach the Giving Gardener page, you must use the entire URL: <https://orderofmaltarelief.org/giving-gardener>.

For more information about the work of Malteser International, visit their web site at www.orderofmaltarelief.org. You can also contact their office at: contact@malteser-international.org.

“The Lord hears the Cry of the Poor!”

Order of Malta

Very Rev. David G. Caron, OP,
D. Min, Ch. M



JULY SPIRITUAL OUTREACH PRESENTATION

These words from Psalm 34 are often sung as a Responsorial Psalm in Church; especially during the season of Lent. But how important it is for us as Catholic Christians—and especially as members of the Order of Malta to realize that the impact of these words from scripture are NOT just for Lent but for very day! After all, we as members of the Order of Malta acknowledge that the spirituality of our Order has its roots in the ideals and actions of our founder, Blessed Gerard. We have a distinctive motto...in a sense a dual mission, “defense of the faith and service of the poor and sick.” Today, we know that it takes courage to do both... living and defending our faith—by living our Christian values that many no longer see as important. Equally, important, our care of “our Lord’s the sick and poor” reminds us that in the important work of serving the sick, we are, in fact, serving Christ himself.

To care for the poor and the sick, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council actually refer to as having a Preferential Option for the Poor and the Vulnerable. This is actually part of the Church’s Catholic Social Teaching. This treasury of teachings reminds us that while the common good embraces all, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need deserve preferential concern. A basic moral test for our society is how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst. In a society marred by deepening disparities between the rich and the poor, the sacred Scripture gives us the story of the Last Judgment in Mt 25:31-46 and reminds us that we will all be judged, at the second coming of Christ, by our response and actions towards the “least among us.” We know this passage about the goats being sent off to eternal flames for their lack of action while the sheep are given entrance to the kingdom.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Friends, this passage is the basis of the Corporal Works of Mercy...the works that we as members of the Order of Malta do when we are about our Pro-life ministries, when we are feeding people in soup kitchens, when we do prison ministry, when we collect clothing, or visit people in hospitals, nursing homes, taking Malades on pilgrimage to Lourdes, and when we bring the Blessed Sacrament to shut-ins...we are in fact working out of the Church’s Preferential Option for the Poor and doing the Corporal Works of Mercy.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in #2248 explains the important reality of the preferential option for the poor this way: “Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere.”

Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI taught something similar in his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, #22, when he said, that “love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to [the Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel.” Wow! Care of the poor is essential! Pope Benedict is reminding us that hearing the cry of the poor and responding to their needs is Holy!

This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable includes all who are marginalized in our nation and beyond our borders—it includes unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, and victims of injustice and oppression. In fact, some in our culture want to define the poor solely as those lacking sufficient money to live at a standard considered comfortable or normal in a society. In other words, the economically poor but, we in our Church tradition, the scriptures, the magisterial teachings of the Church and our own experience in the Order are saying to us... today, don’t define the ‘poor’ narrowly;



instead define the “poor” more broadly. In fact, if one was to do a special study of the Bible one would come away from that study realizing that all members of society ...and society as a whole need to have a special obligation to poor and to vulnerable persons. Why? Because the scriptures show us that God’s covenant includes a special concern for the poor. A couple of additional passages worth noting:

- Deuteronomy 14:28-29
- Deuteronomy 26:12-13
- Luke 4:16-21 (Jesus mission to the poor/outcast)
- Luke 14:12-14 (reach out to the poor/vulnerable)

Well, what about us? How can we be more attuned to cries of the poor and not just sing about it in Church? It all starts with desire and a few choices. If we recognize a desire to be more attentive to the poor and to grow in affection for and solidarity with them, then it is likely that this will be a grace we have received. Pray to be open to this grace, but it is important to name the desire and to welcome it. Perhaps God has been offering us this grace for some time and preparing us to receive it not only in the season of Lent but all year long. If we don't feel this desire, perhaps we can ask for it in prayer. We can ask our Lord to help us grow in a desire to hear better the cries of those most in need. In doing this we grow in our participation in the mission and spirituality of the Order of Malta and more profoundly, we grow in our own Baptismal calling.

In our bringing this conversation to prayer, whether kneeling in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, after receiving Holy Communion at Mass, in fingering the beads as we pray the Rosary, or in reading the passages of scripture we might want to ask some questions: Who are the poor? Who are most in need? Who are the voiceless? Who are those most pushed to the margins of neglect and powerlessness? Pope Francis in his exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel” (Evangelii Gaudium) and in other writings refers to the poor as those on the “peripheries.” It doesn't take a great social

analysis to come up with some immediate answers to the aforementioned questions. We just need to be attentive to the news - locally, nationally, and globally. We can ask in our own local contexts, “Who appears to be suffering? Who seems to be tremendously burdened? Not all the poor are in the news, but a sensitive scan of the news is a place to start.

In light of what we discover in answering these questions our consciences may be pricked...How can we ignore the fact that those most in need of our solidarity are those who suffer painful hardships? Their misery seems almost inescapable. Many are trapped in poverty. So limited are some people’s opportunities, their poverty has become structurally entrenched. Perhaps the most pressing and painful examples are forced migrants, refugees, the undocumented); inner city populations (minorities, the elderly, the homeless, those caught up in addictions or those who are trafficked, the persistently poor); indigenous peoples at home and abroad; and the globally destitute. More than 800 million people who go to bed hungry each night. And to this, we followers of Christ acknowledge with the Psalmist, “The Lord hears the cry of the poor.”

Perhaps as you are listening to me you might be asking yourself: What do I do when I begin to hear the cry of the poor? Some people tend to not think of the poor very much because to do so

can render one sad or feeling "unable to help"—perhaps paralyzed. But, if we use a time like this Malta reflection to try to further reflect upon the situation of the poor... near us and around the world, then the poor will help us come to know God's special love for them...and God's care for us who respond to them. So, when we help them...we actually help our own souls, too! This conversation then is not heavy! It's actually good news! It's news of hope.

As I bring this Malta Spiritual Outreach -presentation to a close, I would remind all of us that prayer and reflection upon the situation of the poor, and subsequent faith-filled action, will draw us closer to them, helping us understand the mystery of radical dependence upon God. Ultimately, our closeness with the poor will make us more “Christ-like.” And isn't that our goal? Yes, the Lord hears the cry of the poor.

It's been a pleasure being with you on this July day for this Spiritual Outreach call! Let's close with a prayer.

God of Justice, open our eyes to see you in the face of the poor. Open our ears to hear you in the cries of the exploited. Open our mouths to defend you in the public square as well as in private deeds. Remind us that what we do to the least ones, we do to you. ■

Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The article from Father Dave is a transcript of the July Spiritual Outreach Call. The recording for this call and many of the past calls are on the Association's website in the Spirituality section. Here is the schedule for the next seven calls:

August 2	Saint Ignatius of Loyola	Msgr. Sylvester Cronin
September 6	Mary, Health of the Sick	Father Robert Dunn
October 4	The Rosary – Mary's gift to us	Father David Skoblow
November 1	All Saints – how to become one	Msgr. James Moroney
December 6	Advent	Father Frank Sevola, OFM
January 3, 2018	Elizabeth Ann Seton	Msgr. William Fadrowski
February 7, 2018	Lent – a time of sacrifice	Deacon Jeffrey Trexler

All of the calls are at 11AM. The conference call number: 1-800-442-5794; the passcode: 656886#



The Constitutional Reform of the Sovereign Order of Malta

ROME, 06/28/2017

The reform process for the Sovereign Order of Malta's Constitutional Charter and Code was launched few months ago. Ambassador Mauro Bertero Gutiérrez, member of the Government Council, is coordinating the work of the Reform Steering Committee. We met with him in the Magistral Palace, Rome.

Ambassador Bertero Gutiérrez, you have been appointed coordinator of the Reform Steering Committee. What does your role involve?

The Sovereign Council of May 3 appointed a Steering Committee of nine: five members of the Sovereign Council, the Prelate, two members of the Government Council and a Professed chaplain. Considering the importance of this reform process the Lieutenant of the Grand Master has also decided to participate in the Steering Committee's meetings.

On May 29, during the Committee's first meeting, I was asked to coordinate the work and I accepted this important responsibility with great humility and hope. My task is to manage the work at both the central and the outer levels. Some 200 people are directly involved in the work and a large number has sent suggestions and proposals. For this process to be successful, it is of the essence for everything to function as well as possible. Among my duties during the process, I would like to point out the one related to providing information about the different stages of the reform process. I am totally committed to doing so.

WHY IS THIS REFORM NEEDED?

The Sovereign Order of Malta's recent institutional crisis has provided us with a great opportunity to update our Constitutional Charter and Code. Promulgated in 1961, it was partially revised in 1997.

I would just point out some numbers. In 1961, we had some 3,000 members, while today their number is four times as many. In the early Sixties, we had 33 Grand Pories, Subpories and National Associations. Today we have 59. For example, the Order of Malta's South Korean delegation was established in 2016 — an encouraging event, demonstrating the Order's continuing expansion in the various corners of the world. Again in 1961, there were 25 countries with which we enjoyed bilateral diplomatic relations. Today there are over 100, in addition to all the multilateral relations, including those with the United Nations system. An exponential

growth like this requires rules and procedures and a governance system more in step with the times, with the Order's role and its international dimension.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REFORM PROCESS?

In March, all the Order of Malta's members were asked to send their ideas and proposals for the reform. Over 100 documents have arrived to date, coming from all over the world. We have analysed and summarised them and catalogued them by subject. We can say that their level is decidedly higher than expected. Thanks to this work we have identified ten areas to examine: First Class; Second Class; Third Class; Spirituality and theological knowledge — training and formation; Ministry of Chaplains; Role and Position of Dames; Youth; Structure of the Government and governance; Peripheral organisations (Grand Pories, Subpories, National Association); Financial administration and Compliance.

On May 31, the Lieutenant of the Grand Master sent a letter to all Grand Pories, Subpories and National Associations asking for the names of the members to be appointed in the groups dealing with analysing, discussing and producing concrete proposals in these categories. Our challenge here is to ensure that these groups are as representative and inclusive as possible, but at the same time the size of the group must enable them to work efficiently.

WHAT IS THE TIMEFRAME?

The working groups have been asked to produce their results by the end of 2017. In early 2018 an international seminar will be organised in Rome, attended by the working groups and the Order's local organisations, to analyse the proposals and reach the initial conclusions. This process must continue to be open, transparent and inclusive; the quality of the result is more important than its timing. If we realise that we need more time, we are prepared to extend the analysis and reflection process to ensure that this reform meets all expectations.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MSGR. ANGELO BECCIU, THE POPE'S SPECIAL DELEGATE IN THIS CONTEXT?

We want first of all to express our gratitude for the closeness of Pope Francis, demonstrated by this important appointment. The role of Msgr. Becciu is described in the Pope's letter of February 4 as: "my special delegate to the distinguished Order of Malta", you will work in "strict collaboration" with the Order's leader for developing together "a study in view of the appropriate spiritual renovation" of the Order's Constitution.

The reform of the Constitution and the Code is a specific responsibility of the government and all the Order's members. The Special Delegate is accompanying the reform

process through weekly meetings with the Lieutenant of the Grand Master, the Grand Commander and the Grand Chancellor. It is evident that the Special Delegate and the Holy See are particularly interested in the aspects of the spiritual life of the Order's religious members.

Some have expressed the concern that this reform could change the Order's identity, in particular by modifying its religious nature.

Not at all. I can reassure everyone that the spirit of this reform is to consolidate our identity as a religious-lay order, to make our healthcare and social activities even more effective and to reinforce our presence and our influence in humanitarian diplomacy at the global level. The charisma of 'tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum', as expressed over the nine centuries of the Order's life, is in no way under discussion. Those who express these views are clearly not familiar with the norms for revising our constitutional laws. The Extraordinary Chapter General, which will have to approve the reform, needs a two-thirds majority. Moreover, the rules concerning the Professed members specify that not only do they have to obtain two-thirds of the chapter members' votes, but also two-thirds of the Professed themselves. It is therefore absolutely impossible for an amendment to go against the Order's religious nature. The idea that there are opposing factions on this matter has no foundation whatsoever. That said, different opinions can exist and are actually encouraged.

This article is taken from the Order's website:
<https://www.orderofmalta.int/2017/06/28/the-constitutional-reform-of-the-sovereign-order-of-malta>.

■ IN MEMORIAM

Deceased Members: January 1, 2017 – Present

Michael Bienes, KM	Fort Lauderdale, FL
Lauren M. Bilyeu, DM	Massapequa, NY
Thomas A. Bolan, KM	Flushing, NY
Rev. Msgr. Patrick E. Brown, ChM	Wayne, NJ
Edward J. Callahan, Jr., KM	Wayzata, MN
Thomas F. Carney, MD, KM	Manalapan, FL
Frederick P. Crowe, KM	South Bend, IN
Most Reverend Thomas Vose Daily, ChC	Douglaston, NY
John T. Dolan, KM	Indian River Shores, FL
J. Barry Driscoll, KM	Milton, MA
Charlotte E. Flatley, DM	Milton, MA
Joan M. Gleason, DM	Bound Brook, NJ
Beverly June Heffernan, DM	Ypsilanti, MI
John Roger Hirl, KM	Dallas, TX
Thomas F. Keogh,	Old Lyme, CT
Francis H. Ludington, KM	Pelham Manor, NY
Barbara J. Mack, DM	Naples, FL
Richard E. Mack, KM	Naples, FL
James E. Madigan, KM	Green Bay, WI
Albert Makkay, KM	Centerville, MA
Rhody Joseph Megal, KM	Wauwatosa, WI
Thomas J. Mullen, Jr., KM	Ringoes, NJ
William J. O'Brien, KM	Quincy, MA
Robert D. Ouellette, MD, KM	West Boylston, MA
Ann R. Peabody, GCM	New York, NY
William T. Robinson III, KM	Florence, KY
Steven E. Schmidt, KM	Westborough, MA

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

(continued from page 2)

early pioneer Dames in the Association which had been mostly the province of Knights until Ann set about, at President Peter Grace's direction, to identify some women who would bring a new perspective to the Association. That move was brilliant and started the Association on the road to focus on the hands-on work that is the hallmark of the Order of Malta. Ann was key (with Cissie Ix) in organizing the first Association pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1986. Ann was chair that year and co-chair the following year with Cissie. Charlotte was co-chair in 1999 with Paula Murphy. Both women will be greatly missed and always remembered for the important impact they had on the history and future of the Association.

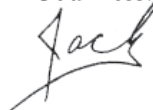
FEAST OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, PATRON SAINT OF THE ORDER

Many Areas celebrated the feast of Saint John the Baptist, Patron of the Order of Malta. The feasts we celebrate together

(World Day of the Sick/Our Lady of Lourdes, Saint John the Baptist, Our Lady of Philermo) focus our attention on the spiritual nature of the work of the Order. While we are often engaged in hands on work, it is always with the realization that it is our spiritual growth and perfection that we seek through the hands on work we do. The Mass and the Eucharist remind that we are linked to Our Savior through our response to feed the hungry and care for the sick.

May the Lord bring you many blessings during this summer season. May we continue to have a strong focus on the mission of our Order with the hope that we will grow spiritually as we live our charism to help the sick and the poor while giving witness to our Holy Faith.

God Bless!



Jack E. Pohrer, GCM
President



A PLACE OF PRAYER

A Place of Prayer, A Place of Peace



A small chapel on a narrow and winding country road will catch your eye, and maybe your heart, as you climb a small rise and see its gleaming white walls set in a field of green. The Order of Malta flag blowing from the front of the building signals something special and a visit to the chapel for the first Mass to be said there turned a beautiful summer Sunday afternoon outside Cooperstown, New York, into a prayer of grace and peace.

Karen Dutkowsky, DM, began the work of involving the American Association as a group in the Pilgrimage for Life, a journey to Washington to participate in the annual March for Life. Although Mrs. Dutkowsky died in 2016 after a courageous battle with cancer, her commitment to life lives on. The Association has continued to make the Pilgrimage to Washington in January each year, joining with members of the Federal Association and hundreds of thousands of others committed to the belief that life is sacred from the moment of conception to its natural end.

Dr. Joseph Dutkowsky, KM, built the chapel to honor the memory of the life and work of his wife. The small chapel with a bell and belfry has four stained glass windows on the side walls, calling to mind Faith, Hope, Love and Joy. The signature stained glass window over the altar features Our Lady of Lourdes and Bernadette. The Our Lady of Lourdes Oratory recognizes and remembers the importance of prayer, the Lourdes Pilgrimage, and the Order of Malta in the lives of Dr. and Mrs. Dutkowsky.

The Opening Mass was celebrated by The Most Reverend Edward Scharfenberger, D.D., Bishop of Albany, and Conventual Chaplain of the Order of Malta on Sunday, July 16th. Over one hundred twenty-five people, including Knights and Dames of the Order, joined together in prayer and hymns at the dedication of the Oratory and the opening Mass. A reception followed.

Our Mission

The American Association of the Order of Malta, carefully observing the centuries-old tradition of the Order, has as its mission, to enhance the glory of God through the sanctification of its members, through dedication to and defense of the faith and the Holy See and through service to our fellow man, especially the sick and poor.

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Photos for this issue have been graciously provided by Michelle Babyak, and others.

Change of address (physical or virtual)?

Please notify the New York office of all changes of address.

As the American Association continues to advance its communication efforts, the New York office has created the new Member Contact Information Update Form. This form provides members with a quick and simple way to update any, or all, of their information online. Members with and without active email addresses can now submit an update to their home address, professional, and even educational information on our website using this new form.

Want to try it out? After logging in as a member, visit orderofmaltaamerican.org/members/update and submit your full name and birthdate, along with any information that you would like us to update in our database. We hope that you will utilize this new method and help keep the American Association's records up to date.

You can also send a note to the New York office or send an e-mail to Miquan@orderofmaltaamerican.org or call our office at 212-371-1522.