



YEAR OF PREPARATION  
PRIMER

AN EXPLANATION OF THE ORDER,  
ITS HISTORY, ITS MEMBERSHIP &  
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem,  
of Rhodes and of Malta  
American Association  
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Order of Malta  
American Association

Year of Preparation Formation Program

Chapter 1--What is the Order of Malta?

This booklet is designed to give you a better understanding of the Order of Malta. With background knowledge of the Order of Malta, you will be in a better position to satisfactorily complete your year-long journey of preparation to become a member of the Order. Hopefully, many of your questions about the Order will be answered in the coming pages.

The Order of Malta is a lay religious Order of the Catholic Church with 14,000 members and 80,000 volunteers across the world headed by a Grand Master who governs the Order from Rome, both as a sovereign and as a religious leader. The Order was founded over 900 years ago by Blessed Gerard, a monk and Knight, who gathered a group of men and women together to commit themselves to the assistance of the poor and the sick, and to defend and to give witness to the Catholic faith.

Blessed Gerard established a hospital in Jerusalem in about 1050 A.D. to care for sick pilgrims in the Holy Lands. That care was extended to wounded soldiers on both sides during the Crusades. Since that time, members of the Order have committed themselves to grow spiritually by following the path set by its founder. While the Order's original members formed a community around Blessed Gerard, the current Knights and Dames live in a "virtual community" where each member lives out the Beatitudes by "serving our Lords, the sick and the poor" in his or her home environment.

As a sovereign entity, the Order of Malta today has diplomatic relations with over 100 countries, has a permanent observer mission to the United Nations, and delegations to numerous international humanitarian organizations. As a "service" organization, the Order operates a world-class maternity hospital in Bethlehem, serving Christian and Muslim women who cannot afford proper care. Through its relief arm, Malteser International, it provides on-the-scene help in disaster and war-torn areas around the world. And, each year at the beginning of May, thousands of members of the Order gather in Lourdes, France to bring the sick to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, to come in procession, to wash in and drink the waters of the Grotto, and to pray for spiritual, emotional and physical healing.

The Order is headed by the Prince and Grand Master who is elected for life by a council convened solely to elect the Grand Master when a vacancy occurs. The council is known as the "Council Complete of State", and consists of the members of the Sovereign Council, the Prelate of the Order, and various other leaders and members of the First Class (the exact make-up of the group is determined by the Constitutional Charter of the Order). The Grand Master must be a Knight of Justice (taking vows of poverty, chastity and obedience). He reports to the Pope and is considered to have the rank of Cardinal, although he does not have a vote in the Consistory when a new pope is elected.

The Sovereign Council, elected every five years by the “Chapter General,” includes the high offices of Grand Commander, Grand Chancellor, Grand Hospitaller, and Receiver of the Common Treasure (Treasurer), and six other individuals. The Sovereign Council assists the Grand Master in the government of the Order. The Grand Master, who is elected for life, presides over the Sovereign Council.

The Grand Commander is the religious superior of the Professed Knights and of the Knights and Dames in Obedience.

The Grand Chancellor as Minister of Foreign Affairs is in charge of the relations with the 47 National Associations of the Order in the world and the diplomatic corps.

The Grand Hospitaller’s responsibilities include the offices of Minister of Health and of Social Affairs and Minister for Humanitarian Action and Minister for International Cooperation. He coordinates and supervises the initiatives of the Grand Pories, National Associations and other Order institutions world-wide.

The Receiver of the Common Treasure – the Minister of Finance – directs the administration of the finances and the property of the Order in coordination with the Grand Chancellor, under the authority of the Grand Master and the surveillance of the Board of Auditors.

Apart from the Grand Master, members of the Sovereign Council are elected for a five-year term (renewable) by the Chapter General. The Chapter General also amends the Constitution and Code, and establishes policies for the Order.

There are 47 Associations within the Order of Malta worldwide. In the United States, there are three Associations, the American Association headquartered in New York City, the Federal Association headquartered in Washington, DC, and the Western Association headquartered in San Francisco.

The American Association is the oldest of the three US Associations and received its charter from the Order of Malta in Rome in 1927. For legal purposes in the United States, it is a 501(c)3 (non-profit) corporation, registered in the state of New York. The American Association is described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

***At its core, the Order of Malta is a lay religious order devoted to the deepening of its members’ personal sanctification through service to the sick and the poor. Joining the Order of Malta is a lifetime commitment to a way of life deeply rooted in a Christ-like focus on the least of our brethren.***

## A Lay Religious Order

The full title --“Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta”—is usually referred to by the shorter “Order of Malta,” but the longer version provides a better understanding of our identity - the additional words shed light upon the various rich aspects of who we are, where we came from, and what our purpose is.

Because of the chivalric background of the Order, there is a focus on honorable behavior and the arcane geographic places in our full name allude to glorious adventures of the past and battles fought by noble men in in defense of Christianity. More than our history, however, distinguishes the Order of Malta from other chivalric orders.

Most dioceses in the United States have very active groups of the Knights of Columbus. They are called “knights” and hold high ideals of chivalrous service but they are a fraternal association rather than an “order.” For the “Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre” the word “equestrian” means more than the fact that they historically had horses and the Order of Malta usually had ships—not simply an Army vs. Navy distinction. They are also knights but the word “order” in their title refers to a hierarchical form of governance rather than what it means in our name, a lay religious order.

An important aspect of our identity that usually comes to mind is **service**, a principal element of the charism of the Order – to serve the sick and the poor. Whereas the “Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre” supports the Christians in the Holy Land, our organization has projects close at hand no matter where we live. While we do have charitable activities spread across the globe—including a remarkable hospital in Bethlehem -- an important part of what it means to be a member is to roll up our sleeves and serve the sick and the poor right where we live.

It would be a grave misunderstanding to think that membership is an honor you are invited to share without thinking of the even more important duty you will assume of service to the sick and the poor. **Service** is a principal element of the charism of the Order of Malta.

As an international service organization, we are recognized by our flag: a white cross on a red background always and everywhere. Our official hymn is “Ave Crux Alba” or “Hail, O White Cross!” This same cross is emblazoned on our attire and reminds us of an important aspect of our organization that should frankly be self-evident: we are unapologetically Christian. Non-denominational service organizations such as the Red Cross societies adapt to become Red Crescent societies in Muslim countries. You will never find a crescent on the Order of Malta’s flag.

**Witness to the Gospel** is the other principal element of the Order’s charism. We serve the sick and the poor but we also commit to defend the Faith—the two go together. Our adherence to the Catholic

Faith should be manifested by our moral conduct, our ongoing learning and sharing of this Faith, and our service. We are not motivated by a paycheck or a place of honor in church or generic humanitarian inclinations. We are followers of Jesus Christ!

The teachings of the Church are often opposed by modern society. The sanctity of human life and the sanctity of marriage are not commonly accepted by many communities nor protected by our nation's laws anymore. We need the fortitude of our warrior predecessors to remain faithful to the Gospel and indeed proclaim anew the beauty of Jesus Christ as the Savior to a broken humanity sinking in selfishness and meaninglessness.

Service and witness are the two important aspects of the Order of Malta but we still haven't actually touched upon the essence of who we are and why we do what we do. It goes back to that little word which we usually skim over: "Order." We spend a lot more energy explaining how Malta was the penultimate stop in our group's bumpy journey from Jerusalem to Rome than we do on what it means to be an order.

The word "order" certainly indicates that we are governed by a hierarchical structure headed by a Grand Master and that we strive to live lives ordered according to the principles of our Faith. Our title's use of the word "order"—perhaps surprisingly even to some who are members—refers to the common usage found in religious circles when we speak of the Franciscan order or the Dominican order or the Benedictine order. **We are in fact members of a religious order of the Catholic Church!** Not just any order, but one of the most ancient as Blessed Gerard founded our order over a century before Saint Francis or Saint Dominic founded theirs.

It may seem incongruous to many that we are joining a religious order since the vast majority of members of the Order are married and have secular jobs. That said, the "heart" of the Order is what is called the **First Class**: the members who profess vows of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Just as the physical heart is much smaller than the body, so these members are a minority but are the essential element to the life of the whole Order of Malta. It would not be an "order" without them!

There is a **Second Class** whose members make a promise of obedience instead of professing the three vows. These Knights and Dames in Obedience freely oblige themselves to "strive for the perfection of Christian life in conformity with the obligation of their state, in the spirit of the Order" (Constitutional Charter, article 9, section 2).

The **Third Class** — to which most of our members belong and to which those in their Year of Preparation will be invested — requires a simple commitment to the mission of the Order of Malta. They devote "themselves to the charitable activities of the Order according to the provisions of the Code" (Constitutional Charter, article 9, section 3).

The three classes of the Order of Malta do not reflect degrees of greater or lesser prestige but rather increasing degrees of self-sacrifice. Our patron Saint John the Baptist gives us the stirring reminder, "He must increase, I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30). Saint Paul makes more explicit the meaning of the entire Christian life: "it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Profession of vows, promise of obedience, commitment to the mission of the Order... three ways of living the same charism given by God to Blessed Gerard over 900 years ago. That charism is accurately captured in the motto of the Order: *Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum* (“defense of the faith and service to the sick and the poor”). That is a good description of what we do but not yet the entirety of who we are!

Returning to the original question: “What is the Order of Malta?” Our official documents direct us that: “The purpose of the Order is the promotion of the glory of God through the sanctification of its Members, service to the faith and to the Holy Father, and assistance to one’s neighbor” (Constitutional Charter, article 2, section 1).

How many of us reply to that common question that it is a religious order aimed at the glory of God through the sanctification of its members? Service to the poor and witness to the faith are means to the end but not the end itself!

Herein lies the great difference between the Order of Malta and other organizations we have mentioned. The Order provides the way for its members to become saints.

Far more than doing good works, the Order is our path to Heaven. In a way similar to those who become Benedictine oblates or Third Order Franciscans or lay Carmelites, the members of the Second and Third Classes associate themselves with the vowed religious of the First Class in seeking holiness by praising God through the gift of their lives in the Order of Malta. There is a distinctive spirituality in the Order of Malta that should guide us.

We are first and foremost disciples of the Lord Jesus seeking to follow Him more closely by living according to the way revealed to our founder Blessed Gerard. The eight points of our white cross symbolize the eight Beatitudes taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt. 5). Saint John Paul II described the Beatitudes as the self-portrait of Jesus. As members of the Order of Malta, we are called in a special way to meditate upon and put into practice the Beatitudes. Blessed Gerard shows us how to use our service and witness to live them and thus shape our lives to be ever more Christ-like.

What does it mean that we belong to a “lay religious order?” At first glance these adjectives seem contradictory. How can something be both religious and lay at the same time? “Religious” refers to the vows taken by the members of the First Class. “Lay” refers to the fact that this order is not primarily composed of priests and deacons.

What is common to all orders is that they don’t conform the Gospel to the lives of their members but rather seek to stretch their members to the fullness of the Gospel. We should prayerfully examine how we can enter more fully into this rich spiritual tradition.

How faithfully will you live your vocation as a member of this Order? Will you make time for daily prayer, frequently attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and praying the Liturgy of the Hours? Will you make the corporal and spiritual works of mercy priorities? Will you encourage young people

to join the Order? Will you pray that more men will respond generously to God's call to profess vows in the First Class? Will you take seriously the faithful witness of our Order stretching back nearly a millennium and our responsibility to hand it on for another generation by not wavering in the face of the challenges of our day?

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the model for all those who seek to draw close to God. Under her title of Our Lady of Philermo, she is the patron of the Order of Malta. The Byzantine icon of the Blessed Mother, which tradition accredits to have been painted by St. Luke the Evangelist, was found in the ruins of a monastery on Mount Philermos in Rhodes. The Knights of Saint John, as the Order was known then, built a basilica on the site and reinstalled the icon. As a treasured possession of the Order, the icon accompanied the Order as it moved throughout the Mediterranean. The feast day of our Patroness is September 8th, the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated as a solemnity by the Order under the title Our Lady of Philermo. It, coincidentally, was the date the Order defeated the Turkish siege of the island of Malta in 1565.

*More information about the history of our Patroness can be found in the Appendix.*





## Chapter 2-- The Year of Preparation

A review of the rules and regulations of the Order regarding the Year of Preparation should give you not only a clearer idea of the actions you must take during the year and the expectations for your participation, but also provide you with a better understanding of what being a member of the Order of Malta really means.

### **Regulations & Commentary**

The Regulations and Commentary were promulgated by the Grand Master and approved by the Sovereign Council in 2011. This important document (which is available on the Association's website in the Year of Preparation section) provides a helpful interpretation of important segments of the Order's Constitution and Code (also available on the Association's website in the Year of Preparation section).

While the Constitution and Code should be read by every candidate during their Year of Preparation, the Regulations and Commentary can be a reference for years to come.

The Year of Preparation is clearly defined as a requirement in the Code of the Order:

### 2. THE PREPARATORY YEAR

#### ***Code art. 109***

**The reception of Knights (and) Dames ... must be preceded by a preparatory period of one year during which the candidate becomes acquainted with the history of the Order and participates in its works and programs.**

The Associations are required to provide a program that gives the candidates an introduction into the Order, its charism and regulations, as well as provide opportunities for candidates to participate in the spiritual activities and hands-on work of the Order. The Code clearly states that these are required activities (exceptions can be provided only by the Grand Master or the Sovereign Council).

The American Association provides for the educational piece of the requirement through a series of narrated PowerPoint modules which should be completed in the first six to nine months of the Year of Preparation or, alternatively, with this synthesized publication of those narratives.

The Regulations require that a candidate have two sponsors who are Knights or Dames. In the American Association, this requirement is met through your sponsors and the Area Chair who also signs your application. Both the sponsors and the Area Chair have the responsibility to shepherd each candidate through the year-long process of preparation and the application process. The Regulations require that they continue their supportive role through the early years of membership, once the candidate is approved and invested.

Each Association, and each Area within the American Association, has its own unique method of accomplishing the requirements of supporting candidates in their year of preparation. You, as the candidate, have the right and the responsibility to seek your sponsors' assistance in clarifying any of your responsibilities, in providing support and encouragement to you and participating with you in many of the activities during your year of preparation.

A successful year of preparation involves a partnership between the candidate and the two sponsors. That partnership will evolve over time – in many cases, the result is a lifetime of friendship and opportunity to grow together in the spiritual life of the Order and to share in the camaraderie that is one of the outcomes of working side by side with other Knights and Dames in serving the sick and the poor and in giving witness to the faith.

In the chapter on Works and Ministries, there will be a clear explanation of the importance of hands-on work in service to the sick and the poor for Knights and Dames. In your year of preparation, you should have multiple opportunities to be involved in working along with other Knights and Dames in serving the sick and the poor.

You may have already been involved in such activities. In many cases, that is how a Knight or Dame identified you as a potential candidate for membership in the Order of Malta. The early Christians were identified by the famous phrase, "See how they love one another." The same could be said for the Knights and Dames who show their love for Jesus through their service to the least of His brothers and sisters, the poor and the sick.

If you are already involved in hands-on work that is part of the Area's regular works and ministries activities, then you can probably continue to work in that same activity. You are encouraged, however, to also get involved in some other activity in your sponsors' Area to give you a broader perspective on the kinds of activities in which members are participating.

In some cases, Areas will have a planned set of specific activities in which you are expected to participate. You should discuss this early in your Year of Preparation so that you can arrange your schedule, working with your sponsor and the Area Chair to ensure you meet any Area-specific requirements. Early discussions will help to avoid any last-minute surprises.

In March of your Year of Preparation, you will be asked to submit a page from the application form (currently Page 3) on which you will summarize your participation in the spiritual and service activities within your Area. You should meet with your sponsor and/or Area Chair to develop a plan for completing the activities required for this form. Then, when it is time to submit the form, it will be easy for you to identify and explain the various activities in which you participated during your Year of Preparation. You should review your plan regularly to keep on target.

As you become more involved in different activities with members of the Order, you should take the opportunity to speak to other Knights and Dames to help you gain insight into the normal flow of activities as well as the reasons why members have chosen to join the Order.

Your Area Chair or sponsor should provide you with a calendar of events for the Area. Some Areas are particularly active while some Areas, because of geographic size or limited numbers of members, may have fewer planned activities. The Association website has a calendar of major Association events. Each Area should also have a similar Calendar, usually accessible through the Association's website ([www.orderofmaltaamerican.org](http://www.orderofmaltaamerican.org)). As many of our members travel or split their time between two or more Areas, the links to the various Areas' calendar of activities enable members and candidates to participate in the activities of other Areas when they are away from their home Area.

A key work of the Order in which the Association participates every year is the Pilgrimage to Lourdes. This is one of the principal works of the Order and is addressed fully in a later chapter. The Regulations state that candidates should attend the pilgrimage during their Year of Preparation, if possible, or within the first three years of membership. You should discuss with your sponsor whether you should pursue such an opportunity during your Year of Preparation; if you cannot participate during your Year of Preparation, you should note that the Order considers it important enough to state that you should participate within the first three years of membership if you cannot go during your Year of Preparation.

In recent years, the American Association, in collaboration with the Federal Association, has organized a shorter 3-day pilgrimage to the apparition site of Our Lady of Good Help near Green Bay, Wisconsin. Participation in the pilgrimage to this Marian shrine can also be considered a fulfillment of the Regulation's requirement, albeit in a much smaller setting than Lourdes. More information about this alternative can be found on the association's website.

The Year of Preparation is a time of discernment. By its nature, it is also a time of prayer and reflection. The Regulations and Commentary offer the following:

- The strong recommendation to the candidate to participate in a spiritual retreat to discern his/her vocation to join the Order.

The Association and the Areas offer several retreats each year. The dates of the Association retreats should appear on the Association calendar on the website as soon as they are determined.

Prayer is an important part in the life of a member of the Order of Malta. Most Areas offer multiple opportunities during the year to participate in the celebration of the Mass. Generally, Area Masses will be celebrated on the feasts of the patrons of the Order – Our Lady of Philermo (September 8<sup>th</sup>); Saint John the Baptist (June 24<sup>th</sup>) as well as on the World Day of the Sick (February 11<sup>th</sup> – the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes). Many Areas also have Mass on each First Friday of the month, celebrated by the Area Chaplain. You should speak to your sponsor and your Area Chair about what is available in their Area.

As you read these chapters or complete each module on the website, you should take the time to discuss its content with your sponsors. Ask questions; seek explanations about anything you are not sure. When you talk about the material you reviewed, it will serve to help you remember it; your sponsors may be able to offer insights from their own experiences. Among the advantages of making

the modules and/or these chapters available for self-study is the ability to set the time at the candidate's convenience.

In the Year of Preparation/Formation section on the American Association's website ([www.orderofmaltaamerican.org](http://www.orderofmaltaamerican.org)), you will find a number of resources that may be helpful to you as you proceed through your year of discernment:

I. The complete set of narrated chapters in this series.

II. Videos (or links to videos) recommended for your review: including Lourdes, Investiture Mass, an Italian Association Rescue, videos on two of our international works and the following "must see" videos:

***The Heart of the Order.*** A Video on the First Class

***What is the Order of Malta?*** An American Association Video

III. Assembled required/recommended readings to be housed in YOP Room: including the Regulations and Commentary; Constitution and Code; Chaplains essays; the Catechism of the Catholic Church; decrees from 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council; and several Papal exhortations and encyclicals. This section also includes a link to The Bible (Vatican's website, [New American Bible](#)) and a Prayer Book.

IV. Other resource material with links to the list of current Board members and Area Chairs.

This is the start of one of the most important years of your life. The prayers of the Association's Board of Councillors and your sponsors follow you throughout this Year of Preparation. It is fitting that you end this chapter as you will pray every day, the Daily Prayer of the Order of Malta:

*Lord Jesus, thou hast seen fit to enlist me for thy service among the Knights and Dames of Saint John of Jerusalem. I humbly entreat thee through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin of Philermo, of Saint John the Baptist, Blessed Gerard and all the Saints and blessed of our Order, to keep me faithful to the traditions of our Order. Be it mine to practice and defend the Catholic, the Apostolic, the Roman faith against the enemies of religion; be it mine to practice charity towards my neighbors, especially the poor and the sick. Give me the strength I need to carry out this my resolve, forgetful of myself, learning ever from the Holy Gospel a spirit of deep and generous Christian devotion, striving ever to promote God's glory, the world's peace, and all that may benefit the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. Amen.*



## Chapter 3 – The American Association

### **A Brief History of the Association**

On April 28, 1927, at the request of Pope Pius XI, the Sovereign Council of the Order in Rome granted a Charter creating the American Association as an official entity of the Order with headquarters in New York City. It became the tenth National Association of the Order, and the first in the Western Hemisphere.

From its small beginnings, it has grown to approximately 1,800 Knights and Dames, making it now the largest association within the Order. There are also nearly one hundred chaplains and several hundred members of the Auxiliary within the Association. There are 31 designated American Association Areas across the country with appointed Area Chairpersons and Hospitallers. Many Areas also have their own Membership and Communications chairs. Knights and Dames assist a broad number of charitable projects in their local areas with their hands-on volunteer efforts and additionally, in many cases, with their financial support.

The Association usually holds its annual business meeting in conjunction with its annual investiture of new members in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City each November.

There are three Associations in the United States: the American Association with headquarters in New York City, the Western Association with headquarters in San Francisco and the Federal Association with headquarters in Washington, DC. Each has its own executive offices and its own governance. All three Associations are part of the Order of Malta worldwide and seek the same spiritual goals, following the same charism.

While there were always women in the Association, even from the early years, the first large group of women was elected to the Order in 1986 when sixty women were admitted to the Association and were invested in the Order at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. The new Dames of the Association were instrumental in providing the leadership and planning needed to enable the Association in joining the worldwide Order of Malta's annual pilgrimage to Lourdes for the first time. The Association has participated in the Annual Order of Malta Pilgrimage to Lourdes since 1986.

The Association's first president, James J. Phelan, and later president, George MacDonald, were dedicated to increasing the Association's membership and in helping to grow the Association's resources. The list of the Association's Presidents is on the Association's website.

His Eminence, Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop of New York, was selected as the group's first Chaplain in 1927. By charter, and by tradition, the Archbishop of New York is the Principal Chaplain of the Association and, by charter, the Association's headquarters are in New York City.

In the coming years, the Association received the protection and guidance of Francis Cardinal Spellman. He initially became acquainted with the American Association while a Monsignor in Rome working with Mr. Edward Hearn (a founding member of the American Association), and his connection with the Association strengthened over the next few years.

Cardinal Spellman possessed an exceptional ability to achieve things both political and economic. As a political manager and businessman, he had few equals within the Church. Following his installation as archbishop of New York in 1939, Cardinal Spellman's support for the Association continued to grow. By 1941, Francis Cardinal Spellman was listed as the 'Grand Protector' and 'Spiritual Advisor' of the Association. Using his inherent talent, drive, and devotion to the Association, Cardinal Spellman was able to enlist the aid of some of America's business and professional leaders in support of the Association.

In 1989, the American Association received national recognition when His Most Eminent Highness Frá Andrew Bertie, Grand Master of the Order, presented President Ronald Reagan with the Collar of the Order pro Merito Melitensi. This presentation at the Association's Annual Dinner was the first time in the Order's history that an American President had formally recognized the Order. According to the Association's president at the time, J. Peter Grace, "The President ... [received] this award for his vigorous defense of the pro-life cause during his eight years in office, his commitment to Christian moral principles, and his dedication to traditional family values."

President Reagan's remarks provided great insight into this Order from an outsider and a major political leader. Below is an extract of remarks made by President Ronald Reagan at the American Association's Annual Dinner at the Waldorf Astoria in 1989:

*"Today, as for nine centuries, you, the Knights and Dames of Malta, serve the victims of poverty, hunger, and disease. I have often noted that in America we have a tradition that began when the first community of settlers joined together to help build a home for a newcomer: the tradition of neighbor helping neighbor, the tradition of the barn raising, and the settlement house and the church-run hospital, the tradition that Tocqueville spoke of in wonderment more than a century and a half ago when he observed that when there was a job to do, Americans didn't wait for the government but pitched in and did it for themselves. Well, yes, an American tradition, but one more ancient and universal as well, of which history offers few examples more crystalline and enduring than the Knights of Malta.*

*But to return to faith, hope, and love, your work with the ill, in particular, those with leprosy, now those with AIDS; ...your support of Mother Teresa's care for the poorest of the poor; your work feeding the hungry in Latin America -- these are some of the highest examples of love, compassion, and mercy in our time. They have the power of faith moving in the modern world."*

President Reagan's remarks resonate today as members and candidates for membership reflect on an outsider's view of the work of the Order. We are called to continue the work of Blessed Gerard in a

world which he probably never conceived. But the issues still remain and the work of the Order has never been more needed.

## **Governance**

The Governance of the Order is defined in its charter and outlined in its By-laws.

The American Association is governed by a Board of Councillors, consisting of a President and 24 other individuals. All are elected by the members of the American Association and serve a three-year term, renewable for a second three-year term. One third of the Board is elected/reelected each year. The President is elected by the general membership; officers of the Board are elected by the Board members from among the elected members of the Board and include the Chancellor, the Treasurer, the Secretary, the Hospitaller and the Vice Hospitaller.

Elections are held each year, in the Fall. As noted above, the terms of the President and the Board members are three years and they can run for re-election. After two terms, elected members must wait three years before being considered to run again. One third of the seats on the Board are up for election each year, providing the opportunity for transition as well as stability.

The Board has a number of standing committees to address ongoing issues of governance including the Admissions Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Audit Committee, the Disciplinary Committee and the By-laws Committee. The Board also has Operating Committees which may change from time to time, depending on the needs of the Association.

## **Areas of the Association**

The extensive geographic territory covered by the American Association necessitates the division of the Association into geographic units defined as Areas. There are thirty-one Areas in the Association. Because of differences in member locations, some Areas consist of a full state, one includes multiple states and some are political subdivisions of a state. Within a state, the boundaries of each Area are often defined by county or by diocese.

A map of the Association's current Areas is available on the website. The American Association's territory is primarily the northeast quadrant of the country from the Atlantic to the Rockies, and north of the Mason-Dixon line, but due to migration and the "snow bird" effect, it also has very active Area groups in parts of Florida and Texas.

Areas are headed by an Area Chair or in many cases, Area Co-Chairs. The Area Chairs are appointed by the President of the Association with the approval of the Board of Councillors. The President receives recommendations for consideration from Area members when an Area Chair's term is expiring. Terms are for three years with the opportunity for re-appointment to a second three-year term. The Area Chairs report to the President of the Association and are charged with "carrying out the plans of the Association as they relate to the Areas." They also have the responsibility to "further the charitable, religious, and beneficent works of the American Association within their respective regional areas, and to assist the President and the Board of Councillors in the effective administration of the Association."

Area Hospitallers are appointed by the Area Chairs, subject to the approval of the Board of Councillors. The Area Hospitaller is responsible for current and prospective works and ministries within the Area. Most Areas have an Area Treasurer, an Area Membership Chair, a Grants Committee Chair and often, a Communications Chair---although the Area Chair assumes all of these responsibilities in some of the smaller Areas.

Area chaplains are a spiritual resource for members in the Order and assist in providing worship and spiritual activities including days of recollection, Eucharistic ministry training, celebration of Masses related to key dates of the Order as well as other activities.

Each Area is responsible for developing spiritual and hospitaller activities that can engage Members in growing spiritually by living the charism of the Order. Certain events are prescribed such as Mass on the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. In addition, Areas may host social activities, often connected with spiritual and hospitaller activities. Areas help in growing membership by identifying potential candidates through contacts at work, church, and in other volunteer settings.

While Areas and the Association do not own organizations such as hospitals, food banks and pregnancy support centers, the Areas support activities where Members join with organizations in place to provide volunteer support as well as resources. Areas also administer the Association's grants program; Area leadership and Area Grant Committees make decisions on Area Grants to support works in which members are engaged.

The Grant funding is provided primarily through a grant the Association receives annually from the Malta Human Services Foundation. This Foundation was established to grow resources to support the charitable works of the Association and other works of the Order of Malta. Some Areas also provide additional funding for Area grants.

The Auxiliary is an important component of the Area population and may help with American Association projects and can initiate its own projects and experiences to create a strong and vibrant membership. Auxiliaries fully support and participate in all the spiritual and ministerial activities of the Order, as well as their own projects and programs. Auxiliary members are members of the Association and participate with the Knights and Dames to further the work of the Order.

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Some of the historical information on the American Association was taken from an article by Dr. Carl Edwin Lindgren, Member of the Royal Historical Society (London) and the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars.





## Chapter 4-- Works and Ministries

As the Daily Prayer of the Order states, “Be it mine to practice charity towards my neighbors, especially the poor and the sick.” Members of the Order do that in any of hundreds of ways, always focused on those whom Blessed Gerard referred to as ‘our lords, the sick and the poor.’ As servants to those who are sick and poor, we join in a worldwide Order of people dedicated to the same resolve, crossing boundaries of time and space.

In this chapter, we discuss the meaning of the Order’s charism of nurturing, witnessing and protecting the faith (*tuitio fidei*), and of serving the poor and the sick representing the Lord (*obsequium pauperum*) and how it relates to what is required of every Knight and Dame in the Order. When a person becomes a member of the Order of Malta, he or she is expected to pursue a lifetime journey of spiritual development that takes form through active engagement in helping the sick and the poor, and giving witness to our Faith by our works of charity towards those in need.

This chapter will also provide an overview of the types of works and ministries in which members can become involved in their Areas and in the Association; in addition, you will get a brief look at some of the major international works of the Order.

The Regulations and Commentary state the following about the Order’s Charism:

For nine centuries, the mission of the Order has been “*the promotion of the glory of God through the sanctification of its Members, service to the faith and to the Holy Father, and assistance to one’s neighbor*”.

The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of Malta fulfills this mission as “*a religious lay order...*”

It is devoted to its charism of nurturing, witnessing and protecting the faith (*tuitio fidei*), and of serving the poor and the sick representing the Lord (*obsequium pauperum*).

*(taken from the Regulations and Commentary – page 26)*

“Giving witness to the faith, serving the sick and the poor” - you will hear this phrase time and time again as a reminder of what being a member of the Order of Malta is all about. The charism of the Order of Malta, as expressed in this short phrase, is simple to learn and a challenge to live. The Order of Malta originated as a Hospitaller order in Jerusalem where Blessed Gerard gathered a group of like-minded individuals who dedicated themselves to the care of pilgrims in the Holy Land. It continues to provide service to the poor through its operation of hospitals (mainly in Europe),

volunteer activities in hospitals, nursing homes, homeless shelters, and a variety of other interactions with the sick and the poor.

When we discuss the history of the Order in Chapter 6, we will see how, although the Order of necessity developed a military component, it never lost its focus on its hospitaller function – the thread that is woven through its history and is carried on by the Order and its members more than nine hundred years later. Even before the Order was an Order, men and women dedicated to the service of the sick and the poor in the name of Christ were at work in Jerusalem.

### **Hands-on Work**

The Regulations and Commentary have this to say about hands-on work of the members of the Order:

“In search of a tangible response to the love of Christ, the first Members of the Order recognized the Lord and served Him in sick pilgrims in the Holy Land. Serving the sick and the poor (*obsequium pauperum*) has its origin in the divine compassion for the misery of the world, which obliges the Members of the Order to serve Jesus Christ, who is present in the sick.

With respect to the other purpose of the Order, witnessing the faith (*tuitio fidei*), the Members of the Order, recognizing the image of God in each individual, are especially called upon to become involved in those situations where human life is threatened in its God-given essence and dignity.”

*(taken from the Regulations and Commentary – page 37)*

What characterizes the commitment of the members of the Order of Malta is the hands-on work in which they become engaged. The Order of Malta’s Annual Pilgrimage to Lourdes provides a foundation on which members develop a better understanding of the nature of the Order and the role of hands-on work in the spiritual development of its members. Participation in the Lourdes Pilgrimage has been the impetus for many members to grow their commitment to hands-on work.

Again, the Regulations and Commentary are clear on the spiritual nature of the hands-on work of its members:

“Consequently, the Order is the tangible way for its Members to fulfill the supreme commandment of love for God and neighbor, to honor God and sanctify themselves in the imitation of Christ and in communion with the Church. The charisma of “*obsequium pauperum*” leads Members to encounter the Lord in the sick through personal service. All Members are, therefore, called on to practice, personally and regularly, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

By serving the sick and the poor, the Members of the Order put into practice the Word of the Lord: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:35-36).

This service demands a personal commitment by every individual, in order to enter into a concrete relationship with those in need. This relationship [should] be marked by friendship and real respect for those being assisted, for their own sake. Service to the needy must have priority in the works of

the Order. Although the tasks can vary according to the nature of the work as well as the training and abilities of the Members, the personal relationship to those being served should never be absent.

It is always insufficient to describe the charism of “service to the sick and the poor” in words. In its deep and real sense, it can only be experienced during and in service. It is alive in the Order and in the Members only insofar as it is implemented.”

*(taken from the Regulations and Commentary – pages 37- 38)*

Candidates who choose to become members are making a lifetime commitment to share their time in the spiritual activities of the Order, to serve the sick and the poor as their path to spiritual growth and to share of their material goods to help the sick and the poor.

### **International Works of the Order - The Lourdes Pilgrimage**

The Pilgrimage to Lourdes is one of the most important works of the Order. It is so important that the Regulations and Commentary speak of attending the pilgrimage as an obligation to be completed in the first three years of membership with the recommendation that candidates in their year of preparation attend the pilgrimage if possible.

The Grand Master has designated the Lourdes Pilgrimage as one of the key priorities of the Order. In addition to the important work of helping the sick, the Pilgrimage provides a focus for the Knights and Dames of the Order that they do not get anywhere else. It is often said that once a member attends the Lourdes pilgrimage, they better understand what the Order is all about. The active participation in service to the Malades (the sick people who journey with the Association to Lourdes) is an eye-opener for many good people whose experience with hands on work may have been limited. The Pilgrimage brings together everything the Order stands for – witness to the Faith, service to the sick and the poor, a worldwide organization serving in many countries, an institution of the Church with a long history and a strong tradition.

Seven thousand (or more) members of the Order gather in the little village in the mountains of southern France each year over the first weekend in May. With them come thousands of sick people (Malades) and their caregivers, medical teams, chaplains, and volunteers. Knights and Dames from all over the world join together, reminded that they are in solidarity with each other through the bond created when they joined the Order of Malta.

The Lourdes Pilgrimage will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

### **Other International Works of the Order**

In addition to the Lourdes Pilgrimage, there are a number of other major works of the Order which are supported monetarily and sometimes with volunteers which will be highlighted here.

**Malteser International** is the worldwide relief agency of the Order of Malta for humanitarian aid. Its worldwide operations include emergency medical interventions, long term reconstruction and development programs. Formerly known as ECOM (Emergency Corps of the Order of Malta), Malteser International has more than 50 years of experience in humanitarian operations.

There are twenty-six Order of Malta Associations belonging to Malteser International. Malteser International has its headquarters in Cologne, Germany, and currently runs 100 projects in 27 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Malteser International Americas is located in New York and has made significant financial and material contributions to the recovery efforts after hurricanes and earthquakes in the U.S as well as Central and South America.

**The Holy Family Hospital** in Bethlehem, Palestine, is a joint project across the Order of Malta, under the operational responsibilities of the French Association of the Order. The hospital provides the population of Bethlehem and its surrounding area with an indispensable service, offering the only possible place for women of the region to give birth under good medical conditions. Since 1990, more than 65,000 babies have been born in the hospital. Its primary objective is to offer high-quality maternity care to all women, regardless of race, religion, culture or social condition. Because of the continuing unstable political and the very tight economic situation, the need for the hospital services has increased. In recent years, the hospital has added mobile units, enabling staff to travel in medical vans out into the countryside to serve a wider audience.

The hospital's operating costs are sustained by the Order of Malta. Patients pay what they can afford. For those unable to pay, charges are reduced or waived. The heavy financial burden is borne by the French Association, with help from the National Associations of Germany, USA, Ireland and Switzerland and by the European Union.

**The Global Fund for Forgotten People** was founded by the Government of the Sovereign Order of Malta in 2011. The Fund raises money for works of the Order of Malta, which reach out to those who would otherwise be forgotten. In partnership with the Order's national organizations and diplomatic corps, the Fund raises awareness of, and support for, particular issues which have fallen under the radar.

Forgotten People are those who, even in our modern world, when the spotlight of attention seems to shine everywhere, are suffering beneath the surface. The Global Fund makes approximately 40 grants a year in support of the forgotten and builds the capacity of the Order of Malta to support forgotten people around the world.

All of these summaries came for the Order's website in Rome. You can get there from the Association website: [www.orderofmaltaamerican.org](http://www.orderofmaltaamerican.org). Click on "The Order's Seat in Rome" on the left navigation bar and then click the link at the bottom of the home page.

Links to the websites for these organizations and other important organizations can also be found in the Year of Preparation section of the website.

## Area Ministries

Every Area has the responsibility to provide opportunities for hands-on work in which members may participate. In most cases, those activities are in support of the work of another non-profit organization delivering services to the sick and the poor or giving witness to the Faith. For example, members will volunteer to host one night a month at a soup kitchen. Or members will pray in front of a Planned Parenthood location with a Right to Life group. Most Areas have a number of opportunities including prison ministry.

Many candidates are attracted to the Order of Malta (or are invited to join) because they are already involved in hands-on work and see that ministry as a way to grow spiritually on a personal level. Some members become involved as Eucharistic ministers, bringing Holy Communion to the sick in hospitals and the homebound.

One of the books prepared by the Association and available on the website is the *Spirituality in Action Resource Book*. It contains information about many of the hands-on activities in which members are involved and you can find an in-depth description of all of the hands-on activities within your area.

Also on the Association's website, you can find a calendar of events for the Association; it also contains entries for many of the Areas' activities.

*Prison Ministry* is often referred to as the national work of the American Association. Since its start in 2006 as a result of work on the Association's strategic plan, prison ministry has grown to a ministry that crosses the American, Federal, Western, and Canadian Associations.

Prison ministry addresses a serious national issue, often one person at a time. A sample of the variety of different activities carried out in the Areas includes visiting jails, state and federal prisons, including "Death Row;" celebrating Holy Mass and conducting prayer services for the inmates; distributing Association bibles and prayer books in English and Spanish and our quarterly publication, "The Serving Brother." Over 140,000 publications are distributed annually to the incarcerated by the American Association through its prison ministry efforts.

There are pen pals, mentors and tutors for the children of the incarcerated, and bus arrangements for families to visit inmates in far-removed prisons. Ex-offenders are provided with resources, mentoring and contacts to transition to the outside world. Families of the incarcerated and the victims of crimes are also part of the scope of the activities in which Area members are engaged.

The ministry offers hope to the inmates, if not in this world, then in the next. The message is that there are those "on the outside" who care about them and are praying for them. Most of the Areas within the American Association have active prison ministry work. Your Sponsor or Area Chair can direct you to the local activity.

## **American Pilgrimage: Our Lady of Good Help, Wisconsin**

Since 2016, members of the American and Federal Associations have jointly organized a pilgrimage to the site of the U.S.'s only known and approved Marian apparition near Green Bay, Wisconsin. The pilgrimage takes place over the first weekend in August, but unlike the pilgrimage to Lourdes, members and malades make their own travel arrangements. Once there, the activities of prayer, procession and spiritual reflection are organized in a manner similar to Lourdes.

Although the Good Help pilgrimage does not give the participant the unique understanding of the nature and scope of our Order, participation in this pilgrimage does fulfill the same obligation of attending a pilgrimage that the Regulations and Commentary mentions.

## **Works And The Admissions Application**

As you will have noted, there is a page in the application entitled: SERVICE IN THE PREPARATION YEAR (currently Page 3). This form is to be completed by April 1<sup>st</sup> of your year of preparation and, as noted below, should reflect your involvement with hands-on activities in your area during the prior six to nine months.

The Preparation Program requires service, including “hands-on service to the sick and the poor”. The candidate is asked to describe the spiritual and corporal works, performed on behalf of the Church, for the sick and the poor, undertaken during the Preparation Year.

The importance of hands-on work is reinforced in the Admissions process, but it is only the start of your lifetime engagement in living the charism of the Order – service to the sick and the poor, witnessing and nurturing the faith.

## **Summary**

For a Knight or Dame in the Order of Malta, the lifetime commitment to engage in hands-on work in support of the sick and the poor and in giving witness to and defending the faith becomes the path to spiritual growth.

There are many opportunities for involvement. The Area should provide the center for engagement in a variety of different activities suited to the members. The path to spiritual growth laid out by the Order's charism is long and straight but it is wide enough to accommodate varying personal schedules or travel plans. The pace and the amounts will vary by individual based on age, current state of life, career demands and a variety of life challenges that Knights and Dames face. But the direction will be the same.

Your year of preparation is a time of discernment. The hands-on work in which you engage will help in that process. You are trying to determine whether the path laid out by Blessed Gerard and travelled

for over 900 years by Knights and Dames from around the world is the path you want to follow. Discernment is critical – the decision you make should reflect your willingness to make a *lifetime commitment* to that path that is a requirement of being in the Order of Malta. Your year of preparation should put you on the path – through your work, prayers, and God’s grace, you can stay on the path through the Order of Malta for the rest of your life.



## Chapter 5 – The Lourdes Pilgrimage

Each year, Knights and Dames from all over the world meet in Lourdes accompanied by sick Pilgrims, caregivers, medical teams, clergy, Auxiliary and volunteers.

Our Blessed Mother appeared to a French peasant girl – Bernadette Soubirous - on 18 occasions over a period of months in 1858. Mary requested that people come to Lourdes on Pilgrimage - which they have been doing for more than 150 years. Lourdes draws around eight million Pilgrims a year to the shrine.

Bernadette died in 1879, was beatified in 1925 and canonized in 1933 by Pope Pius XI. Pope John Paul II visited Lourdes in August, 1983 and again in August, 2004. He made Marian piety one of the centerpieces of his papacy.

The Church has recognized 69 miracles in Lourdes. The International Medical Committee of Lourdes which works with the Bishop of Lourdes-Tarbes is a group of about 20 physicians; they have certified another 2,000 unexplained cures. Many of the Pilgrims-- people who are ill, even dying—go to Lourdes hoping for physical healing. Few attain that goal but they experience spiritual miracles and are able to leave Lourdes with an inner peace they did not feel before. In 1858, Lourdes was a small village in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains of southwestern France with a population of about 4,000 people. It was known as a garrison town and, even to this day, the fort on the hill occupies a prominent place in the Lourdes landscape, overlooking as it does, the Sanctuary and the town.

The town is on the Gave de Pau River which passes right through the city and actually divides the Sanctuary in two. The Grotto where the apparitions took place is located on the north end of an outcrop of rock called Massabielle (from the local dialect, meaning “the old rock”) on the bank of the Gave.

Bernadette Soubirous was born on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1844, into a loving and devoted family. Her family was generally provided for as her father was a miller with a successful business. Over time, however, a series of misfortunes beset the family and they were left nearly destitute as Mr. Soubirous lost his business. At one point, the family moved into an abandoned single room that had once served as a prison cell. But the family stuck together and supported each other as best as they could.

Bernadette was a good child but she suffered from asthma that was aggravated by the family’s poor living conditions. Because of the situation, she was not able to receive a proper education and was studying religion with seven year olds when she was a teenager.



Between February and July 1858, Our Lady appeared eighteen times to Bernadette in a marshy area near the river. The Lady, as Bernadette initially referred to her, eventually revealed herself to be the Immaculate Conception (a term which Bernadette likely did not understand). Father Peyremale, Bernadette's parish priest, was initially skeptical of her reported visions, but became convinced when he heard Bernadette refer to the Immaculate Conception because he knew that she would have had no knowledge of the term or the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (which had been proclaimed four years earlier).

The Blessed Mother told Bernadette to dig in a certain spot and to drink from the small spring of water that began to bubble up.

Today, the spring delivers thousands of gallons of water daily, enough for Pilgrims to bathe in it and for many more to take home water from the spring. There likely have been thousands of reported and unreported cures over the years, in addition to those miracles officially recognized by the Church.

The message Mary gave to Bernadette had a number of elements:

"Go to the spring, drink of it and wash yourself there.

"Penance, penance, penance, pray for sinners."

"Go, tell the priests to come here in procession and build a chapel here."

Each year, Pilgrims from every corner of the globe find their way to the banks of the Gave de Pau River to reflect on the words that Mary shared with Bernadette in the place where those words were spoken. Today, they find a city of about 15,000 people with the largest number of hotel rooms in a French city outside of Paris. The Pilgrimage "season" generally runs from Easter to October with the feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8<sup>th</sup>) and the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11<sup>th</sup>) also drawing Pilgrims to the Grotto in large numbers.

Lourdes today is far different from the isolated mountain village of 1858. Several huge basilicas and churches dominate the grounds, including two built on top of another – the Rosary Basilica, the Crypt Church and the Upper Basilica. To the right side, toward the Gave River, is the old stone outcropping, the Massabielle, where Mary appeared to Bernadette in the Grotto. A statue of Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes, is placed in the side of the rock where she appeared.

During the Pilgrimage season, there are Masses, prayer services, Eucharistic processions – in many different languages suited to the groups of Pilgrims who travel together to that sacred space. The candlelight procession for which Lourdes is famous winds between the walkways of the Sanctuary, a flickering ribbon of light created by the candles as Pilgrims say the Rosary and sing hymns of praise to Mary.

While Lourdes, the village, and the Sanctuary, have clearly changed from the time Bernadette saw the first vision, the heart of the grotto remains essentially the same. The statue of Mary looks over the Grotto area and across the river to the plains. A long line of people slowly winds into the cave-like

area carved out of the rock, praying reverently and leaving petitions in a special box from which they are removed and burned.

Candles are a symbol of the Sanctuary in Lourdes. The thousands of candles held by Pilgrims as they make their way through the sanctuary during the candlelight procession, the large rack of candles in front of the grotto proclaiming the sacredness of that special space, the rows of candles brought by Pilgrims, lit with prayers of hope and trust that line the walkway to the right of the Grotto near the baths – all proclaim the glory of God and the love of His Blessed Mother.

Of course, water is another enduring symbol of Lourdes – the spring that Mary revealed to Bernadette still flows and Pilgrims use the faucets in the sanctuary to draw water and bring it home, using it for prayer, for washing themselves and their sick friends, not because it has magical powers but because of their faith in the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes.

**The International Order of Malta Pilgrimage to Lourdes** is usually held over the first weekend in May each year. Over 7,000 Pilgrims - members of the Order, auxiliary, clergy, physicians and nurses - bring Malades (French for “the sick”) and their caregivers to Lourdes from throughout the world. Typically, there are more than 1,000 Pilgrims from the three Associations of the Order of Malta in the United States.

The American Association has been participating in the International Order of Malta Pilgrimage to Lourdes since 1986. In recent years, the Association has chartered a plane to bring between 350 and 400 Pilgrims each year, including approximately 50 Malades plus their caregivers. Both the malades and their care givers travel as the special guests of the Association. Their expenses are the responsibility of the American Association and are funded through the generous donations of members and part of the registration fees paid by Knights and Dames who participate in the Pilgrimage. From the start of the pilgrimage at Kennedy Airport in NYC, Knights and Dames, the Association’s Auxiliary, clergy, physicians, nurses and volunteers all assist in the care of the Malades. Once in Lourdes, we all stay together in hotels and dine together as family.

During the Pilgrimage, the Knights and Dames wear the service uniform of the Order with a patch showing their nationality, and join with Knights and Dames from throughout the world in living the 900-year-old mission of the Order; service to the sick and the poor (*obsequium pauperum*) and nurturing, witnessing and protecting the faith (*tuitio fidei*).

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The Pilgrimage to Lourdes is one of the most important works of the Order. It is so important that the Regulations and Commentary speak of attending the Pilgrimage as an obligation to be completed in

the first three years of membership with the recommendation that Candidates in their year of preparation attend the Pilgrimage if possible.

The Grand Master has designated the Lourdes Pilgrimage as one of the key priorities of the Order. In addition to the important work of helping the sick, the Pilgrimage provides a focus for the Knights and Dames of the Order that they do not get anywhere else. It is often said that once a member attends the Lourdes Pilgrimage, they better understand what the Order is all about.

The active participation in service to the Malades is an eye-opener for many good people whose experience with hands on work may have been limited. The Pilgrimage brings together everything the Order stands for – witness to the Faith, service to the sick and the poor, a worldwide organization serving in many countries, a treasure of the Church as it has been referred to, with a long history and a strong tradition.

While there are records of many physical cures from sickness and disease, the miracle of Lourdes for many comes from the understanding and acceptance of what God has given to us. Malades and caregivers go home with a sense of peace not previously experienced. Knights and Dames find that their service to the sick brings its own rewards, not the least of which is the alignment of their service in Lourdes to their commitment when joining the Order. “Now I know what it is I joined; now I understand the commitment I made.”

### **The American Association and the Lourdes Pilgrimage**

In 1985, eight women from the American Association went to Europe to tour the European charities of the Order. They visited Knights and Dames of the Order in Germany and in France. On that visit, they learned that the Order went to Lourdes every year. Later that year, the American Association President spent two days in Lourdes during the Order’s pilgrimage. When he returned, he committed the Association to participate in the 1986 Pilgrimage.

In 1986, there were 37 American Association pilgrims who travelled to Lourdes and followed along with the other Associations in the activities of the Pilgrimage. In 1987, the Association brought 46 Pilgrims including six Malades and three doctors. In the early years, the Pilgrimage went through Paris on commercial flights and travelled the next day to Lourdes.

Now, the Pilgrimage has grown to more than 350 pilgrims who travel together on a chartered jet directly to the airport closest to Lourdes. The size of the group and the complexity of transporting more than fifty Malades make it much more important to avoid the need to transfer the group in Paris. In addition, it would be impractical to travel commercially with such a large group.

Candidates in their year of preparation and Knights and Dames with less than three years of membership are offered an opportunity for early registration to reserve their seats. The Association is usually blessed with “sold out” Pilgrimages so early registration is a help. The registration process begins in the Fall.

## **Malades**

An important part of the registration process includes the Sponsoring of Malades by members. Sponsorship does not necessarily include paying for the Malade and caregiver. The central focus, the driving force and the only reason for the Order of Malta Pilgrimage to Lourdes, is the Malades and their caregivers. In the American Association, the more than fifty sick persons who are selected to participate in the Pilgrimage are proposed by Members who know the person and understand the likelihood that they could benefit from the Pilgrimage.

Members who propose Candidates for consideration for the Pilgrimage are called Sponsors. The Sponsor proposes the Candidate, helps them with getting the forms completed and provides a resource for the Candidate concerning questions they may have about the Pilgrimage.

The Malade Selection Committee is composed of members of the medical team, headed by a doctor. They are familiar with the rigors and challenges of the Pilgrimage. Based on the medical information provided by the Candidate's doctor and the considered opinions of the medical team, each Candidate is reviewed to determine suitability for the Pilgrimage. The Committee takes into consideration the Candidate's information, the ability of the Pilgrimage to manage the Candidate's situation in Lourdes, and the mix of Candidates being considered for the Pilgrimage. Depending on the Candidate's medical condition, the Candidate may be accepted, provisionally accepted with a check on the Candidate's condition closer to the Pilgrimage, or included in the "Malades in Spirit" program which recognizes sick persons unable to travel to Lourdes through prayers by the Pilgrims in Lourdes and by the Knights and Dames who are not on the Pilgrimage.

Once a Malade is accepted (along with a caregiver, if appropriate), the Malade is notified. As the Pilgrimage draws closer, the Malades are assigned to specific teams (designated by colors). In addition to a caregiver, the team will include team captains, a medical team, a chaplain, Knights and Dames, Auxiliary members and volunteers. Each team will normally include about fifty people including seven or eight Malades.

Applications to Sponsor a Malade are sent with the application for the Pilgrimage. It is recommended that Sponsors submit the form nominating someone as a Malade as early in the process as possible. Sometimes it takes a while to gather all the relevant medical information so the sooner the process begins, the more likely that the complete set of information will be available on a timely basis for the Malade Selection Committee.

All Malades and most Pilgrims travel together on a charter flight from the New York Area to Lourdes. From their arrival at the airport until their return at the end of the Pilgrimage, the Malades become the focal point of all the activity of the Pilgrimage. Everything is planned around them.

Malades, while in Lourdes, travel from the hotel to the Grotto in carts called voitures, pulled and pushed by Knights, Dames and Auxiliary. Periods of reflection are set aside where the Malades and

Caregivers meet with chaplains to gain further insight into the meaning of pilgrimage and into their own faith.

### **Typical Schedule**

The Pilgrimage opens with a Mass at the beautiful Rosary Basilica – joined by the Pilgrims from the Federal and Western Associations, the Malades and their caregivers are front and center for this important Mass.

A Morning of Reflection provides the Pilgrims, with the Malades sitting right up front, with the opportunity to focus on the spiritual aspects of the Pilgrimage and the spiritual aspects of their illnesses. Many Malades, caregivers, Knights and Dames take the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at this time. The Anointing Mass follows the Morning of Reflection – at the Mass, the Malades (and any other Pilgrims who wish) receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

On another day of the Pilgrimage, the Association joins the Federal and Western Associations at the Grotto for an outdoor Mass in front of the place where Mary appeared to Bernadette. Celebrating a Mass in this sacred place is an important event for those who have never been to Lourdes and for those who return year after year.

On Sunday in Lourdes, the International Mass is celebrated in the Saint Pius X Basilica, an underground facility that holds twenty-five thousand or more Pilgrims – the Mass is a celebration of the universal nature of the Church. Cardinals, bishops, priests, deacons, a magnificent choir and thousands of Malades all combine to bring the 25,000 participants to a new level of appreciation for the international aspects of the Catholic Church.

The Candlelight Procession is one of the most beautiful spiritual exercises - thousands of people carrying candles in the darkness, praying the Rosary together in many languages, raising their voices in song, “Ave, Ave, Ave Maria”.

This focus on the Malades is a way for Knights and Dames to live the charism of serving the sick and the poor. Lourdes also offers the ideal place to give witness to the faith and so it is considered a perfect venue for Knights and Dames to live out their commitment to the Order, growing in their spiritual lives as they serve the sick in that most sacred place.

There are many reasons that people go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. The reason the members of the Order of Malta go is to serve. In that service in that special place, many Knights and Dames find the true reason that the Order of Malta will be their spiritual home. Knights and Dames see the Order at its best; they find themselves challenged to be their best as part of that ancient and holy community following in the footsteps of Blessed Gerard, caring for the sick, becoming the servant of those in need.

It is a rare Knight or Dame who can participate fully in the Pilgrimage and not come home moved by the experience, changed for the better, renewed in the commitment to live the charism, giving witness to their faith by their service to the sick.



## Chapter 6---A Brief History of the Order of Malta

The Order of Malta traces its origins to a hospice for pilgrims started in Jerusalem, perhaps earlier, but certainly by the 1070s. It was a place of recovery after the rigors of a long journey and of assistance to those in need. During the siege of Jerusalem in the First Crusade in 1099, Frá Gerard rendered great service to the Crusaders. After the victory, he and his fraternity continued to help the wounded and sick of all faiths, the pilgrims and others in need. A number of the Crusader knights, attracted to this work as a way of following in Christ's footsteps, joined his group. In effect, this religious fraternity became the first "order of chivalry," that is, a group of knights formally joined together under a rule or code of conduct.

While continuing to be a hospice for pilgrims, the facilities of the fraternity of Saint John developed into what became the first real "hospital" in the modern meaning, and the brothers became known as "The Hospitallers of Saint John" or merely "The Hospitallers." As early as 1111, many of those serving with the Order were volunteers who did not take the religious vows. By a Bull of February 15, 1113, Pope Paschal II approved the institution of the fraternity "of The Hospital of Saint John", recognizing it as a religious order of the Church. It was placed under the direct protection of the Holy See which ensured its right to elect Frá Gerard's successors without interference from other ecclesiastical or lay authority, making it an "exempt" order and establishing it as a sovereign entity. It was the first religious order of the Catholic Church with a centralized administration and government and, as such, is the oldest in the Church.

By the mid-1120s, circumstances had forced a new role on the Order -- although an old role for its members who were knights -- that of armed protection for pilgrims and the defense of the new Christian Kingdom and its holdings against Muslim attacks. Thus, in addition to being a chivalric and religious Order, it also became a military Order. It attracted many recruits and quickly became one of the two "standing armies" (with the Knights Templar) in the area.

The Hospitallers of Saint John, like those in the Templars, were feared and respected for their bravery and fighting abilities. They were given the duty of defending a number of castles and fortresses at the most vulnerable points in the Latin East. This new role enhanced the Order's prestige and increased the steady flow of recruits, privileges and donations. The Order was able to expand a network of hospices for service to, and defense of, pilgrims not only in the Levant but also in Europe.

Almost 200 years after the capture of Jerusalem by the First Crusade, the last of the Latin settlements in the Levant was lost again to Muslim forces. On May 18, 1291 the great fortress city of Acre fell after a fierce siege. The Convent, or headquarters, of the Order was transferred to the island of

Cyprus. During its first two centuries, the Order had employed transport ships to carry supplies and pilgrims. It also had some excellent warships, but they were always subsidiary to its land forces. Finding itself on an island, however, the Order established a navy as the only means of carrying on its struggle to reconquer the recently lost Holy Land.

In 1306, the Order invaded the island of Rhodes. The Convent moved there in 1309 and, by 1310, its conquest had been completed. The Order created a new crusading base, and then strengthened it by also occupying a number of islands in the southeastern Aegean Sea, close to the coast of Asia Minor. It thus also acquired territorial sovereignty.

During the next 150 years, various holdings of the Order were attacked many times. In 1440, the Mamelukes of Egypt mounted a serious threat to Rhodes itself, with an unsuccessful invasion. They returned in 1444 for a 5-year invasion effort which again failed. On May 23, 1480, the Ottoman Turks began the first of the "great" sieges. They invaded the City of Rhodes with 70,000 men against the Order's 600 Knights and sergeants-at-arms, about 1,500 to 2,000 troops and some armed civilians. The siege was lifted in August, but the Order's casualties included 231 Knights killed and many wounded, with large numbers of casualties among the soldiers and civilians. Frá Pierre d'Aubusson, the Master of the Order, received a cardinal's hat from Pope Eugene IV, the first Master so honored. In 1489, he began the regular use of the title "Grand Master".

In July 1522, Suleiman I, later to be called "the Magnificent" personally led a force of perhaps 200,000 men in the second "great" siege of the Order. Rhodes was defended by about 500 Knights and sergeants of the Order and about 1,500 soldiers and some able bodied inhabitants. With munitions seriously depleted, and to save the population, on Christmas Eve, the Grand Master was persuaded to accept the very honorable terms of capitulation offered by Suleiman. On New Year's Day 1523, the Order departed from Rhodes with the honors of war, its treasure and the great relics of the Order.

In 1523, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, in his capacity as King of Spain, offered the Maltese archipelago (Malta, Gozo and Comino) and Tripoli in North Africa to the Order in sovereign fief. On March 13, 1530, the islands and Tripoli were ceded in fief to the Order for the symbolic annual payment of a falcon, for which Malta was well known. By a Bull of May 7, 1530, Pope Clement VII, himself a former Professed Knight of the Order, gave his approval, and the Convent of the Order moved to Malta.

In 1565, Suleiman the Magnificent, then 70 years old and exasperated by the successes of the Order, compelled his forces to take Malta. On May 19, the third "great" siege began with 375 vessels and a force of some 40,000 men -- of which over 25,000 were regular combat soldiers, including about 6,300 Janissaries. Facing them were 540 Knights, the Order's sergeants and men-at-arms, 400 Spanish soldiers and some native Maltese who could bear arms. At the end of June, 43 Knights and about 650 soldiers managed to reinforce the garrison. After almost four months of fierce hand-to-hand combat,



on September 7, a relief army of 8,000 landed on the island. On September 8, the Feast of Our Lady of Philermo, the Patroness of the Order, the Turks withdrew.

Of the initial defending force of perhaps 8,500, by the end of the siege, 7,000 had died and only 600, most badly wounded, were capable of bearing arms. Only 15,000 of the original 40,000 Turks returned home, and they were forced to enter their harbor at night to hide the defeat. Thus ended one of the most famous sieges in history. All Europe recognized the debt it owed to the Order for halting what had been perceived as the irresistible force of the Turks. Even Elizabeth I of England, separated by great distance from the Mediterranean and by serious religious differences from the Order, declared days of rejoicing and prayers of thanksgiving.

The decline of Ottoman sea power dated from this defeat. The Order had an important part in its further destruction in the great sea battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571. The Order's galleys were given the place of greatest danger, and corresponding honor, in the Christian fleet. This battle ended the Ottoman threat to Europe by sea.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Order eliminated the Barbary piracy in the Straits of Messina. Malta became the major commercial hub of the Mediterranean. Aside from the policing efforts of its fleet, from its arrival in Malta until 1722, the Order fought the Ottoman Turks, usually in alliance with other Christian powers. After that, it operated with greater independence. In effect, it also was the "naval academy" for training the officers for most European fleets.

The rise of Protestantism in the 16th and 17th centuries caused the loss of many of the Order's possessions and of much revenue. Prior to this point, the Order had sizable income from its raids on the enemy. But, by the 18th century it was suffering from its own success in having driven all but the smallest corsair vessels from the sea, thereby gaining much less in booty. By the end of the century, it was in financial difficulties.

In 1789, the French Revolution began a process that vastly changed Europe. In June 1798, General Napoleon Bonaparte visited Malta on his way to invade Egypt, with the intention of capturing the important islands and destroying the power of the Knights. The terms of the treaty by which the Order had acquired Malta required strict neutrality on the Order's part in conflicts between Christian powers -- and guaranteed their neutrality toward the Order. However, in June 1798, the French deliberately violated this neutrality, invaded Malta, expelled the Knights and captured the Order's treasures.

In 1798, a number of the Knights, dispossessed by Bonaparte's continuing conquests, took refuge in Russia with Tsar Paul I who had shown himself friendly to the Order (and who had hoped thereby to gain a Russian presence in the Mediterranean). Tsar Paul became the "protector" of the Order, and then had himself proclaimed "Grand Master". After the death of "the mad Tsar," his son and successor, Alexander I, renounced the claim of his predecessor to the title of Grand Master and

helped the Order to return to legitimate rule with the election in 1803 of a Grand Master, Frá Jean Baptist Tommasi, who died soon thereafter, in 1805.

It would appear that in 1802, Pope Pius VII, by his interference, virtually destroyed the Order's chances of recovering Malta, and in 1814, he was instrumental in preventing the Order from making good that loss in another place. Years of petty self-interests made permanent the disasters of the period of the French Revolution. Finally, at the invitation of Pope Gregory XVI in 1834, the Order established its Convent in Rome in what had been its embassy to the Holy See, on the Via Condotti, and in its villa on the Aventine, both of which had and still have extraterritoriality.

In 1879, the leadership of the Order was restored to legitimacy when Pope Leo XIII confirmed the election of a Grand Master and bestowed the honor of cardinal to that position. Although with the fall of Malta, the Order lost its military power and much of its resources, it continued with its original charism, the care of the sick and the poor. The Order began to take on its present structure in the latter part of the 19th century.

Since the Second World War, the Order has expanded its membership, including in the New World, and greatly expanded its Hospitaller work. Today, the Order is larger than ever in its history. It has operations on every continent (except Antarctica) and is one of the major aid and relief agencies in the world. It has diplomatic relationships with over 110 countries, has the status of Permanent Observer at the United Nations, and participates in a number of international organizations.

The Order has 14,000 members, 80,000 volunteers and 25,000 employees around the world. In some ways it has wider influence and serves more people than its founders could have imagined. It is still a sovereign, military, Hospitaller, and religious Order. During its 900-year history, the Order has faced many challenges and has responded to those challenges without changing its primary purpose: the spiritual development of its members through the defense of the Faith and help of one's neighbor.

The history of the Order is fascinating and for many, it is inspirational. Although much of the history detailed above focuses on the military aspects of the Order, the contributions made by the Order to the care and well-being of the sick should not be overlooked. Early on, hospitallers were credited with placing the sick in individual beds and with serving food to patients with silver or metal spoons, rather than wood, to prevent the spread of germs. By the time the Order was settled on Malta, it had erected a large teaching hospital and contributed to the development of both ophthalmology and pharmacology. As detailed in an earlier chapter, the Order continues the tradition of its hospitaller heritage by operating hospitals and ambulance corps in Europe and in the Holy Land, and in the U.S., volunteering in in healthcare facilities.



## Chapter 7--The Daily Prayer of the Order of Malta

**“You are seeking to become part of an Order which spreads around the globe. Knights and Dames become conscious of the geographical universality of the Order of Malta. Recitation of the Daily Prayer of the Order reminds us all that there are fellow Knights and Dames around the world reciting the same prayer each day.”**

This brief segment taken from volume seven of the Journals of Spirituality regarding the **Ecclesial dimension of the Order of Malta** focuses on the universal nature of the Order and the link that prayer creates among all the members of the Order around the world.

The prayer of the Order will be a regular reminder of what the Order of Malta is all about and what we are committing ourselves to be as a person and as a Knight or Dame.

We as individuals say these words on a daily basis – we speak to Jesus and ask Him, while reminding ourselves, to help to live more fully the life of service and commitment to the Order we belong to. At the same time, the prayer reminds us of the community we are joining as Knights and Dames around the world join us daily in the recitation of this special prayer.

In this module, the Daily Prayer of the Order of Malta will be discussed in detail. Hopefully, after completing this module, you will find the Prayer more meaningful as you say it in unity with Knights and Dames from around the world.

**“Lord Jesus, thou hast seen fit to enlist me for thy service among the Knights and Dames of Saint John of Jerusalem.”**

The opening sentence directs our prayer to Jesus Christ. It may be startling to some - we acknowledge that membership in the Order of Malta is a response to a personal calling from Him; he has enlisted each of us personally. Our yes response is truly a vocation.

A second critical aspect of membership is called out in the phrase, “for thy service.” We are serving the Lord in all we undertake in the name of the Order. Service is the hallmark, the charism of the true Knight or Dame.

We acknowledge Jesus as our Lord; we recognize that His call is a vocation; our commitment is to service under the banner of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, the Order of Malta.

When we can say this opening sentence with understanding and conviction, then we will have a good idea of the commitment made when joining the Order.

The second sentence is a prayer of supplication. **“I humbly entreat thee through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin of Philermo, of Saint John the Baptist, Blessed Gerard and all the Saints and blessed of our Order, to keep me faithful to the traditions of our Order.”**

We ask our Lord who called us to this vocation to help us remain true to the commitment made at the time of Investiture. We seek the intercession of the saints most closely associated with the Order: the Blessed Mother, under her title of Our Lady of Philermo, Patroness of the Order; Saint John the Baptist, Patron of the Order; and Blessed Gerard, founder of the Order.

We ask for help from Jesus and the intercession of the Saints in our desire to keep our commitment to live the charism of the Order.

**“Be it mine to practice and defend the Catholic, the Apostolic, the Roman faith against the enemies of religion.”**

Knights and Dames are challenged to live a life that reflects their commitment to the Catholic Church and its teachings. Through the Catholic or universal nature of the Church, God’s grace, mercy and salvation are made available to all.

The Church is apostolic, descending in direct line from the Apostles and continuing the same responsibility of bringing Christ’s word to all. Knights and Dames specifically pledge to practice and to defend the Roman faith, led by the Pope, to which Roman Catholics throughout the world are connected

Practicing Catholicism and defending the Church may put us on the outside in some environments. The Order, like the Church, runs counter to the culture of the world. It is there that many face the biggest challenge – rejecting what the world teaches and espousing the message of Christ.

**“Be it mine to practice charity towards my neighbors, especially the poor and the sick.”**

All Christians are required to practice charity towards their neighbors. Our neighbor, as it turns out, is anyone who needs our help.

Through the charism of the Order, the focus is on the poor and the sick. The preferential option for the poor and the vulnerable is a priority for the members of the Order of Malta, by history and tradition and by personal commitment.

**“Give me the strength I need carry out this my resolve, forgetful of myself, learning ever from the Holy Gospel a spirit of deep and generous Christian devotion”**

The Daily Prayer focuses on the needs of the Knight and Dame, not for personal gain or individual glory but to keep to our resolve to live the life of a true Knight or Dame of the Order.

Some outsiders and even some members may think of membership in the Order of Malta as an honor; in the worst case, some may think that members have been chosen for this honor. The Knights and Dames who are true to their commitment are humbled by the role they have been called to serve.

Members of the Order, as do all members of the Catholic Church, seek to learn from the message of the Holy Gospel. Saint Peter told Jesus that “You have the words of eternal life.”

As we seek the grace of a deeper devotion to the Christian way of life as a Knight or Dame, we also seek to be a generous Christian – generous with our talent, time and treasure.

The Prayer includes a tri-focused set of CHALLENGES:

**“...striving ever to promote God’s glory, the world’s peace, and all that may benefit the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.”**

We acknowledge that our life is dedicated to the glory of God, as is all creation. All the work we do by living the charism of defense and witness to the faith and service to the sick and the poor is for the greater glory of God. As we are blessed, so we are also reflecting God’s glory.

The Order’s focus on peace is perfectly aligned with its mission to serve and to give witness. In many cases, the work of the Order is directed at those who are the victims of war and violence. True peace, which is always a reflection of justice, can bring relief for those most vulnerable.

The prayer of every Knight and Dame is that the Order they have joined may flourish so that its mission and their part in it may be effective in fostering spiritual growth for all who follow the path of Blessed Gerard through generous service to those in need.

As so many prayers conclude, the Daily Prayer ends with an “Amen”. Amen literally means “so be it” and is often said with emphasis to confirm that the speaker strongly subscribes to the words just completed.

In saying the Daily Prayer of the Order every day over a long period of time, we may sometimes find ourselves saying the words without focusing on their meaning. It is a good idea to regularly say the prayer more slowly and focus again on the great blessings we have received by having been enlisted for the Lord’s service among the Knights and Dames of Saint John of Jerusalem.

We are join the Order of Malta to enhance our spiritual growth. We have chosen to follow the path of Blessed Gerard and live the special charism that is the foundation of spiritual growth f Knights and Dames in the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.



## Chapter 8 – Members of the Order: Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace, Those in Obedience and The Professed

Throughout the Year of Prep Formation program, you will learn about your entrance into the Third Class of the Order of Malta and the important commitment you are making in joining one of the oldest Orders in the Roman Catholic Church. The focus of the earlier chapters has been on what it means to be a member of the Third Class of the Order of Malta. This chapter will introduce you to the entire breadth of the membership of the Order of Malta with a particular focus on the First Class and the Second Class and the close relationship all members of the Order share.

### **Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace**

Newly invested Members of the Order (referred to in the Code as “Third Class”) enter a unique family within a Religious Lay Order committed to the charism of the Order (to serve the sick and poor and to witness the Faith).

Our consideration of the composition or memberships within the Order rightly begins with the “Third Class” because this is the sequence followed in the new Regulations and Commentary of 2011. These Regulations constitute the new Member’s handbook for spiritual guidance.

Before delving into the composition of the Third Class (as discussed in Chapter IV of the Regulations), new members are urged to read the “Preamble” and “Introduction” of the Regulations and Commentary, pages 17 to 42. These are important sections because the Regulations provide the norms, structure and spiritual guidance for members of the Third, Second and First Class.

The Key Points of the Regulations can be summarized as follows:

### **The Order of Malta is a lay religious order.**

The term “lay religious order” is to be understood as stating that Members of the First, Second and Third Classes are all members of a “lay religious order,” but each in a different way:

1. The Third Class consists of those members who live according to the norms of the Church and “commit” themselves to serve the sick and the poor and witness the faith within the Order and the Church. Each of us will make this Commitment.”
2. Members of the Second Class make a “Promise” of Obedience to the Church through their religious superiors in the Order to lead a life of Christian perfection in the spirit of the Order. Like members of the Third Class, members in Obedience are “lay” – not religious. They occupy a middle

place between the Third Class and First Class.

3. Members of the First Class are “religious” but are neither “clerical” nor lay. As religious, they lead a consecrated life. Members of the First Class profess and live by the religious vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, the so-called “Evangelical Counsels.” The canon law of the Church uses the term “institutes of consecrated life.” This refers to religious orders and congregations whose members profess religious vows. This includes our Order of Malta since our First Class Knights of Justice profess religious vows.

What do the Regulations teach us to do?

1. To follow Christ as a member of the Order of Malta; in so doing, we follow one of the fundamental precepts of Christian faith: “the unity of love of God and love of neighbor.” This unity of love has always been practiced by the followers of Christ, by serving the sick and poor, whom Christ served and with whom Christ identified Himself. This is the essence of the Order of Malta and the message of these Regulations: to love God by loving each other!

2. To follow the word of God: by frequent reading of the word. To love Jesus by serving the least of his brothers, we need knowledge of the word of God by frequently reading the divine scriptures and reflecting on the readings of the Holy Mass of the day.

3. We need to be fed continuously by the grace of the sacraments. The sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist constantly renew our new life with Jesus Christ and in the love for God and neighbor. This is the message of the Regulations!

The Regulations identify the fundamental considerations for all members of the Order on how we should live to grow spiritually:

1. To read and contemplate the word of God.
2. To deepen our knowledge of the faith, of our Church, and of the history and the tradition of the Order.
3. To frequently receive the sacraments so we may receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
4. To serve our beloved sick and poor and to know we do our works to save our souls.
5. To live as a family and be clearly identified by how we love one another.
6. By serving the sick and the poor, Members of the Order put into practice the word of the Lord.

*"For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, a Stranger and you welcomed Me, naked and you clothed Me, ill and you cared for Me, in prison and you visited Me."*

What are the Fundamental Considerations for Members of the Third Class?

The Regulations tell us that “...The Third Class consists of those Members who do not make religious vows or the Promise but who live according to the norms of the Church and are prepared to commit themselves to the Order and the Church.”

The members of the Third Class do not become “religious” – strictly speaking - (like the Professed Knights) nor are they bound by a special religious Promise (like Members in Obedience), yet they become members in a different way in a Religious Order:

Following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, members of the Third Class are called to ‘the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.’ This is a calling to Members of all three classes in the Order to “...witness to the Faith and to Charity, to know and observe special duties and the rule of Spirituality, in order to glorify God, to sanctify himself and to build up the kingdom of God in the world.”

The membership in the Order of the Members of the Third Class “...can be compared to that of the Third Orders of the Mendicant Orders and of the Oblates.”

What are the basic regulations for members of the Third Class?

1. To receive frequently and regularly the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance.
2. To say daily prayers, especially morning and evening prayers and the daily prayer of the Order, the Rosary, the Angelus and parts of the Prayer of the Hours, and to pray for each other and the deceased, the ill and those in need.
3. To make a yearly retreat, preferably of three days, sponsored by the Order and to look for regular guidance from a spiritual director/confessor.
4. To keep informed about the concerns and topics of the Church in its dealings with society and with respect to the life of the individual.
5. To take part regularly and frequently at the meetings and religious celebrations of the Association and Area of the Order of Malta.
6. To attend the special programs offered by the Order of Malta to help us deepen our knowledge of the Faith and the history and spirituality of the Order.
7. To be actively involved in the works of the Order.
8. To live a life of moderation in accordance with the spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience in accordance with one’s single or married status in life and to financially support the works of the Order having due regard for our family duties.
9. To not neglect our obligations towards our families and to set an example of love and fidelity in our own family.
10. If married, to take note that membership in the Order together with one’s spouse can be an occasion and help to a couple to progress together in spirituality and service to the needy.



11. To be role model citizens and to exercise Christian influence within one's community.

### **Knights and Dames in Obedience**

Members in Obedience (referred to in the Code as "Second Class") have entered a "family of prayer" within the larger family of the Order of Malta. In the American and Federal Associations, this community is found in the Subpriory of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Subpriory has as its members not only the Knights and Dames in Obedience from the two Associations but also the Professed Knights of Justice. All members of the Subpriory, both those in Obedience and the Professed, retain their membership either in the Federal or American Association.

Members in Obedience continue as active, working and committed members of their respective Association. When they enter into Obedience, they do NOT withdraw into a life of the contemplative - they have that, too - but rather they are taking a step to become even more committed and active members of their own Association. Obedience, then, is not only a prayer group but also a call to members to reaffirm their pledge to do the work of the Order, with one hand, and, with the other, to pray and proclaim the Faith! We do not care for the sick and poor for their sake alone, but to save our own souls. The prayer of those in Obedience is to make this happen.

### **What is the Promise of Obedience?**

Obedience is a "life decision" before God through one's religious superiors in the Order. The Promise is made through the Regent, the head of the Subpriory, but is always made to God, to love God by loving one's neighbor, to read and reflect upon the Word of God found in the scriptures, and to lead a sacramental life.

While these words apply to all members of the Order, Knights and Dames in Obedience have made a "Promise" within the Order of Malta to:

- live a life leading to Christian perfection in the spirit of the works of the Order
- attend Holy Mass daily and to recite daily prayers
- take part each year in a three-day silent retreat of the Subpriory
- regularly seek the counsel of a Spiritual Director, a companion on one's journey in prayer and in seeking to do the Will of God
- participate in the parochial life of one's parish
- be an active member of one's Association according to one's circumstances
- become a member of a spiritual family (the Subpriory) within the larger family (the Association) and to continue to help those in need, follow the Word and receive the Sacraments on a regular basis—a three-fold practice shared by all in the Order but reaffirmed in the Promise of Obedience.

### **The Promise of Obedience and Married Couples**

Unlike the Vow of Obedience made by the Professed, the Promise of Obedience by Knights and Dames is limited by overriding obligations of their state of life, e.g., by the sacramental binding of marriage. However, the stronger obligation of Knights and Dames in

Obedience opens up a new opportunity for married couples to witness the special charism of the Order of Malta. “Married couples ...stand in the common obedience towards the Order and its mission, and, at the same time, in the Sacramental unity of the spouses.” (Regulations, page 62).

Obedience To Whom?

“Obedience” means “It is not their will, but that of their Superiors who should be obeyed at all times...Obedience towards God and His Word is the center of the Promise.” Although the ‘Promise,’ like the Vows of the Professed, is made before a Superior of the Order, the Superior is only an intermediary, an instrument. The Superior is, first of all, a listener: he must know the voice of God but also listen to the voices of the members and, in doing so, to understand their own life situations.

The Path to Obedience in the Order of Malta

The bond established by the “Promise” is stronger than the promise of Tertiaries or Oblates in other vowed religious orders. Obedience can be described as a step between Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace and the Professed. Those in Obedience have a directed responsibility of participating with all Members in witnessing their Faith and leading a sacramental life within the Order of Malta.

The Promise of Obedience cannot be abrogated.

### **The First Class – the Professed**

In Chapter 1, it was noted that the cornerstone making the Order of Malta a lay religious order is the requirement that there must be professed religious in the Order.

The Professed Knights of Justice allow us to meet this requirement. There are currently three Knights of Justice in the American Association. The Professed Knights (vowed religious) are referred to in the Code of the Order as “First Class,” not because they are “better” or more pious, but because they are our beloved confreres, servants of us all, the cornerstone of our Order for a millennia.

Who are they? Some sixty men of all ages across the continents, who start the day with Morning Prayer, attend Holy Mass, go on retreats and recite the Rosary. They do not live in a monastery but remain in the world as business men, teachers, lawyers, archivists, working in the field of the Order of Malta.

These men are our cornerstone because we are a religious order under Canon law, not an “NGO” or simply an order of the Church.

To understand the Order of Malta and the role of the Professed, it is necessary to understand the following basic concepts:

- 1) The Order of Malta is a religious order of the Church. This is the absolute foundation on which all else depends and from which all else flows. Every religious order is to assist its members in the glorification of God and their own salvation, by being a means of their sanctification.

So, too, in the Order of Malta:

*“The purpose of the Order is the promotion of the glory of God through the sanctification of its Members, service to the Faith and to the Holy Father, and assistance to one’s neighbor, in accordance with its ancient traditions.”*

2) Being a Professed Knight is a vocation, a calling from God through the Holy Spirit to live a life modelled on Our Lord Jesus; accepting that calling is a true response on the part of the member.

3) Although all members of the Order of Malta have responded to the calling from God to love and to serve, members in Obedience and in Magistral Grace, as “lay” members – not vowed religious like the Professed – are nevertheless members of a Lay Religious Order. Therefore, the Order of Malta, as a religious order, includes both vowed religious - our Frás – the Professed – and our “lay members” (members of the Second and Third Classes.)

4) Our role as lay members is not only to do our hands-on service and witness the Faith but also to band with our religious to work and pray with them and for their vocations. All members of each Class should also work to identify and bring forward candidates who might be considered for membership in the Order.

Any single Catholic male may apply for admission to enter the preparation period to become a Professed Knight, provided he:

- 1) is not subject to any impediments established by the Constitution, the Code, or Canon Law;
- 2) is moved by right intentions;
- 3) is suited to serve the sick and the poor within the Order, and is suited to dedicate himself to the service of the Church and of the Holy See;
- 4) has been a member of the Order for at least one year;
- 5) has completed his 25th year of age; and
- 6) is not under investigation by the courts.

The process from application through final vows for Knights is set forth in the Constitution and Code in compliance with Canon Law. It is deliberately long (from five to eight years or more) to insure that the Knight will have sufficient time for discernment before making solemn, perpetual vows. In making solemn vows, the Professed are required to make the vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience (the “Evangelical Counsels”.)

The first vow is that of Obedience. Professed Knights bind themselves to obey the Holy Father and their legitimate Superiors in accordance with the Constitution and Code. They must have religious respect for their Superiors, and must submit themselves to them in a spirit of love and devotion.

The vow of Chastity binds the Professed, also by the virtue of religion, to live celibately and to avoid every internal and external act contrary to Christian purity.

The concept and implementation of the vow of Poverty in the Order of Malta is quite different from that in other religious orders. With the perpetual vow of poverty, the Professed renounces not only the use of his goods but also their ownership and the capacity to possess or acquire temporal goods. The Code requires that goods which come to the Professed in Solemn Vows become the property of the Priory or of the Order.

Because the Order does not provide housing and support for living, the Code permits the Professed in Solemn Vows to obtain from the Holy See a special exception which permits him to manage his goods.

The Professed, as noted before, as vowed religious, are required to make the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience (the “Evangelical Counsels”), and all of us – Professed, in Obedience, and Knights and Dame of Magistral Grace - are expected to live in the spirit of the Evangelical Counsels.

Although the Professed do not live “in community,” they have strong fraternal links with one another through attendance at periodic retreats, days of recollection and conferences, both within their respective Associations as well as in Lourdes on pilgrimage and in Rome to meet with each other and their religious superior, the Grand Commander of the Order.

As explained previously, Professed Knights and those in Obedience make their home not only in their Association but also within their Grand Priory or Subpriory (in the American Association, the Subpriory of Our Lady of Lourdes). The Subpriory of Our Lady of Lourdes is a spiritual family within the Order of Malta which includes all Professed Knights and all Knights and Dames in Obedience from the American and Federal Associations.

The Professed are expected to participate in the life and activity of their Subpriory and national association, in their charitable works and in those of the Order, and also in their diocesan and parish life. In fellowship with all Knights and Dames in Obedience and Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace, the Professed should be a light of Faith and Hope to all Christians.

At present, the American Association has two Professed Knights who have taken their permanent vows and one who has taken temporary vows.

As you continue your preparation for your entrance into the Order of Malta, hopefully you have a better understanding of the role of the Knights of Justice in preserving the religious nature of the Order. The Knights and Dames in Obedience provide support to the Order by accepting various roles as required as well as supporting the spiritual development of the entire membership.

### **The Subpriory of Our Lady of Lourdes**

Established in 2006 to assist the Professed and those in Obedience in fulfilling their spiritual obligations and to guide Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace within the Order in the development and practices of their spirituality, the Subpriory is one of seven in the world within the Order of Malta and has

- 90 Knights and Dames in Obedience

- 20 Members are in the year of preparation
- 5 Members are Knights of Justice

The Subpriory unites members from both the American and Federal Association and welcomes all Knights and Dames who have been members of their Association for five years, been actively involved in the works within their local area and have made three or more pilgrimages to Lourdes or to another Marian shrine with malades. Other requirements can be found in the Subpriory section of the Association's website.

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To learn more about the Knights of Justice, the Grand Master has urged that every candidate should watch the video in the Year of Preparation room titled, "*The Heart of the Order*", a film produced by the Order about the Professed Knights of Justice.

## APPENDIX

### **Our Lady of Philermo**

*The following historical segment was written by Frá James-Michael von Stroebel, a Knight of Justice in the Federal Association.*

From the 4th to the 11th century, the island of Rhodes belonged to the Greek Byzantine Empire. In 1052 it was occupied by the Venetians. In 1306 they sold the island to the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. On Mount Philermos in southwestern Rhodes, there were the remains of a Byzantine church. It had housed a “miraculous” pilgrimage icon of the Blessed Mother, which pious tradition accredited to having been painted by Saint Luke the Evangelist and having been brought from Jerusalem.

The Knights of Saint John built a basilica on the spot and reinstated the icon, which was venerated as “Our Lady of All Mercies” and became known as “Our Lady of Philermo.” Since then the Order has been devoted to Our Lady under that title as its protector and patroness. The island was invaded several times unsuccessfully. After the first great siege by the Ottoman Turks in 1480, Mount Philermos was considered insecure and in 1513 the icon was moved to Saint Mark’s in the city of Rhodes. During the second Ottoman siege, in 1522 under Suleiman, the church of Saint Mark was completely destroyed, but the icon was found intact. Running out of supplies, the Knights accepted Suleiman’s offer to depart with military honors. On 1 January 1523 they left Rhodes taking the icon of Our Lady of Philermo with them.

In 1530 the Order moved to Malta. The icon was placed in the church of Saint Lawrence, which soon was badly damaged by fire, but the icon once again was not damaged. On 19 May 1565 Suleiman began the third and most famous of the Ottoman sieges of the Knights of Saint John, this time in Malta. Although greatly outnumbered, the Order withstood the attacks. On 8 September, celebrated by the Order as the Feast of Our Lady of Philermo, a relief army landed on Malta and the Turks fled.

After Bonaparte captured Malta in 1798, the Order was allowed to take away several important relics and the icon of Our Lady of Philermo. These objects ended their travels in Saint Petersburg under the protection of the Tsar, and came to be regarded as the personal property of the Russian imperial family. By the grace of God the relics were saved from the 1917 revolution, and in 1919 they were taken to Copenhagen. In 1931 they were taken to Yugoslavia and placed under the protection of the king. When the Germans invaded in 1941, the icon was hidden in a monastery in Montenegro. It later was found by Tito and finally placed in a museum in Cetinje, the old capital of Montenegro, but was never displayed. Considered lost for some time, a few years ago the icon was ‘rediscovered’ and now is on display.

YEAR OF PREPARATION  
RECOMMENDED READING LIST

- REGULATIONS AND COMMENTARY
- CONSTITUTION AND CODE OF THE ORDER
- YEAR of PREPARATION HANDBOOK
- CHAPLAINS' EDUCATIONAL ESSAYS
- THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
- 2<sup>ND</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL
  - CONSTITUTION *LUMEN GENTIUM*
  - DECREE *APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM*
- POPE JOHN PAUL'S APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI*
- POPE BENEDICT XVI'S ENCYCLICAL LETTERS
  - "*DEUS CARITAS EST*"
  - "*CARITAS IN VERITATE*"
- THE BIBLE (NEW AMERICAN BIBLE translation)
- A CATHOLIC PRAYER BOOK

All of the above are available for download from the American Association's website ([www.orderofmaltaamerican.org/american-association/preparation-formation-program/readings/](http://www.orderofmaltaamerican.org/american-association/preparation-formation-program/readings/))

In the same section of the website, you will find the original narrated Modules which duplicate the Year of Preparation Primer, and you also will find a number of videos which will be helpful in deepening your understanding of the Order of Malta, its history, the important role of the professed knights, as well as the Order's international humanitarian works.