

SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER
OF SAINT JOHN OF JERUSALEM
OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

Journals of Spirituality

Toward a Spirituality of Communion



ROME 2002

N. 2

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INTRODUCTION

The first Journal of Spirituality of the Order was dedicated to the Apostolic Letter “Novo Millennio Ineunte”. While encouraging charitable outreach and indeed a ‘new creativity in charity’(nr50), the Letter also extended an invitation to form a resolute commitment to communion and a call to promote a spirituality of communion (nr 45). Since these exhortations should not be overlooked by members of the Order, the purpose of the current issue is to underscore the vertical aspect of communion with God and find there the basic motivation which should animate both the interior life and charitable works of the Order of Malta at various levels and help to overcome the danger of the “temptations of selfishness”. What is more, the two themes of charity and communion often converge and intermingle.

Therefore next to the theme “Toward a Spirituality of Communion” is the subtitle “Charity and Communion.”

Following a short analysis of these two words it seemed imperative that we turn our attention next to the New Testament in order to uncover those elements which provide the foundation and inspiration for the issues of “charity” and “communion”, theme of chapter 1

(nr1) by the Prelate of the Order.

It was then considered worthwhile to examine the internal or conventual's life of our Order in its earliest stages. This has been provided for us with his customary skill by Jonathan Riley-Smith, Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Cambridge, in an article which allows us to enter into the world of the Orders's first century in Jerusalem and grafts the demanding spirituality which sustained the members in the service of the sick (nr. 2).

Cardinal Pio Laghi, Patronus of the Order of Malta and Archbishop Maurice Couve de Murville, Chief Chaplain of the British Association of the Order, deal with authority the theme of the present Journal, drawing inspiration from the Apostolic Letter 'Novo Millennio Ineunte' (nr 3 and 4).

The article by Count Neri Capponi, the Order's Delegate for Florence, calls for a practical reflection on charity in action specially in the Pilgrimages with the sick (nr 5).

Finally two brief extracts, which have lost none of their relevance for today, were included from addresses given in Lourdes by the late Prince Guy de Polignac, for many years President of the French Association (nr6).

Archibishop Angelo Acerbi

“CHARITY” AND “COMMUNION”

Exploring the index to the documents of the Council, one finds that the words “caritas” and “communion” are employed in various ways. Caritas/charity on one hand is broad and comprehensive in that it covers the whole of Christian life, while on the other it can have very particular meanings.

God above all else is love and caritas is the expression of the Trinitarian love of God. Charity is consequently the constitutive form of the Church since it was Christ who established it as holy, a community of faith, hope, and charity. We may also look at the word “charity” in its connection with the sacraments. Christian perfection, and so forth. From a practical perspective, or in other words from the standpoint of charity put into practice, it is realized especially in works of mercy which can even be structured according to the circumstance in ways that will to ensure its effectiveness. For its part, the Order of Malta has had such a lengthy experience with this “active charity” that its achievements in this field have become an integral part of its very life.

The Vatican Council used the word “communion” frequently and in various ways. In fact, as a general concept it obtains its meaning only in relation to a particular reality (communion of the faithful, Mystical Communion, hierarchical communion ...). The background to the conciliar declarations is the biblical and early Christian concept of “communion”, created from on high, of persons united one with another as members of the Church by the Holy Spirit and his gifts – a communion which is to continue in the daily life of the community by participating in the needs and the sufferings of one’s neighbour. The vertical communion brought about by God in Jesus Christ is thus reproduced horizontally in relations with the brethren and in service of the needy.

A few themes and passages from the New Testament

In the Gospels

The motto of the Order, *obsequium pauperum*, translates into a charitable commitment that can be realized in various ways and through diverse initia-

tives ranging from aid for the sick and the poor to relief in times of natural disaster. A reflection therefore on the evangelical notion of charity which ought to motivate and sustain these undertakings is more than appropriate.

A scribe put to Jesus a question that was much debated at that time: which commandment in the Law was the *greatest*. Jesus replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments *hang* all the Law and the prophets” (Mt 22:37-40). The two objects of love, God and neighbour, cannot be separated and neither can one take the place of the other. One necessarily comes first and the other second, and between them there is a difference of intensity: the first object is loved with all your strength and the second as yourself. We must love God totally, above everything, and our neighbour as ourselves. Between love’s two objects there is an inner connection. Both are preceded by God’s love for us. He loved us first.

The discourse on the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-

46) does not speak of love, but of the works of love each person has done or failed to do. Here we find a clear statement that Jesus is present in the needy: in coming to the aid of the poor and the afflicted, we come to the aid of the Lord. To love one's neighbour in this way is to love Jesus himself and the two objects of love thereby converge.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (LK 10:29-37) answers the question: who is my neighbour? The neighbour in the parable is an unknown person, lying half dead in the road, robbed and beaten. The Samaritan becomes his neighbour, demonstrating by his actions that one's neighbour, demonstrating by his actions that one's neighbour can even be an unknown person. In the details of his caring which Jesus describes, the Samaritan reveals the nature of his love. This is underscored again in the question Jesus puts to scribe: 'Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers? "Put this way, the question calls for a complete reversal of one's outlook: the good Samaritan is the one who makes of himself a Neighbour. *There is a great lesson here and cause for reflection on the part of*

all who words in the field of “obsequiun pauperum” on behalf of sick, the poor, the marginalised: it is important not only to do good for he needy, but also with loving care to be there neighbour.

Saint John bore engraved on his heart the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: “A new commandment I give to You, that you love one another: even as I have loved you, that you also love one another”(Jn 13:34).

The apostle transmitted this testament of Jesus to the first Christian generations for whom the precept of charity succeeded in becoming a norm for the life of the community. The object of his teaching is based on his knowledge and experience of the love of the Lord Jesus: “having loved his own who were in the word, he loved them to the end.” Augustine assures us, that John, who laid close to the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper, drew from it as from a fountain. John had experienced the dept of that love at the foot of the cross of his Lord and, in his first Letter, wrote “by this we know love, that he laid down his life for us”. John based fraternal charity upon the cornerstone which is Christ, “and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. “Love is the distinctive sign of the

Christians, the sign of the last days, inaugurated and revealed through the death of Christ Jesus.

In the discourse on the vine and branches given at the Last Supper (Jn 15), where the depth of Christian life joined to Christ is revealed, Jesus concludes by indicating that fraternal charity is to be the result of abiding in him: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). *Thus a new commandment, the distinctive sign of the Christian and of the Christian community, is the Condition for being with God. “If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us”(1 Jn 4:12). Christian communities where mutual love reigns at all times are to be a concrete sign in the world of the love of God.*

In Saint Paul

The Pauline epistles draw liberally on the theme of charity, making frequent use as well of the term *koinonia* (communion). The Letters to the Galatians, to Corinthians and to the Colossians confront those ecclesial communities as well as our own with this issue. Saint Paul is anxious that love of neighbour be

evident in the churches, 'To the Galatians he writes, "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, *You shall love your neighbour as yourself*. But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another"(Gal 5:14-15). And the admonition continues, "Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another"(5:26).

The words of Saint Paul will serve for an examination of conscience in any community including the Order seeking to discover whether the temptations to which the faithful of Galatia were subject may also be lodged in there own hearts. One snare above all is singled out for its power to destroy – self-conceit or vainglory – because it is based not on the Lord but instead on nothing and leads to fruitless exaltation of the self in contrast to others.

Although the community at Colossae has long since passed into history, in Paul's Letter it belongs to every age: "Put on then. As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other: as the Lord has forgiven You, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony"(Col 3:12-

14). For Saint Paul, virtuous behaviour includes mutual forgiveness in the measure each one receives it from the Lord and charity becomes *the Bond of Perfection* which binds together individual virtue and communal relations.

In the face of the divisions which threaten the Church at Corinth, Saint Paul exhorts them to harmony: "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment"(1 Cor 1:10) and he invites them to look upon Christ who suffered crucifixion for all, On these Christological basis, the Apostle resolved all conflicts and tensions which formed in the communities he founded and visited.

The hymn to charity is found in chapter 13 of the first Letter to the Corinthians. Even as he wrote this extraordinary passage, Saint Paul had the community in mind with all its various problems, especially those which touched its inner life. These he addressed not in an exhortative manner, as on other occasions, but in the language of poetry in which problems and difficulties are transformed by love alone. Negative elements or pressures which perme-

ated the community at Corinth could overcome by a love presented not as an abstraction but instead as something positively constructive: “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”(4-7). Then a brief final stroke: love never ends, because it leads to the vision of God.

In the early Christian community

The early Christian community arose around the apostles and mother of God and was confirmed in unity by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. According to Saint Peter, this mother Church of Jerusalem began its journey enriched with nearly three thousand souls. Consider then the Acts of the Apostles where we read that they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship (koinonia / communion), to the breaking of bread and the prayers (2:42). “And all who believed”, Acts continues, “were together and had all things in common

and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need”(2: 44-45). Their communion was made manifest in attention to the teaching of the apostles, sharing of goods, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes. What then was the spirit that reigned in that early community? The answer is that their “glad and generous hearts’ so shone in the world outside that they “favour with all the people”(2:46-47). And again, “the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common”(4:32).

At the same time, the example of Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates that not even the early Christian community was exempt from the temptations of selfishness. The gravity of the punishment the couple received for their insincerity is a symbol of the authenticity which is required in relationships.

Persecution overtook the community, but the Acts tell us with what generosity of spirit these trials were endured, in dealings with one another, in forgiving the persecutors and in the courage to profess the Christian faith.

The Jerusalem community recalls the issue of the “collection” proposed by the Apostle Paul. At the time of the Council of Jerusalem, James and Peter and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that they should go to the Gentiles; “only they would have us remember the poor,” the Apostle added, “which very thing I was eager to do” (Gal 2:9-10). The collection is an explicit sign of the communion of the churches which arose between the Gentiles and the mother Church of Jerusalem. Paul’s intentions were not simply to promote a collection of money but rather a “communion of service”. *It is good to recall that the Order Of Malta, which founded and maintains a hospital in the city where Jesus was born, is united in communion of service with the land where it has its roots.*

A simple and elementary conclusion can be drawn from this summary excursus on certain parts of the New Testament. Charity has a vertical dimension: the love of God for us revealed in Christ Jesus expects a response of love from us. This vertical dimension should be present in our relations with our neighbours, not only through charitable activity in taking responsibility for the needs of the poor and the

sick, but also and above all in relationships within our own community. *At the practical level, the quality of the relations between various groups in the Order of Malta is also a measure of our effectiveness in serving our neighbour in fulfilment of the motto “obsequium pauperum”; in so far as it is a sign of the God who is love, it contributes most assuredly to the spread of the faith which is the other great duty of the members of the Order.*

(Cf. the following publications: Scheffczyk, L., *Aspekte der Kirche in der Krise, Um die Entscheidung für das authentisch Konzil. Quaestiones non disputatae*, Bd.1, [F.Schmitt] Siegburg 1993; Aa. Vv., *La Carità e la Chiesa, virtù e ministero. Disputato 005*, G. Ambrosio, de., [Glossa] Milano 1993; Aa. Vv., *Ministero e ministero della koinonia. Parola Spirito e Vita* n.31, [Edizioni Dehoniane] Bologna 1995).

Archbishop Angelo Acerbi

HOSPITALER SPIRITUALITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The spirituality of the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem was founded on a radical notion of the lordship of the poor. Although in time the concept was supplemented by the broader one of the lordship of the sick it remained the bedrock on which everything the order did was based. It was expressed through caring for the poor when they were ill, burying them when they died and protecting them – and by extension the whole of Christianity – when they were in danger of being physically assaulted.

The care of the sick was the responsibility of the brothers (and at first also sisters) who served in the great hospitals built alongside the order's headquarters in the Levant and in a few subsidiary hospitals as well. The patients, male and female, Muslims and Jews as well as Christians, were given the kind of treatment only great princes could have expected. The burial of the dead is the least known of the Hospital's commitments, but it was taken very seriously and demonstrated a determination to maintain its care for the poor to the grave.

The order had its own cemeteries outside

Jerusalem, where the crypt of its church just south of the city survives with its charnel pits still visible, and Acre. Military activities, begun in the mid 1120s, grew in importance because of the expenditure of effort and resources required, because they had a particular attraction for benefactors and recruits, and because the situation facing the Christian settlement in the Levant became progressively more precarious. But the Hospitallers remained professed religious first and brethren-at-arms second: in their great castles one can identify the areas of enclosure in which they lived, isolated from the mercenaries and servants on whom much of the day-to-day working of the fortresses depended.

A treatise written by a German cleric in the 1180's provides us with an insight into the practical application of the Hospitallers ideal. The author used the hospital in Jerusalem as an outstanding example of Christian charity and from it, and from scattered references elsewhere, a picture of a luxurious establishment comes into focus. There were in the hospital separate beds for the poor, with regular changes of sheets, and in an obstetrical ward little cots for the babies; a meat diet supplemented with whit bread and

an extraordinary range of vegetables and fruits; the attention of teams of physicians, surgeons and male and female nurses; a large orphanage, an ambulance service and a mobile field-hospital. When the hospital was overcrowded the brothers surrendered their beds and slept on the floor. When horses were needed to transport the injured from a battlefield the brothers, even the noble ones, gave up their chargers, 'thus openly showing that they have not appropriated them for themselves, but that they and whatever they have belong entirely to the sick'.

At first sight the Order's calendar looks quite well populated, but the lives of medieval Hospitaller saints present us with acute hagiographical problems. Three holy women are secure, although only one, St Flore (or Fleur), a sister at the nunnery at Beaulieu whose cult developed soon after her death in 1347, was indisputably professed into the order. St Ubaldesca, a peasant girl from Calcinaia, seems to have been a servant in a hospital run by nuns in Pisa which became attached to the order while she was there; the holiness of the life was recognized even before her death in 1208. St Toscana was a widow who served in the thirteenth-century hospital in

Verona as a consoror. The founder, Bl. Gerard, was certainly an object of veneration in the thirteenth century; indeed the continuing well-attested existence of his relics suggests that his body had been carefully abstracted from Jerusalem when the city was lost to Saladin in 1187. Although the cult of St Hugh, a commander of Genoa, is not attested until two and a half centuries after his death in 1233, it was apparently based on a collection of material made by the archbishop of Genoa at the time and sent to the pope. Hugh's service in his commandery's hospital and in the burial of the dead was said to be rooted in fervent prayer, in particular in the recital of the office.

On the other hand, Bl. Nuño Alvarez Pereira, who had indeed been a knight and prior in the order, is venerated more for his later career as a Carmelite lay brother. Some individuals (bl. Gerard Mecatti of Villamagna who was a Franciscan tertiary and Bl. Gerland, who had probably been a Templar) seem to have been appropriated and the cults of others (St Nicasius and Bl Pietro Pattarini of Imola) are possibly fabrications.

The calendar owes much to the systematic work (and in some cases imagination) of Giacomo Bosio

and others in the late sixteenth century. Its unreliability, however, has a consistency about it which is revealing. With the exception of the founder Gerard these men and woman are depicted gaining a reputation for holiness not in the Levant but in western Europe.

Hugh's life was used but his biographer to show that while the brothers in the Levant fought the Muslims, their confreres in the west supported them by engaging in their own spiritual battles 'against invisible enemies'. The church has always found it difficult to sanction officially the martyrdom of warriors and this obviously presents problems when considering the lives of brothers-at-arms, although the order on Malta developed its own martyrology. And anyway the names of brothers once known in the east for their holiness may have been lost, since their cults in Jerusalem an Acre could have evaporated once their tombs could no longer be visited.

It should be remembered, however, that the lives of brothers in the Levant were not typical. Most members of military orders never served in the east and never expected to do so. In Europe they resided in religious communities, usually called commandery's, which had originally been established in imita-

tion of Benedictine priories and had spread out from centres like St Gilles in southern France. In 1288 the pope assumed that there was an average of twenty brothers living in the larger ones, but such numbers outside provincial headquarters must have been unusual and houses sometimes had as few as three residents. Nevertheless, all commandery's were proper religious communities, in which life was punctuated by the office, said according to the liturgy of the order's original mother church, the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, interspersed on some days by lections of Our Lady or St John. The brothers originally slept in dormitories, but by the early thirteenth century they were beginning to have individual cells.

They always ate in common in refectory, although they were subject to quite stringent abstinences and fasts. Many early communities had been mixed, but from the 1170's the sisters were being gathered into separate nunneries in which, as enclosed canonesses regular, most of them devoted themselves solely to prayer, although, like their male counterparts, they were also responsible for providing for the upkeep of the convent in the east. Nunneries provides the backdrop to the lives of

Ubaldesca in Pisa and Flore at Beaulieu.

In their commandery's the Hospitallers managed the great estates which provided the money and materiel which enabled the convent in the east to carry out its tasks. Their estate-management was relatively efficient, but there must have been plenty of time for them to develop their spiritual lives.

Not enough attention has been paid to the fact that recruits to the orders found supporting roles in the commandery's spiritually satisfying, at least until the numbers in the European communities began to decline in the later middle ages.

Life in a less active ambience in Europe perhaps enabled members of the order to achieve sanctity better than in the bustling environment of the compounds and castles in Palestine, Syria and the Dedecanese. There were, of course, occasional scandals, but it is clear that the order, which was freed from the oversight of the bishops because of its privilege of exemption, took the spiritual formation of its members seriously. The houses scattered throughout Europe were gathered into provinces under priors, the better of whom seem to have monitored the lives of their subjects scrupulously. In this respect the

Hospital of St john is to be distinguished from its sister order the Temple, in which the administration had become chaotic by the time of its suppression

Prof. Jonathan Riley-Smith

CHARITY AND COMMUNION

For this second booklet on Spirituality, addressed to you who are members of our Order, a topic was chosen which is very close to the heart of Pope John Paul II. In fact, he dedicated numbers 42 and 43 of the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* to the theme “Charity and Communion”, two terms which challenge the faithful to be responsible not only at the level of the universal and the particular Churches, but also at the level of an order like ours. Like all types of religious associations, the fundamental reason that our Order was created is charity, that is, the love of God and neighbour. One of the primary expressions of this love is the communion that exists among our members and also with all people.

As the Holy Father stated in the above mentioned Letter, communion “is the fruit and demonstration of that love which springs from the heart of the Eternal Father and is poured out upon us through the Spirit which Jesus gives us ((cf. Rom 5:5), to make us all ‘one heart and one soul’(Acts 5:32)”(n.42).

If we apply what the Pope said to the Church and to our Order to be faithful to the plan of God

and to respond to the expectations of the society of which we are a part and which we serve, we must make our own Order into, to use the Pope's expression, "a home and school for communion"(n.43). But to do that our starting point should be the promotion of an authentic "spirituality of communion" among ourselves, emphasizing it as one of the fundamental educational principles in our Priories, in our Associations, including to Sovereign Council, and among all of us.

In the article which follows, you will find in Archbishop Couve de Murville a true Pastor, whose wisdom gained throughout his years of service to the Church is reflected in his presentation, as he explains to us the essential elements of a "spirituality of communion".

Before turning to him, I would like to summarize the four "stages" of the path which the Holy Father proposes in order to have a true spirituality of Communion:

1. "A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we

must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us”.

2. We must develop “an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, the Church, and therefore as ‘those who are a part of me’. This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship”.
3. “A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a ‘gift for me’”.
4. “A spirituality of communion means, finally to know how to ‘make room’ for our brothers and sisters, bearing ‘each other’s burdens’ (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy (par. N. 43).

Cardinal Pio Laghi

THE SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION

One of the most significant passages of *Novo Millennio Ineunte* is to be found in section 43, where the Holy Father gives his teaching on the Spirituality of Communion.

He introduces it by saying that creating such a spirituality is the first thing to do, even before we formulate any plan for action. The Pope says: *...our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow.* How accurately John Paul II describes our impulsive reaction, always ready to exteriorize, to produce blue prints and to tell other people what to do, because it is much easier to behave like this than to seek inner conversion. Yet inner conversion is essential for the effectiveness of a Christian, because it puts God at the centre of what we are trying to do, It is his action, his grace, his effectiveness which are at the centre of the work of salvation on which we are embarking. The Pope comes back to this introductory comment at the end of section 43, when he writes: *...unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose.*

They would become mechanisms without a soul, “masks” of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.

So what is the right spiritual path that the Pope talks about? What is the communion whose spirituality is crucial?

At this point the Pope drops a small spiritual bombshell, He says: *A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us.* How amazing that the Pope makes contemplation of the greatest mystery of the Christian faith the condition of any truly effective apostolic work! The Trinity is so difficult to explain; it is impossible to understand fully because it is a mystery. We priests and deacons tend to preach on it once a year on Trinity Sunday, and are glad to limit ourselves to more approachable topics the rest of the time; what the pope says opens a new vista.

Giving and receiving

Let us look at it this way. The perfection of God within himself is a perfection in giving and receiving. In fact it is the greatest possible sharing. The persons

of the Trinity give the godhead in its entirety to each other and receive the godhead in its entirety from each other. Each of the three persons is wholly and entirely God. But each of the persons is distinct; in fact its individuality (if one can call it that) is constituted by the relation it has to the other persons. If we want to use imaginative language, which is not really suitable when talking of God but which can bring one to us what we are talking about, then we could say that the divine persons are fiercely individualistic, because they are actually constituted by what distinguishes them from the other two persons; and we could also say that they get on extraordinarily well, because they think and act as one, since they are actually one at the level of their one, divine nature.

At first reading this may sound very abstract. In our weaker moments, we might wonder why Jesus has gone to the trouble of revealing the existence of the three persons of the one God. It is something we can never wholly understand in this life; in fact in terms of human logic it is contradictory. It also causes difficulties in relations with Jews and Muslims who accuse us of worshipping three gods. We are tempted to ask: "Could our Saviour have kept the truth

about the Trinity until we actually get to heaven and receive the beatific vision?”.

Love and the arts

But the Holy Father says quite clearly (and I repeat his words): *A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us*. Why is that? The answer must be that belief in the indwelling of the Trinity indicates the resolution of the chronic difficulty of all human experience – the relation of the one and of all human experience – the relation of the one and the many. It is part of human experience that love urges us to seek communion but that human beings find it very difficult to reach a satisfactory form of that union. Ever since the European novel took shape in the 17th century (one thinks of Mme de La Fayette's *Princesse de Clèves*) nearly all amorous literature has turned around that problem. As the 18th and 19th centuries progressed, the outlook presented by the arts seemed to become steadily more bleak. By 1925, Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* centred on the tragedy of an ordinary man in a way that has become symbol-

ic of the alienation of the 20th century. Soon the Existentialist philosophy of the 1940s, expressed in plays and novels such as those of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, promoted the doctrine that the life of man is meaningless and is not even enjoyable (Sartre's dictum "L'Enfer c'est les autres"). Since then Berthold Brecht and Samuel Beckett, in the "theatre of the absurd" and the "theatre of despair", have continued to proclaim that the search for love and communion is vowed to frustration.

When I was chaplain to students at Cambridge, a young couple came to have their baby baptized. They were research students, working on their doctoral dissertations, and, when I asked them what name they wanted to give to their son, they said "John Paul". "Ah", said I pleasantly, "after Pope John Paul, I suppose". "No", they said "after Jean-Paul Sartre". I thought that really runny at the time; but looking back on it, I see it as a portent. Our task is to replace the influence of Jean-Paul by that of John Paul, and we must remember that the Pope is also a philosopher, in some ways the greatest philosopher of them all. He is not afraid, in spite of all the horrors of the 20th century, to point to an equally valid

experience, inter-personal communion, which introduces us to a happiness which is open to a transcendent dimension. No wonder that he takes the Trinity as the starting point for his meditation on the kind of activity to which we are called.

Acceptance and the Trinity

A spirituality of communion, says the Pope, enables us to see the light of the Trinity *shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us*. The resolution of the problem of the one and the many, as revealed by the gospel in the inner life of God, is proclaimed to mankind as part of the Church's faith. The "use" of that doctrine, if one can put it that way, is that it does not only tell us something about God; it tells us something about ourselves. The perfect self-giving and the perfect acceptance of others in the Blessed Trinity is an explanation of what we are seeking in our relations with other human beings on earth. We see "the light of the Trinity shining on the face" of others when we are conscious, in our relations with them, of the God who is leading us to become, in some way, like him.

The Pope continues: *A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in Faith with the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are part of me”.*

Just as the unity of the persons in the Trinity allows Jesus to say: “The Father is in me and I am in the Father” (John 10, 38), so our belief in the Trinity gives us the certainty, through our faith, that “those are part of me”, i.e. the brothers and sisters who surround me in this life. We are still at the level of faith here, but the firm belief in such a deep unity now allows us to emerge at the level of conscious experience, as the Pope goes on to say: *This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and to attend to their need, to offer them deep and genuine friendship.*

A change of heart

Such a description of what the spirituality of communion means in practice is particularly relevant to us as members of the Order of Malta. Traditionally the eight pointed cross of the Order has been seen as a symbol of the Eight Beatitudes, the

summary of the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes are a perfect expression of the change of heart that is especially required from members of a religious order. To be humble, poor in heart, a maker of peace, gentle, poor in spirit, to be prepared to suffer in the cause of right – all these are only possible if we have been touched inwardly by the wonder of God's love, a love that comes to meet us and asks for our love in return, It is the miracle of conversion.

The habits of religious orders are an outward sign of that inner change of heart. They are a reminder that a religious is a new creation in God, a creature which has love at its centre. Without love, the religious habit would be merely outward show, a “mask” as the Pope says. So, wearing the black cowl and the white cross must cause a regular examination of conscience. It is not only a reminder: it can be a reproach if we do not make love our priority, as the Beatitudes require.

Making room for others

This is precisely what the Pope asks of us in the section of *Novo Millennio Ineunte* which we are

examining. *A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brothers or sisters who has received it directly, but also as “gift for me”. A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to “make room” for our brothers and sisters, bearing “each others burdens” (Gal 6,2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy”.* How sad it is when divisions and jealousy are found among the followers of Christ, as they have been too often in history. It is particularly sad when this happens within a religious order. Although most of us in the Order of Malta are not professed religious, we have the privilege of being spiritual fruits. What John Paul II says about the Trinity as the starting point of our “heart’s contemplation” give us the starting point for the programme of conversion which must precede the practical work that the Order is called to undertake.

St Bernard and the thirty-three

I want to give an example of such a programme of conversion actually taking place and I quote the

history of the origin of the Cistercians. Actually their beginnings coincide in time with those of the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem.

St Robert of Molesmes founded the Abbey of Cîteaux in 1098, a year before the capture of Jerusalem by the First Crusade. St Bernard entered the novitiate at Cîteaux in 1098, a year before the capture of Jerusalem by the First Crusade. St Bernard entered the novitiate at Cîteaux in 1112, a year before Pope Pascal II gave to Blessed Gerard the ***Bull Pie Postulatio Voluntatis***. which confirmed us as a religious order. When St Bernard knocked at the door of Cîteaux, he brought with him his uncle, some of his brothers and a group of Burgundian noblemen. There were thirty-three of them altogether and this launched a previously unknown community on an explosive career of expansion. By the time of Bernard's death in 1153, there were 400 Cistercian houses throughout Europe and 700 monks at Clairvaux alone, Bernard's own abbey. What was remarkable about these early Cistercians was how they loved one another, which in practical terms means how well they got on together. It was good to be with them because they were attentive to each

other. There was no rivalry or jealousy between them. Because they were humble men, there could be a tremendous corporate feeling among them. They thought of the good of the community before they thought of themselves, they lived out those words of St John; “anyone who loves God must also love his brother”(1 John 4,21). The Cistercians were thus off to a flying start, because many people wanted to join such an attractive group. Goodness attracts, and it is the goodness of God that shines out of those who are really committed to him.

There is a message for us in the history of our early contemporaries, the Cistercians. If we want our Order to grow today, we must imitate those companions of St Bernard. The Order will attract if it is attractive, and it is the charity which governs the relations between its members which will make it so.

Archbishop Maurice Couve de Murville

CHARITY IN ACTION

The Pilgrimage in the spirituality of
the Order of the Hospital, known as Malta.

The History

The Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem is “born” on pilgrimage and around pilgrimage; it can be said that this is the devotion it is founded on.

If it is true, as it seems, that it was a group of Amalfi merchants, oblates of the Santa Maria Latina monastery at Jerusalem, who took the trouble to give accommodation to the crowd of pilgrims at the guest quarters of the Monastery, this shows that they followed what Saint Benedict says in his Rule (which in turn was borrowed from the New Testament) according to which the guest is Christ himself. In this way this group of oblates took on a more committed sequence to Christ, giving life to a new religious order that made its first scope that of providing assistance to pilgrims: firstly by being ‘hoteliers’, then by being

‘Hospitallers’, given the large number of sick and wounded pilgrims that filled the streets to and in Jerusalem, then as soldiers to defend both the pilgrims as well as the places which were the destination of the pilgrimages, for then to pass to the defence of the Faith and consequently to the defence of Christianity, without, however, ever forgetting the commitment towards the sick. It is therefore on pilgrimages and assisting the sick the Order is founded.

The Pilgrimage

The meaning of the pilgrimage is well-known: it signifies, in a symbolic form, the life of the Christian that begins with its spiritual rebirth in this world (Baptism) to arrive at its second birth in heaven. The house from which it begins is this world, the journey is life itself, the sanctuary of arrival is heaven, the beatified vision. It can also mean, in a more intimate way, a totally spiritual walk starts from an external reality to arrive, without leaving the world, at a contemplation of God, even if imperfect due to the wall of flesh that separates us from the Lord. It can also mean, seemingly in a more banal way, a walk that

brings one from sin to repentance and to the resurrection. In any case it is always a spiritual and ascendant walk that to be fully understood takes on the form of a real and concrete journey towards a privileged place of prayer, a sanctuary. A pilgrimage is not only a means of renewing our being in the light of Faith, but if public and set in a framework of visible signs of Faith, is also a testimony; to proclaim openly that we are Christians and that we want to live as Christians in a visible way to distinguish ourselves in the world and to separate ourselves from the world. The pilgrimage of the Order of the Hospital, known as Malta, has a further meaning. The assistance for Our Sick Lords is, as we have seen, one of the primary goals of the Order, the other being the defence of the Faith. By carrying the sick on a pilgrimage the Order not only renders visible one of its primary purposes but also brings with it, as a flag, the actual picture of the suffering Christ, The Order's pilgrimage with the sick is therefore not only a service towards the sick, as in other organizations that carry out this act of faith and of charity, but is a public testimony of that which the Order stand for, of its very essence. For this, whilst other organizations drastically reduce

the staff responsible for the assistance, the Order urges everyone to participate as it is not only a pilgrimage for the sick but a pilgrimage with the sick and with the latter in a privileged position surrounded by an active court as befits the representatives of the great King.

The Presence of the Sick

The pilgrimages of the sick are therefore a way of visibly and tangibly accomplishing the two aims of the Order. With the pilgrimage in itself and with the participation in the solemn and public religious services (processions, solemn masses, etc.) that represent the culmination of the cult of the pilgrimage, the Order bears witness to its Faith and in bearing witness it defends it. In fact today next to the evangelization though the word (to which the Order is also called), the testimony, totally open, that Christ is the only Saviour, acquires much importance in a world that is deaf and secularized. At the same time though the presence of the sick in the pilgrimage the order scope of the Order is accomplished: the *Obsequium*

pauperum, the assistance to the poor and to the sick, It is important here to remember that it was the Great Master Frà Angelo de Mojana that with brilliant and deep intuition brought back the Order, with the pilgrimages of the sick, to the original charisma of Blessed Gerard.

Testimony of Faith

The pilgrimages of the sick, besides being a witness of Faith and of charity, are also the means of obtaining personal sanctification. In the first place, though the Sacraments, In fact a pilgrim, a sick person, a stretcher bearer of a nurse, would have little sense if he did not receive the Eucharist several times, or if it were the case, go to confession during the pilgrimage, The Sacraments are the cannels of the grace of God, without which everything that is done is spiritually useless. Once we have received the grace of God we must put it into practice continuously with prayer, that is, with the answer that we give to God who consults us and who calls us to do his work and to identify ourselves with him. On the two pillars of the Sacraments and of prayer the pilgrimage of the Order must

implant catecheses, both devotional and informative, in order to return home more holy and more conscious of our faith than when we started out.

At this point it is opportune that besides the solemn manifestations, more space is given to prayer and to private meditation than that which is the custom in pilgrimages today; the calendar, in fact, of public engagements is very full, especially at Lourdes. At the same time a rationalization of the religious engagements is necessary.

Style of Behaviour

Due to the fact that in the pilgrimage of the Order there is a public testimony of Faith, our behaviour must be in keeping with what we profess, otherwise we are Pharisees. The Order of Malta enjoys great prestige so the octagonal cross, symbol of the Beatitudes, often becomes a sign of vanity instead of a sign of Christian commitment. The same thing can happen in the pilgrimages, so one must be careful that the pilgrimage of the Order does not become the “Malta Show”, an exhibition of vanity, of worldliness, a procession that one participates in to meet

important people or in order to be noted and then boast about it. He, who goes to Lourdes or Loreto with these feelings and does not change on the way, does not bring any benefit to his spirit nor to that of others because not only goodness but also badness is spiritually contagious. Also very important are the relationships between the participants of the pilgrimage and their behaviour. First of all there must be a seriousness that does not mean a false devotion or long faces (Saint Filippo Neri was famous for his genuineness and his joyfulness, and also for his pranks), but the ability to distinguish between moments of relaxation, that are always necessary, from those of service. Secondly the relationships between all those involved in the pilgrimage must be based on charity, charity above all towards Our Sick Lords, the toward those colleagues in the personnel (which does not always happen), between the staff and superiors and Vive-versa. Charity demands a willingness and availability which when one is called to carry out a service, must prevail above everything and when the sick are involved must be absolute in every moment. Charity and commitment are also promoted by good example, good example which is a duty above all of

the older people towards the young, superiors towards those under them; for example, a wheelchair pushed by a professor of dignity of the Order is worth more than lots of speeches!

The Aim of the Pilgrimage

Man is composed of a soul and of a body, the elevation towards God, the holiness that a pilgrimage must produce, must translate itself in a style and language that must be in harmony with this effort to be holy. Often the lack of style, of order or an inappropriate language hide a lack of depth, a lack of depth that like a snake that bites its tail, is nourished by the style, by the inappropriate language and by disorder, damaging not only the individual but also others who can take this bad example. With this we do not want to say that everyone must behave like “little saints”, which is something above all that can create hypocrisy, but that nothing be exaggerated, that there be discretion and balance, and above all that no bad example is given, taking into account that not everyone is the same and what can seem normal for some can be a cause at scandal for others, The behaviour

towards Our Sick Lords must be even more restrained because they are not only the image of the Lord but they are people who are suffering and a lack of style and frivolousness can not only be offensive but also cause sadness.

Relationship with the members of the Pilgrimage

Those who in the pilgrimage are called to exercise authority or decision-making at any level are expected to be charitable, humble, as well as being steadfast and firm: those under the superiors are expected to be humble, readily and enthusiastically obedient, and of course charitable. The superior, above all in a religious order, must totally forget himself and think only of being an instrument of the Lord so that everything can go ahead with order and with that harmony which is the fruit of charity. Everyone must remember that, whatever role they carry out in the pilgrimage, they are at the service of the sick and at the service of God, and that superiors must be prayed for so that they become holy. Avoiding the dangers that can accompany the use of

power even if limited. Pride and selfishness etc., lurk in all hearts, and we all need the prayers of each other, especially in a devotion so important as a pilgrimage.

Count Neri Capponi
The Order's Delegate for Florence

CHARITÉ ET COMMUNION

En ce moment de l'histoire de l'Ordre Souverain, auquel j'appartiens depuis l'âge de 25 ans, je me réjouis de penser qu'autour du Prince et Grand Maître, les Grands Prieurés, les Prieurés, et les Associations nationales de l'Ordre Souverain constituent une grande famille unie.

Qu'est-ce qui, à mon avis, caractérise une famille unie?

C'est que les membres d'une famille unie sont convaincus de leur solidarité du besoin qu'ils ont les uns des autres, de leur communauté d'aspirations et de destin; ils savent se pardonner, se rendre service réciproquement, et ils savent renoncer à leurs intérêts particuliers pour sauvegarder leur unité.

Une famille unie est une communauté d'affection et de soutien réciproque, source permanente de joie, de paix et d'épanouissement personnel de chacun de ses membres.

Ce qui constitue notre grande famille, chers Confrères et amis, ce qui en constitue l'essence profonde, c'est bien sûr la réalité spirituelle – fondement de l'Ordre Souverain – à laquelle tous ses Membres

adhèrent volontairement en s'engageant dans l'Ordre.

A notre époque, croyez-moi, des familles aussi nombreuses et unies que la nôtre, il y en a peu. La nôtre est pour le moins exceptionnelle. Et ce n'est pas une famille figée. C'est une famille qui se développe continuellement, tant par son recrutement, ses activités hospitalières et ses multiples interventions humanitaires, que par sa présence dans un nombre de pays toujours plus grand.

Or, l'unité d'une famille, d'une famille aussi diverse et grande doit s'affirmer au fur et à mesure qu'elle se développe.

Certains vont sans doute penser que je manie le paradoxe, mais à une époque où les combats pour l'homme et pour le maintien de sa dignité, pour le service de ceux qui souffrent et de ceux qui sont abandonnés, sont plus nombreux et plus violents chaque jour, il me semble en effet que notre grande famille doit se resserrer. Se resserrer plutôt que de s'éparpiller. Se resserrer autour de son Grand Maître, afin de marquer son unité – la diversité dans l'unité – tout en conservant, bien sûr, à chaque membre de la famille – c'est-à-dire à chaque Prieuré et Association nationale – son autonomie d'action indispensable

dans le cadre juridique, social et politique de chaque pays.

*(extrait du discours prononcé à Lourdes,
mai 1981)*

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Il est indéniable que notre mission charitable, comme celle d'autres organismes catholiques nationaux et internationaux, est une œuvre d'Eglise. L'Eglise, comme le rappelle le récent décret sur l'apostolat des laïcs, "tient aux œuvres charitables comme à une partie de sa mission propre, et comme à un droit indéniable". Comme au temps des premières communautés apostoliques, le Saint Père, Jean-Paul II, demande à ses fils – ne sommes-nous pas parmi ses fils privilégiés ? – d'exercer la charité dans toute son originalité et sa profondeur évangélique, afin de témoigner, au milieu de ce monde, de la priorité de l'assistance aux pauvres, aux plus pauvres, aux nouveaux pauvres...

Comme membres de notre grande Communauté

rassemblés sous la croix á huit pointes, il vous faut veiller á ne pas isoler la Charité des autres exigences des Béatitudes / en termes plus prosaïques, je veux dire en particulier á nos jeunes, mais aussi á de moins jeunes, que les devoirs d'un Membre de l'Ordre de Malte ne se résument pas á la seule participation á ce Pèlerinage annuel, aussi beau, aussi profondément vécu soit-il ; notre pèlerinage, comme notre engagement Chevaleresque (même si le mot peut apparaître de nos jours comme un peu désuet). Sont du domaine de la permanence et de la quotidienneté de notre vie. Nos malades comptent sur nous pendant toute l'année, sur nos prières et sur notre présence ; nos œuvres multiples, nos activités au service de l'Ordre Souverain, nécessitent plus que jamais une unité totale de vues, d'action, de pensée, dans notre monde profondément bouleversé, á la recherche de valeurs sûres, á la recherche d'idéaux et de fraternité.

Que la vierge Marie nous éclaire et entretienne en nous tous le feu de l'amour, entretienne ce que l'un d'entre nous, aujourd'hui français, appelle "la maladie de l'Ordre de Malte", Que L'Esprit Saint nous unisse, Membres de l'Ordre de tant de pays, dans le cœur unique de Christ, et nous donne la force d'accomplir

ensemble et confraternellement notre mission multi-séculaire.

*(extrait du discours prononcé à Lourdes,
mai 1983)*

Réflexions du *Bailli & Prince Guy de Polignac*
Président de Association Français