

# An Order of Malta Glossary

## LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP

**Third Class—Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace:** includes the vast majority of members, those who do not profess religious vows or make a Promise of Obedience. These Members do, however, live according to the norms of the Church and commit themselves to the Order and the Church as members of a religious order.

Primarily in Europe, where noble lineage often remains the prerequisite for membership the Order, the Third Class also includes members in the following categories:

- Knights and Dames of Honour and Devotion
- Knights and Dames of Grace and Devotion

The nobiliary standards which qualify for the Order with either of these designations is determined by the national association through which the candidate is joining.

**Second Class—Knights and Dames in Obedience:** Members of the Second Class engage themselves to a deeper commitment to the Order through a Promise of Obedience. The Promise, made to God, concerns all aspects of the spiritual life and activities of the Order and provides a means for “non-Professed” members to pursue a path to Christian perfection in the spirit of the Order’s charism.

**First Class—Knights of Justice:** Knights who *profess* perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They are Religious in terms of Canon Law. Referred to as *Fra’*, *these Professed Knights are the essential core of our Religious Order.*

**Chaplains:** The following are also considered members of the Third Class:

Magistral Chaplains—Priests who serve as Chaplains to the Members

Conventual Chaplains *ad Honorem*—principally reserved for bishops

In the American Association, the position of Deputy Chaplain exists. Deputy Chaplains serve for a three year term, after which they may be recommended by the Area Chair and the Board of Councillors to become a Magistral Chaplain recognized by Rome. The position of Deputy Deacon Chaplain also exists in the American Association to recognize Deacons who work with Members of the Order.

# STRUCTURE OF THE ORDER

**ROME:** Seat of the Order's government. The Order is both a lay religious order and a sovereign entity.

**Grand Master:** Elected for life, the Grand Master is chosen by the Council Complete of State from among the Professed Knights. Assisted by the Sovereign Council, the Grand Master serves as the Head of the Order and the sovereign government.

**Lieutenant *ad interim*:** In the case of the permanent incapacity, resignation or death of the Grand Master, the Order is governed by a Lieutenant *ad interim* during the vacancy.

**Lieutenant of the Grand Master:** In lieu of electing a Grand Master, the Council Complete of State may elect a Lieutenant of the Grand Master for a maximum period of one year, when the Council Complete of State is reconvened.

**Sovereign Council:** Assists the Grand Master in the governing of the Order. Consists of the Grand Master (or the Lieutenant), the four High Officers and six other Councillors. Members of the Sovereign Council serve 5 year terms. For further details, see *Constitutional Charter*, Art. 20.

## **High Officers/High Charges:**

**Grand Commander:** In addition to assisting the Grand Master in fulfilling the charism of the Order, he exercises the function of Superior to the Professed and Members in Obedience.

**Grand Chancellor:** The Grand Chancellor is head of the Chancery, and is responsible for foreign affairs, the Associations, and matters concerning members of the third Class.

**Grand Hospitaller:** The Grand Hospitaller promotes, co-ordinates and supervises the works of the Pories, the Associations and other organizations of the Order.

**Receiver of the Common Treasure:** The Receiver of the Common Treasure directs the administration of the goods of the Order in coordination with the Grand Chancellor, under the authority of the Grand Master and the surveillance of the Board of Auditors.

## **Other Governing Bodies:**

**Council Complete of State:** Convenes to elect the Grand Master (or Lieutenant of the Grand Master). See the *Constitutional Charter*, Art. 23. for further information on who is entitled to vote in the Council. The Grand Master's election requires a majority plus one on those present and entitled to vote.

**Chapter General:** This body meets every five years, and in certain other cases, to elect members of the Sovereign Council and the Government Council.

**Government Council:** This is a consultative body for dealing with the political, religious, hospitaller and international policies of the Order.

**Prelate of the Order:** The Prelate is the ecclesiastical superior of the Clergy of the Order. He is appointed by the Pope from among three candidates proposed by the Grand Master with the deliberative vote of the

Sovereign Council. The Prelate assists in the care of the spiritual life and religious observance of Members, and in everything concerning the spiritual character of the Order's works.

**Cardinal Patronus:** The Pope appoints a Cardinal as his representative to the Order. The Cardinal Patronus has the task of promoting the spiritual interests of the Order, its members, and relations between the Holy See and the Order.

**Papal Delegate:** Currently, a representative appointed by the Pope as his official spokesman in all relations between the Holy See and the Order Malta.

**Diplomatic Relations:** Recognized as a sovereign entity, the Order of Malta has established diplomatic relations with 107 countries and has Permanent Observer status at the United Nations

#### **Worldwide:**

**National Associations:** Associations are established by decree of the Grand Master with the deliberative vote of the Sovereign Council. Statutes are drafted in accordance with the legislation of the countries in which they are established and approved by the Grand Master and Sovereign Council. They also approve the appointment of each President and Board.

**Grand Priors, Priors and Subpriors:** The Order currently has 6 Grand Priors and 6 Subpriors. At least 5 professed knights are necessary for the formation of a Priory or Grand Priory. The current Grand Priors of the Order have long histories; most coexist with a national association. There are no Priors in existence at the moment. Generally, Grand Priors and Subpriors (which require at least 3 professed knights for formation) consist of Professed Knights and Members in Obedience. Where a national association does not exist, all Members of the Order are considered members of the Priory or Grand Priory.

**Priors and Regents:** Each Grand Priory (or Priory) is headed by a Prior approved by the Grand Master and responsible for motivating the practice of the religious virtues of, and fidelity towards, the Order. Each Subpriory elects its own Regent, subject to the approval of the Grand Master, who assumes the same responsibilities as a Prior.

#### **United States:**

**National Associations in the United States:** In the U.S, there are three National Associations and two Subpriors.

**1. American Association: *Headquartered in NYC*,** the largest with over 1900 active and emeritus members. There are 32 "Areas" located in 18 states and 1 U.S. territory

**2. Federal Association:** Headquartered in Washington, DC., the Federal Association can be found in 20 locations, some overlapping with the American Association.

**3. Western Association:** Headquartered in San Francisco, CA, the Western Association operates in states west of the Rocky Mountains.

Each Association in the United States is governed by a President, elected by its Members, and a Board consisting of other officers and members. In the American Association, the President is elected for a 3-year term, renewable for a second 3 year term. The other Officers of the Board of Councillors (Chancellor,

Treasurer, Secretary, Hospitaller and Vice Hospitaller) are elected by the Board from among its members. As is the case for President, members of the Board are elected by the general membership of the Association. There 24 members of the Board in addition to the President; 8 positions are voted on each year, and, like the President, each Councillor has a term of 3 years, renewable for a second 3-year term. The President and all members of the Board must be approved by the Sovereign Council.

**2 Subpriories: Our Lady of Lourdes** (members of the First and Second Class of the American Association and the Federal Association.)

**Our Lady of Philermo** (members of the First and Second Class of the Western Association.

A Subpriory is led by a Regent, usually elected by its members and must be approved by the Sovereign Council.

*More in-depth definitions can be found in the Order's **Constitutional Charter & Code and Regulations and Commentary**, both available in the Members Only section of the American Association website.*