

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

Journal of Spirituality

Human Virtues - Christian Virtues
Events
The Young

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N. 8

The Council Complete of State of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta elected on March 11, 2008 Fra' Matthew Festing, Grand Prior of England, as the 79th Prince and Grand Master.

H.M.E.H. Fra' Matthew Festing was born in Bellingham, Northumberland, on November 30th, 1949.

Educated at Ampleforth and St. John's College Cambridge, where he read history, Fra' Matthew, an art expert, has for most of his professional life worked at an international art auction house. As a child he lived in Egypt and Singapore, where his father, Field Marshal Sir Francis Festing, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had earlier postings. His mother was a member of the recusant Riddells of Swinburne Castle who suffered for their faith in penal times. He is also descended from Sir Adrian Fortescue, a Knight of Malta, who was martyred in 1539.

Fra' Matthew served in the Grenadier Guards and holds the rank of colonel in the Territorial Army. He was appointed OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) by the Queen and has served as her Deputy Lieutenant in the county of Northumberland for a number of years.

In 1977 Fra' Matthew became a member of the

Order of Malta, taking solemn religious vows in 1991.

We are happy to be able to insert this news in the n.8 of the Journals of Spirituality which is ready for printing, and to express to the new Prince and Grand Master our warmest congratulations and our best wishes for the success of his mission at the direction of our beloved Order.

“I had the privilege and moving task of daily attending H.M.E.H the Grand Master in his illness.

His first hospitalization was in the Pio XI clinico I visited him every day, bringing him Holy Communion, and we recited the Breviary and other prayers. He was often anxious about his future and the outcome of his illness -of which he was well aware -but he surrendered himself to God's will, both for his condition and for the future of the Order, on which he often reflected.

This journal was already being printed when the sad news arrived of the death of His Most Eminent Highness Fra' Andrew Bertie, Prince and Grand Master of the S.M.O.M.

Other publications will illustrate the figure and work of the late Grand Master but it is appropriate to recall here some aspects of his spirituality. This task has been entrusted to Msgr. Azelio G. Manzetti, Chief Chaplain of the Grand Priory of Rome, who was the person closest to him in his illness and who - as his confessor - tended to his spiritual needs up to his death.

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I had suggested to him St Martin of Tours' words when he was seriously ill: "*non timuit mori - non renegavit vivere*". He repeated it often, commenting that: "If the Lord calls me, I am ready, if he wants me to continue working for the Order, I am willing to do so!" He often recited the Holy Rosary - he loved the glorious mysteries.

Then came the last hospitalization in the *Ars Medica* clinic in Rome, with the end by now approaching. He called for me, realizing that his situation was deteriorating. He remained for a long time in pensive silence, and then said: "*Domine fiat voluntas tua!*". In his attacks of pain he prayed and tried not to show his suffering. He always waited eagerly for Holy Communion, and we repeated together: "*Jesu Quem velatum, nunc aspicio...*"

During the last week of suffering - heroically supported - he offered it up to the Church, to the Pope and to the Order of Malta. He asked me to give him a crucifix to hold in his hands and kiss, which he did, moved by faith and resignation. He also took great pleasure from the

image of the Madonna of Philermos, which he kissed saying: “She is the Madonna of the Order’s Grand Master”.

He loved to be helped to recite in Latin - from memory (he could no longer see) - the *Benedictus* of the Praises, the *Magnificat* of Vespers and the *Nunc Dimittis* of Compline, sighing and commenting: “For me the *nunc dimittis* has arrived...”

A few days later (Monday 4 February), with great serenity and gentleness he whispered to me: “I would very much like to receive Extreme Unction”. I was moved by this profound faith and carried out the complete ritual with his intense participation. As his sickness progressed, he clasped my hand in which he also held the rosary, repeating the ejaculatory prayers that I suggested to him: ‘*Fiat voluntas tua*’, “Mother Mary help me”, “Blessed Gerard protect me!”, “Lord I trust in Thee”.

On Ash Wednesday he received the visit of His Eminence the Cardinal Patronus Pio Laghi with the beloved Prelate Msgr. Acerbi, who administered the Holy Ashes and then made the gesture of imposing them on His Eminence, at his request. He was con-

tent and comforted. In the evening he said to me: “If the Lord calls me, I am ready”.

The next day, his condition having further deteriorated, I again notified the Cardinal who asked the Holy Father for Benediction *in articulo mortis*. The Pope granted it through the Cardinal Patronus who imparted it to him, his voice broken with emotion.

He was now absorbed in praying to God and spoke no more. He agreed with a gesture when I suggested praying for the Church, for the Pope and for the Order. He showed me he understood by pressing my hand.

Friday 7 February: the end was approaching. The Dignitaries of the Grand Magistry took turns in sitting beside him and assisting him, praying continuously.

In a moment of consciousness he tried to speak to me, and I said to him with tears in my eyes: “Highness, Jesus is calling you...”. And he clearly said: “I am going to Him”. Silence, suffering and prayer took over. His breathing was laborious, the end was approaching and the Dignitaries knelt in prayer.

At 22.30 the death rattle became louder, and realizing this I intoned: “*Proficiscere anima christiana...*”

He died devoutly and serenely while we prayed: “*Subvenite Sancti Dei...*”.

On 22.42 of 7 February 2008, Fra’ Andrew Bertie Grand Master of the S.M.O.M. returned to God.”

Azelio G. Manzetti

Index

I. Virtues – Christian Virtues

Daily Virtues for a Knight and Dame of the Order of Malta <i>(Karl Golser)</i>	17
Chivalrous Virtues and according to the Rite of Profession <i>(Costantino Giraldi, O.P.)</i>	43
Fidelity and Detachment in the Order of Malta <i>(Fra' John MacPherson)</i>	71
Humility and Simplicity <i>(Angelo Acerbi)</i>	79
To make oneself a loving neighbour of the poor and the sick. <i>(Albrecht von Boeselager)</i>	93

II. Events

The Visit of the Holy Father to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist at La Magliana (Rome)	
- The Encyclical given to the Diocese of Rome	111
- Homily of the Holy Father	115
- Address of the Grand Master	121

Pilgrims in the Holy Land <i>(Card. Pio Laghi)</i>	123
Lourdes 1858-2008, <i>(Guy Tardivy, O.P.)</i>	129
“The Church in Mission among the Nations” <i>(Philippe de Schoutheete de Tervarent)</i>	143

III. The Young

Reflections on the Messages of the Holy Father for the XXII and XXIII World Days of the Youth (Cologne and Sydney) <i>(Don Diego Merry del Val)</i>	149
Youth Groups in the Delegations <i>(Alessandro Repossi)</i>	157
<i>In Memoriam of Archbishop M. Couve de Murville ..</i>	165

Introduction

This edition of the Journal of Spirituality has three sections. The first section contains some articles of an ethical nature, which we thought could be useful for the members' spiritual life and for our Order's communities. We rely on our reader's comprehension for these reflections, proposed in a constructive spirit.

The second section recalls some events: the visit of the Holy Father to the Hospital of the Order of Malta at La Magliana in Rome; the Order's Pilgrimage to the Holy Land; the Jubilee Year of the Apparitions at Lourdes and the special day entrusted to the Order's pilgrimage by the Bishop of Lourdes within the framework of the Jubilee Year

In the third section, Don Diego Merry del Val's article was inspired by the Holy Father's messages for the XXII World Youth Day celebrated in Cologne and the XXIII Youth Day to be held in Sydney in 2008. The Rev. Alessandro Repossi writes about the Delegations' Youth Groups, starting with his experience in the Lombardy Delegation's Group.

I
HUMAN VIRTUES - CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

**Daily Virtues for a Knight and Dame of the
Order of Malta
Reflections of a Moralistic Theologian
(Translated from Italian)**

1) The point of view of Catholic morality

One can presume that many of our contemporaries, whether believers or not, expect a moralistic theologian to tell them what the Catholic church considers is admissible and right and what instead is forbidden and thus considered sinful. There is still an almost exclusive emphasis on moral rules, for which it is considered that the moralistic theologian is competent. In this there is a great unilaterality because one becomes increasingly aware that it is not enough to be knowledgeable about moral precepts, undoubtedly important in an increasingly complex world. One has, above all, to form the moral subject, who seems much weaker and more disoriented today, sometimes incapable of living in the way he or she is convinced is right and proper.

Since the eighties we have been experiencing a reappraisal of the classical doctrine of the virtues, firstly in philosophy with a return to Aristotle's great

ethics¹ and then in theology. It is once again stressed that one must not separate moral theology from dogmatics and spirituality. In the centuries after the Council of Trent, moral theology was mainly presented as an aid for confessors, so that they could judge the various sins: they had to be listed in confession according to their type and number, which meant that moral doctrine became a simple doctrine of the various sins.

Vatican Council II, in its decree on priestly training “*Optatam totius*”, requested a renewal of moral theology “so that its scientific exposition, nourished more on the teaching of the Bible, should shed light on the loftiness of the calling of the faithful in Christ and the obligation that is theirs of bearing fruit in charity for the life of the world” (n.16). Thus the object of moral theology must be to help Christians to understand their great vocation, which is that of living in Christ and of being able to provide the desired fruits of charity. “I am the vine; you are the branches,” says the Lord. “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15,5).

¹ Mainly through the innovative work by Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, treatise on moral philosophy, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.

We must ask ourselves what the central human questions are. They are not so much “what must I do?” but the more basic ones “what is the meaning of my life? how can my life be successful? how can I be happy?” To these questions the Christian faith does not give a philosophical answer but an existential one, that is the invitation to believe in the Lord Jesus, to open our hearts to He who is the answer to mankind’s basic questions. Vatican Council II says it at n. 22 of the Constitution “*Gaudium et spes*”, the text so beloved of the late Pope John Paul II: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light”.

We see this basic truth expressed so well in the Acts of the Apostles. The apostles Paul and Silas had been thrown into prison. However at night, while they prayed and sang hymns to God: “suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought

them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” (Acts 16:26-32).

Ancient man’s question was about salvation and the apostles replied by presenting Jesus as savior. But faith in Him has the consequence that one must change one’s life.

2. Virtues in general and theological virtues

Faith must take form in us, faith as a fundamental option for Jesus Christ cannot be achieved only in detached acts, but needs continuity; it must become a new form of life, a new approach. This is why academic doctrine has called this virtue “*habitus operativus bonus*”, behaviour that prompts good action. Virtue is thus found between the simple possibility of being and doing something and the actions themselves; virtue is already an inner disposition that steers us towards good actions or, as Romano Guardini says in his work on virtues to which we will often refer in this paper, “a true virtue signifies an ability to penetrate with a glance the whole existence of man. Within it one ethical value becomes dominant and gathers together the living

fulness of the personality”².

Let us briefly return to the apostle St. Paul, who had to defend the particular nature of Christian life both in front of the Jews, too concerned about the works to be done in order to obtain justification, and the Greeks, who placed wisdom in first place, the approach to a theory. Hence St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:22-24). And again: “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Cor 2:1-5).

He continues, speaking of a new type of wisdom: “We do, however, speak a message of wisdom

² Romano GUARDINI, *Virtù. Temi e prospettive della vita morale*, Ed. Morcelliana Brescia 1972, 4° ed. 2001, p.13.

among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: 'no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him'" (1 Cor 2:6-9).

This God-given wisdom is not only a new understanding but, taken with faith, it is the relationship with Christ himself, that becomes a new life in us, a life of faith, of hope and of charity. The Letter to the Romans expresses it well: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom 5:1-5).

These are theological virtues which are a gift of

God, but also the human response to God who is love. This response is achieved through faith, which receives this revealed manifestation, through love for God and for one's neighbour in which faith is incarnated; all this in hope of the eschatological achievement that will be operated by God himself. Theological virtues are the foundation of a theological anthropology. They are true virtues, that is dispositions for acts, inner behaviour for which we must always strive, aided by divine grace.

These operative virtues, addressed firstly to God himself, must then be substantiated in many human acts, in the many virtues that are reflected in the spheres of life. St. Augustine exclaims: "because all these virtues which I have named are within you. But who is sufficient to name them all? They are as an army of a general who has the command within your mind as a general by his army does what he will, so the Lord Jesus Christ, once He begins to dwell in our inner man, (*i.e.* in the mind through faith), uses these virtues as His ministers"³. St. Paul exhorts the Christians of the community of Philippians: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, what-

³ St. Augustine, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Homily 8.

ever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil 4:8).

Important here is the distinction between acts that result from the spirit of Christ and acts of the flesh, which enable St. Paul to catalogue the virtues and vices of the Hellenistic culture. So we find in his Letter to the Galatians the following list: “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:19-23). These are fundamental attitudes, notes of vices and virtues which one has to know how to distinguish or judge, as St. Paul says in his first letter to the Thessalonians: “Test everything. Hold on to the good.” (1 Thess 5:21; cf. also Rom 12:2).

Again this judgement occurs in the Holy Spirit, as said in the First Letter to the Corinthians: “The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment: ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may

instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ”(1 Cor 2:15-16). The thought or, as it is also translated, “the spirit”⁴, is a spirit of love, as proclaimed in the letter to the Romans: “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Rom 5:5).

We conclude our reflection on virtues in general with the summing up given by the Catechism of the Catholic Church: at n. 1803 it says: “Virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God. [St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, 1:PG 44,1200D].” Then at n. 1804: “Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They provide ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good”.

⁴ Thus in the German unitary ecumenical translation (“Einheitsübersetzung) tedesca: “Geist Christi”.

3. Particularly important virtues for the everyday life of a knight or a dame

Passing now to the human virtues, that is those which are fruit of human dedication, we should refer to the scheme first introduced by Plato, who ordered the virtues according to the abilities of the spirit, highlighting four fundamental virtues around which all human life revolves. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes them at n. 1805: “Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called ‘cardinal’; all the others are grouped around them. They are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. ‘If anyone loves righteousness, [Wisdom’s] labors are virtues; for she teaches temperance and prudence, justice, and courage.’ (Wis 8:7). These virtues are praised under other names in many passages of Scripture.” Again, the Catechism at n. 1810 says: “Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God’s help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good. The virtuous man is happy to practice them”.

I would now like to describe some particularly important virtues for a knight or dame of the Order

of Malta, referring mainly to Romano Guardini's already cited study. The great German theologian, of Italian origin, composed these meditations during the last years of his life, after his traumatic experiences in World War II⁵. A characteristic passage of these reflections, on daily reality, states that at the end of every virtue the gaze widens out to the behaviour of God. Guardini explains it thus in the "note to meditations" at the end of the book: "The virtues I have discussed thus become the ways in which the justice of Christ fructifies in us. This justice gives them a new richness and a new character: what is meant by the much abused word 'saint'"⁶.

I want here to recall the pastoral programme indicated by the late Pope Paul John II in his apostolic letter for the third millennium, "Novo millennio ineunte", where he asserts: "To ask catechumens: "Do you wish to receive Baptism?" means at the same time to ask them: "Do you wish to become holy?" The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this *high standard of ordinary Christian living*: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction. It is also clear

⁵ The first edition was published in 1963; Romano Guardini died aged 88 in 1968.

⁶ Virtues., op.cit. p. 225.

however that the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine *training in holiness*, adapted to people's needs."

With this criterion I would now like to look at the Christian living of the knights and dames of the Order of Malta and to choose, among the different virtues commented by Guardini, those which can be considered as knightly virtues.

Courage

The first virtue for a knight seems to me to be courage, which corresponds to the third of the cardinal virtues, that is to fortitude. Guardini⁷ first of all distinguishes between courage and fortitude: courage is "the habitual behaviour, the way in which one faces life" – it is thus a general disposition, whereas fortitude is more behaviour in a certain situation. A courageous person faces life as it is, in its good and bad aspects, because he or she sees a divine indication in these situations, with a belief in divine providence. Life is a mixture of necessity and freedom, one has to understand what one cannot change and also when we are required to make precise choices.

At the moment the future is ambivalent. Albeit

⁷ The virtue of courage is dealt with in pp. 109-121.

there is still the optimism that, with intelligence and technology, humanity will manage to progress, there are increasing anxieties about the future, both because of ungovernable justice and peace issues and because of the deterioration of the environment. Those from noble families who can boast a glorious past are prone to be overly tied to the past, which could also be a form of escapism.

Instead those who believe in divine providence have the courage to make choices for the future, the courage to commit themselves to stable relationships like marriage and also to say yes to children. For a Christian, creating a family is a form of hope in God, it is the expression of a courage that knows that, besides what we can do and direct, there are numerous unforeseen events which have to be considered in communication with God, our true future. It is thus reasonable to proceed towards the future entrusting ourselves to the will of God, whether this be in the choice of a specific form of life (e.g. consecrated life or life in marriage) or choices linked to other situations.

In the end, our moral conscience resounds in every decision we make during our life, it is that voice that is “always summoning us to love good and avoid evil”, as the Vatican Council says (GS 16), defining

conscience as “the most secret core and sanctuary of a man”. Listening to our conscience, above all shaping it constantly to the commandments of God interpreted by the Church, takes courage and fortitude in concrete situations.

The Knights of Malta, and especially doctors or those who work in the medical field, must especially feel this call for exceptional courage and fortitude. They can frequently find themselves faced with radical choices, both in the initial and terminal stages of human existence, and they must take care not to go along with the prevailing mentality which favours the autonomy of the person and the quality of life, forgetting the respect for life itself, which is and remains a gift of God.

At the end Guardini, referring to God, asks: “can one speak of the courage of God”? The answer is yes: God showed He was courageous when He decided to create man, and even more, when despite man’s disobedience, He decided to become man himself; He accepted a destiny in our troubled and confused history, and in the darkness of the death on the cross the light of the resurrection appeared. Thus He fought before we did, making victory possible also for us.

Faithfulness

I would like to see faithfulness as the second knightly virtue. In the Middle Ages it was obvious that a knight had to be faithful to his king. Romano Guardini lived during the time of national socialism and had seen how this virtue had been usurped as an unconditional response to the dictates of the “Führer” (Hitler). He immediately realised he must use the term “faithfulness” with care, because it could become overly rhetoric or even manipulate consciences. He thus describes faithfulness “as a force that conquers time, that is change and obliteration, but not with the hardness of stones in fixed rigidity, but with a vital form which grows and creates”⁸.

The virtue of faithfulness must be especially exercised in the relationship between husband and wife. This is much more difficult today than in the past because so many social supports for mutual faithfulness have disappeared. This is not the place to list all the reasons for problems between married couples. I would just like to mention one, which perhaps is not so obvious. I would dare to say that many marriages fail not out of lack of love, but out of too

⁸ p. 80, faithfulness is described on pp. 79-87.

much desire for love, because of an approach entirely aimed at amatory gratification, where the partner is expected to provide every happiness. In the long term, partners cannot live up to these expectations, because they are claiming from each other what belongs to God. Only God can gratify all our desires, only He can make us totally happy, because “our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee, O Lord,” to quote St. Augustine.

Faithfulness in marriage means committing oneself to grow together as a couple; work today already means that a couple’s lives become increasingly separated. So greater commitment is needed for true communication, for sharing one’s experiences; for a continual reference to God one needs to pray together. Under the pastoral aspect, not only is training before marriage necessary, but the development of a conjugal spirituality has to be fostered, it has to grow among the different couples who meet to share experiences of life and of faith. There are many doctrinal references for this spirituality: they can be found for example in several teachings of Pope John Paul II, and also in the encyclical “Deus caritas est” of Pope Benedict XVI. Above all, I like to recall what was said in the Apostolic Letter “Familiaris consortio” of 1981, at n. 13: “Spouses are therefore the permanent

reminder to the Church of what happened on the Cross; they are for one another and for the children witnesses to the salvation in which the sacrament makes them sharers”.

Finally, let us look once again at the faithfulness of God which is “a fundamental concept of the Revelation”. God remains faithful to His alliance despite the unfaithfulness of His people, and again the definitive revelation of God’s faithfulness is Jesus Christ. Guardini thus concludes his reflection: “Faithfulness in the world comes from God. We can be faithful because He is and because He has destined us, in his imagine, to be so”⁹.

Courtesy

Another knightly virtue is courtesy. The word is derived precisely from the “court”, where young knights had to learn how to behave graciously to each other and in particular to their superiors.

Guardini¹⁰ first of all describes the forms of courteous behaviour. There must initially be the desire to create and maintain distance. “Courtesy creates space around the other person, protecting him

⁹ p. 87.

¹⁰ The virtue of courtesy is dealt with in pp. 143-155

from an impending closeness, provides him with his own air. He recognises good in the other and makes him feel that this good is appreciated. He is silent about his own qualities, leaving them in the shadow so that they will not discourage the other person. Courtesy means being careful to remove or pass over what displeases the other, to avoid embarrassment, to smooth over any painful situation. With courtesy the young honour the old, the man honours the woman, the strong honour the weak”¹¹. Experience confirms the importance of this virtue: “Quite often serious moral danger can be avoided by means of what is called ‘politeness’ and threatened disasters are obviated with little effort”¹².

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, urges: “Anticipate one another in showing honour” (Rom 12:10). But why does he use the noble expression “showing honour?” Guardini asks himself. Because only man possesses what we call “dignity”. The philosopher Kant affirms it because only humans possess it, because of their self-determination ability; the Christian faith sees human dignity in the fact that “Every man is unique, in his relation to God and in God’s relation to him” and “honour is demonstrated

¹¹ Op. cit. 146-147

¹² pp. 148-149.

in our daily intercourse, by the forms of courtesy proper to every situation”¹³.

Another detail which influences the human forms of courtesy is the lack of time. “Courtesy needs time. To be courteous one has to linger, to wait, to approach by indirect means; one has to have consideration and thus put oneself second”¹⁴. This warning is even more topical for our stressful era. “We have to be careful that the time we are forced to save does not destroy our life,”¹⁵ says Guardini. I think that this applies particularly to relations with “our Lords the Sick”, both for the doctors and medical personnel in hospitals and for the stretcher-bearers and sisters in the Order of Malta’s pilgrimages. To have time to listen, to have time to pray and contemplate.

According to Guardini “another point of departure towards the birth of a new courtesy is man’s vulnerability, which requires people to know how to be responsible for others”¹⁶; and where do you encounter human vulnerability if not in the sick, in the disabled, in the dying. Bioethics must not put the

¹³ p. 149.

¹⁴ p. 150.

¹⁵ p. 151.

¹⁶ p. 153.

autonomy of individuals first, but rather their vulnerability. As in the parable of the good Samaritan, the man who fell among thieves is the man who in his vulnerability calls on us to become his neighbour (cf. Lk 10:30-37).

Finally, there is also courtesy in our relationship with God, which is demonstrated for example in the fact that “one does not enter church wearing certain clothes and when one prays one must behave properly, both internally and externally”, a courtesy matched by God, who always respects human freedom. Christ, to whom is given all the power in heaven and earth, is He who stands at the door and knocks (cf. Rev 3:20).

Kindness and patience

Another “knightly” virtue is kindness, and especially for the Order of Malta, which as a hospitaller order was created to act in kindness. According to Guardini,¹⁷ “a kind man is someone who has a good opinion of life, who basically thinks well of it. ... True kindness lets living persons have open space and free movement, in fact gives it, creates it, since only life can flourish... Kindness forgives because it is magnanimous and allows others freedom; because

¹⁷ Kindness is described in pp. 123-130.

it has confidence and helps life to start up once again... True kindness needs patience ... and also something else, something which is rarely spoken of, and that is humour. It helps us to bear something, in fact without it nothing succeeds... One last thing must be said about kindness: it is silent. True kindness does not speak much; it does not push us to get ahead; it does not make noise with organizations and statistics...the more profound it is, the more it is silent. It is the daily bread with which life is nourished"¹⁸.

It is obvious that one can find kindness in God. The entire Biblical revelation is a revelation of divine kindness. You just have to look at the Psalms for praise of the continuous goodness of God. Naturally there is the problem of theodicy: how can God be kind when, although He is omnipotent, He allows so much evil on earth, especially the suffering of the innocent. Much of the evil committed is because of human free will in which God, out of respect, does not intervene, but there are also the evils caused by natural disasters, by illness, the many sufferings. The only response is that the Son of God took our suffering on Himself and showed us the road of a greater love that is given to others.

¹⁸ p. 123-126 passim.

Guardini poetically concludes his reflection on this virtue: “When I say that a mother is kind and that all her family experiences it, I know what this means and it is impossible to think anything better of a human creature. But when I say: God is kind, first of all I know what I mean. But then mystery grasps the word and takes it away from me. However, something significant remains, like the dazzling trail that a meteorite leaves when it disappears in the dark immensity of the cosmos. A silence remains, a sense of fearful respect that shivers in front of the mystery, and everything turns into adoration”¹⁹.

Truthfulness

“A virtue that is notably absent in our in our times is truthfulness”, as Guardini begins his reflection²⁰. “Relations between humans, societal structures, the order of the State, all that which is called morals, and equally the work of man in its multiple forms: all this is founded on the claim that truth is a value. Thus truthfulness means that humans possess this involuntary sentiment: that truth must be said, absolutely. Naturally in the assumption that the other

¹⁹ p. 130.

²⁰ Cf. pp. 21-32.

person has a right to be informed. If not, it will be a question of experience and prudence to sense the correct form of a possible silence”²¹ or to hide truth in an appropriate form.

These words express the entire issue: truthfulness is a form of relationship with ourselves, with others, it is the constituent element of every communication, it must also be the basis of living together in a State. “All relations of men with each other, the whole life of the community, depend on faithfulness to truth”²².

Guardini then discusses various situations that we have no space for here. But the important thing is to be true to ourselves: “If I wish to associate properly with myself and so with others, I must not disregard my own reality, must not deceive myself, but must be true in dealing with myself. But how difficult that is, and how deplorable our state if we honestly examine ourselves!”²³.

Once again he looks to God: “What is in the end and in the real sense is truth? It is the way in which God is God and knows Himself, is knowing, and in His knowledge brings Himself”²⁴. Christ is the

²¹ pp. 21-22.

²² p. 25.

²³ p. 27.

²⁴ p. 27.

revelation of the truth of God, He who said of Himself “I am the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14,6) and his truth will set us free (cf. Jn 8,32).

Thankfulness - gratitude

I would like to conclude my reflections on the important virtues for the everyday life of the knights and dames of the Order of Malta with a last virtue, that of thankfulness, which can also be called gratitude. Guardini²⁵ also sees this virtue as ‘gradually disappearing’ because today the many things we receive we consider as our right; on the other hand all our life is influenced by the economic aspect of giving and receiving in exchange, which also has repercussions on human relations. We can be grateful only to a person, we cannot thank a law, a board, or a company. Gratitude is possible only in the realm of freedom and only with the honour that assumes mutual respect and esteem. There is also a paradox: “there are moments in which one feels the need to thank someone simply for the fact that he is.... Perhaps this is unconsciously addressed to God, since it was God who wanted this person to exist”²⁶.

²⁵ His reflections can be found in pp. 157-167.

²⁶ p. 162.

So gratitude is also directly addressed to God, simply because He exists; we give thanks to him “for His infinite glory”, as we say in the Glory. In the Eucharistic celebration we, and with us all creation, are part of the gratitude that Jesus Himself addresses incessantly to God the Father. The Eucharist, the supreme form of our service and our prayer, must make all our life Eucharistic, our personal life, our social life and our tasks of “*tuitio fidei*” and “*servitium pauperum*”.

*Mons. Prof. Karl Golser**

* Conventual chaplain ad honorem of the Bolzano delegation, professor of moral theology at the Studio Teologico Accademico of Bressanone (BZ)

Knighly Virtues
according to the rite of profession
(Translate from italian)

*“Rise now above your vices
and be vigilant in the virtues and in the Faith of Christ”*

The oldest Rule of the Order that has come down to us, that of Master Raymond du Puy, devotes a chapter to the Profession of Friars “*who come [to the Order] to serve the poor*”¹, without giving the Ceremony or Ritual of Profession.

There are many manuscripts containing the Rule of Raymond du Puy followed by the commandments gradually added by the Chapters General up to the reform by Grand Master d’Aubusson in the 15th century, organizing the Statutes into four parts:

- I. Origin, Rule, admission
- II. Government council and bodies
- III. Duties of members
- IV. Administration, election, appointment to the different ranks

¹ Cfr. J. DELAVILLE LE ROULX, *Cartulaire Général de l’Ordre des Hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem*, 4 voll., Paris 1894-1906, vol. I, pp. 62-63.

From the first printed edition of the Statutes² edited by vice Chancellor Guillaume Caoursin up to the Rohan Code and up to today for the Solemn Profession of the Knights of Justice³, the *Rite to be observed in arming the Knights and giving the Order's habit*⁴ has not basically changed.

The Rite of Solemn Profession contains many references to a Knight's virtues, starting with the dialogue in which the person who receives the new Professed into the Order declares he has "*certain information*" about the candidate's virtues⁵ as a

² For an overview of the Statutes of the Order and for a list of manuscripts and printed editions of the Statutes see: E. NASALLI ROCCA, *Origine ed evoluzione della Regola e degli Statuti dell'Ordine Gerosolimitano degli Ospedalieri di S. Giovanni*, 1960, pp. 901-925; and also J. HASECKER – J. SARNOWSKY, *Stabilimenta Rhodiorum militum. Die Statuten des Johanniterordens von 1489-93*, Göttingen 2007.

³ *Cerimoniale della Professione solenne del Cavaliere di Giustizia del Sovrano Militare Ordine Gerosolimitano detto di Malta*, Roma s. d. The text of the Rite currently in use is that of the Code de Rohan adapted in some places to modern Italian.

⁴ *Codice del Sacro Militare Ordine Gerosolimitano riordinato per comandamento del Sacro Generale Capitolo celebrato nell'anno MDCCLXXVI sotto gli auspici di S. A. E. il G. M. Fra Emanuele de Rohan*, Malta 1782, pp. 476-482; *Stabilimenta Rhodiorum militum*, op. cit., *De receptone fratrum*, pp. 104-117.

⁵ "*for we have received certain information as to your nobility, your virtues ...*", *Code de Rohan*, p. 476. The texts of the Rite cited in this article are taken from the Code de Rohan (1782).

requisite for admittance to the Order⁶.

What the *Rite* proposes for the Knights of Justice is also proposed, according to the various stages in their life, for members of the Second and Third Classes⁷.

The first virtue to be nominated is *charity*, symbolized by the torch held by the Knight: “*Holding a lighted torch in hand is a sign of that charity which a true Knight must also possess*”⁸. Charity aroused and fed by the Word of God: “*Take this torch and go with the grace of the Holy Spirit to hear the Word of God*”⁹.

After having promised “*to have a particular care and concern for widows, pupils, orphans and all those who are sick and suffering*,” the Knight is exhorted to: “*Take this sword in your hand as the means to carry out the promises you have made, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. With the help of God you will be inflamed with hope, justice and charity and you will bravely offer your spirit to God and your body to the dangers and toils of this world*”¹⁰.

⁶ *Code*, Rome 1997, art. 108, § 2.

⁷ The Rite of Investiture for the Third Class and the Promise of Obedience for the Second Class currently in use follow some parts of the Rite of Profession in Solemn Vows for the First Class.

⁸ *Code de Rohan*, p. 476.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 479.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 477.

Reference is often made to the *faith* and to the *defence of the faith* and naturally to the three vows, both with explicit questions and with the formula of the Profession: “[...] *I vow to God Omnipotent, to his Immaculate Mother and to St. John the Baptist to observe permanently obedience [...] and to live without belongings and to be chaste*”¹¹.

The clearest and most intense reference to the virtues is the exhortation following the invitation to put the sword in its scabbard and “*to keep it always pure and clean*”:

*“The purity and spotlessness of the sword signifies that it is the duty of a Knight to be pure and free from every vice and a lover of all the virtues, especially that of Honour, which is ever in the company of the four cardinal virtues. With the help of Prudence, the first of the cardinal virtues, you shall bear in mind the past and the present and take thought for the future. With the help of the second, which is Justice, you shall dispose your public duties and your private interests, holding them in balance. With the help of the third, which is Fortitude, you shall show magnanimity, on occasions worthy of a true and religious Knight. With the help of Temperance, the fourth, you shall so govern your senses and feelings as to become a very perfect, gentle Knight. With these four virtues you shall ever seek honour”*¹².

¹¹ Ibid., p. 481.

¹² Ibid., p. 478.

The virtues according to St. Thomas Aquinas

The second part of St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae* is devoted to moral theology and starts with these words: man is created *in the image of God*. After having spoken in the first part of God, that is of the model to follow, in the second part St. Thomas speaks of man as the *image of God*.

It was easier for mediaeval Christians to understand this vision than for us. Moral doctrine and much preaching now tend to present morality as a series of precepts, commandments and ethical obligations far removed from the word of Jesus Christ who indicates that charity is the centre of Christian life and thus of morality.

St. Thomas' ethics are not firstly precepts or commandments but virtues aimed at the supreme virtue that is charity.

Faith, hope and charity are the answer to God that is made known to Christians in a supernatural way by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The three theological virtues are not only the response of the manifestation of God to man, but are at the same time the faculty and the source that makes this answer possible. We do not always sufficiently remember this: once supernatural reality is

made “accessible” through the revelation, natural man can no longer “believe” in the theological meaning of faith on the basis of his strength alone; the possibility of “believing” comes from sanctifying grace.

In faith the Christian learns about the reality of God in a way that goes beyond every natural knowledge; hope¹³ is the Christian’s existential response, made possible by God, to the revelation that Christ is the “way” to eternal life; charity¹⁴ is the response of all man’s positive energies elevated by God’s infinite grace.

All three theological virtues have a close “connection”¹⁵, as St. Thomas claims in his treatise on the virtues: “*So too, hope leads to charity [...].wherefore, with the advent of charity, hope is made more perfect, because we hope chiefly in our friends. It is in this sense that Saint Ambrose states that charity flows from hope*”¹⁶; the same thing can be said of faith that believes more strongly than before.

The virtues are *habitus*, that is “habits” for helping to achieve man’s authentic fulfillment: just as a

¹³ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe salvi*, Rome 2007.

¹⁴ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, Rome 2005.

¹⁵ Cfr. *Summa Theol.*, I-II, q. 66, a. 2, ad 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II-II, q. 17, a. 8.

skilled worker carries out his tasks to the best of his ability, so the virtues are good “habits” of man’s different faculties: intelligence, will, sensibility ...

St. Thomas likens moral virtues, man’s efforts to do good, to the infused virtues that are given “from above”¹⁷, supernatural virtues coming from the grace we possess. To emphasize better God’s action that supports and promotes man’s acts, St. Thomas links the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit¹⁸ to the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues.

Our strength often fails us. Even when raised by the grace of faith, our minds are troubled by incomprehension, because we have trouble in fully grasping the meaning of the word revealed, which tells us about the life and work of God in Jesus Christ. Thus our moral decisions, even when transformed in their motivations and their aims by the virtues that have been given us “from above”, are often hesitant, encountering great difficulties. The Father, who loves us and gives us the disposition to love Him, comes with the Gift of the Holy Spirit¹⁹ to compensate for human inadequacies.

¹⁷ *John* 3: 3 and 7: 19, 11.

¹⁸ The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord (*Isaiah*, 11: 2).

¹⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1830-1832.

Thomas Aquinas has outlined the *Christian image* of man through seven virtues²⁰ that can be summarized as follows:

The Christian is a human creature who – in *faith* – becomes aware of the reality of God.

The Christian aims – in *hope* – for the conclusion of his existence in eternal life.

The Christian turns – in the theological virtue of *charity* – towards God and towards his neighbour in a manner that surpasses his natural capacity for love.

The Christian is *prudent*, that is, he does not permit the yes or no of his will to cloud his vision of reality, but makes the yes or no of his will depend on the truth of things.

The Christian is *just*, that is he aims to live in truth “with others”; he realises he is only one of the members of the Church, of the civil community and of every community.

The Christian is *strong*, that is ready to support difficulties or even wounds for justice to be achieved.

The Christian is *temperate*, and that is does not permit his wish to possess and enjoy to go against what he must really be.

²⁰ In St. Thomas’ treatise the seven virtues are accompanied by numerous “ancillary” virtues and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the virtues are followed by the description of their contrary vices.

This seven virtues remind us strongly that the ethics of classical theology is an ethics of the *image of God* in us, with explicit reference to Jesus' words on the perfection of the Christian: "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" (Matthew 5: 48).

The answer to our question about the right Christian image of man can be given with a single word: Christ.

The Christian is in some way "another Christ" and, something which always surprises and embarrasses us, "*perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect*".

These words of Jesus Christ seem unachievable by human force alone and even exaggerated; Mary and the first disciples also asked: "*how is it possible?*"²¹, but we must not forget that "*with man this is impossible but with God all things are possible*"²² and that *to be perfect* is not to be understood in the sense of already entirely fulfilled, but in the sense that *perficere* means to complete, little by little; it is a journey lasting a whole lifetime.

²¹ *Luke*, 1, 34; *Matthew*, 19, 25; *Mark*, 10, 26; *Luke*, 18, 26.

²² *Luke*, 1, 37; *Matthew*, 19, 26; *Mark*, 10, 27; *Luke*, 18, 27.

Honour

“It is the duty of a Knight to be pure and free from every vice and a lover of all the virtues, especially that of Honour, which is ever in the company of the four cardinal virtues” (Rite of Profession)

The awareness of one’s honour comes from the spirit of the true man, an upright, strong and pure spirit, disinterested and noble, sure, serious and also joyful.

What does it mean to be noble? To take responsibility for others. It means realizing that honour is the goal of our actions, accepting that our place is where there is need and danger. He is not noble who does all this only after a laborious reflection and with bad grace, but he who has become so accustomed to acting this way that he cannot behave otherwise.

Honour has a profound relationship with another essential moment in a man’s life, and even more of a Knight or Dame: knightly service.

It’s almost as if those who serve had said to themselves: I am not here for my own pleasure, but for another or for a task or a need.

But there are two ways to achieve all this: as a servant or as a knight. The servant serves because he

wants a reward or because he is forced to; those who have a chivalrous soul serve because it is a great thing, independently of advantages or particular aims. That the work will succeed, be achieved: this is the knight's aim. He is not forced to serve but does it out of his free initiative. It is a knightly service to support, safeguard and defend another man to whom one has given one's loyalty. We perform this service especially for those who are our friends and then to whoever confides in us. We must be discreet, trustworthy and prompt in our assistance.

Knighthly service is first of all addressed to the weak: *fratres ad servitium pauperum venientes*. Knightly service means protecting the *poor* from every kind of need and danger, it means defending their honour and their good name. The chivalrous man spontaneously puts himself on the side of the weakest, of those who are in thrall to a necessity; it is precisely this that distinguishes him from the interested man.

The noblest knightly service is the one which has God and His kingdom. In a certain sense God has placed His honour in our hands and we must defend it.

Knighthly service requires much from us and first of all to remain faithful to our service even when it is greatly to our disadvantage. A knight has to live in

such as way as to be worthy of his mission. Knightly service is arduous; many things allowed in other situations are not permitted to those who have chosen this service²³.

Prudence

“With the help of Prudence, the first of the cardinal virtues, you shall bear in mind the past and the present and take thought for the future” (Rite of Profession)

Prudence is not only the first of the cardinal virtues, but can be said to “generate” all the moral virtues. It is called the “charioteer among the virtues” (*auriga virtutum*) because it guides the other virtues, indicating their norm and measure.

Prudence is the virtue that orders practical reason to discern in every circumstance our true good and to choose the appropriate means to achieve it. Prudence is “*the straight rule of action,*” writes St. Thomas after Aristotle. It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation.

In our culture it has become difficult to understand the preeminence of prudence over the other

²³ R. GUARDINI, *L'uomo cavalleresco*, in *Lettere sull'autoformazione*, Brescia 1999, pp. 85-104.

virtues. Prudence, in classical theology, is something close to what in current language we call “conscience”²⁴.

It is prudence that guides conscience. Thanks to the virtue of prudence we apply moral principles to particular cases and overcome our doubts on the good to do and the evil to avoid²⁵.

Prudence is a judgement that assumes a sufficient knowledge of all the aspects of the context in which we have to act. It concerns sapiential rather than scientific knowledge, developing to that wisdom which only revelation can reveal to us. Docility belongs to prudence, that is the ability to listen and to accept the different dimensions of reality. The prudent person thus looks at reality not only from the perspective of people, situations and things but also from that of wanting and doing.

Our habitual language has moved far away from the ancient meaning of prudence: to be prudent today means being cautious and avoiding excesses instead of possessing the knowledge and conditions that are the presupposition for doing good. We find it difficult to think we must always be prudent to be

²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1776-1802.

²⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1806; J. PIEPER, *La prudenza*, Brescia 2001.

right and truthful. Prudence and fortitude seem to be incompatible: to be strong seems mostly to mean being “imprudent”: we should instead remember that right and strong action, all action in general, is right and strong and good because it corresponds to the truth of things that, in faith, we believe God created. The truth of things and situations makes its voice heard in a fruitful and illuminating manner through the virtue of prudence.

Resoluteness belongs to prudence, since it is the prudential measure and fruit of wisdom. We have to assess our strengths and know our weaknesses to follow Jesus: the parables of the builder of the tower and of the king who goes to war illustrate this need well (*Luke* 14:28-33). In Christian life it is not enough to *start*, but one must also *continue and remain* unto death. It is thus important neither to set conditions (“*I will follow you, Lord; but first let me ...*,” *Luke* 9:61), nor be led only by enthusiasm (“*I will follow you wherever you go*,” *Luke* 9:57), nor encourage wishful thinking. Jesus continues his journey to the end, but the disciples do not succeed in following Him to the cross. The great difference between Jesus and His disciples is that Jesus prayed; He faced the challenge (*agòn*) of prayer while His disciples fell asleep (*Matthew* 26:36-46; *Mark* 14:32-42; *Luke* 22:39-46). Resoluteness,

essential for the difficult and always threatened choice to follow Jesus, is a gift of the Spirit which alights on humble, persevering and insistent prayer.

Justice

“With the help of the second, which is Justice, you shall dispose your public duties and your private interests, holding them in balance” (Rite of Profession)

Justice is the virtue that consists of a constant and firm desire to give to God and to one’s neighbour what is their due.

Justice is the ability to live with another and with others. The good man is first of all just. It is no coincidence that the Bible and church liturgy say that the man who lives according to the word and grace of God is “just”.

St. Thomas praises justice with the words of Aristotle: *“Justice is the highest of all virtues; neither the morning star nor the evening star are so beautiful”*.

To recognize and attribute to each their due is the meaning of this virtue handed down to us by western tradition. Classical theology distinguishes between *commutative justice*, which deals with relations between individuals, their mutual rights/duties, and

distributive justice, which deals with the relations of the community as a whole, mainly concerning the work of men and government institutions for the formal and essential protection of the principles of socio-economic equality and equality before the law.

With distributive justice we are explicitly introduced into the vast chapter of *social justice*. On one hand, it concerns the responsibilities of those who, at various levels, govern the state, always aiming at the “common good”, on the other it interpellates individuals about their contribution to the construction of a “good society”.

Justice concerns the eminently relational and social aspects of our life. It prompts us to respect the rights of others and to behave in a way consistent with communal life. It postulates the recognition of the criteria of equality and responsibility. This is why justice constitutes a safeguard against any form of discrimination and is an incentive to establish a network of relations, both private and public, under the banner of respect of one’s neighbour and of the laws of society. It is a virtue that concerns interpersonal relations, where the recognition of the other does not mean dominating him or her, but creating the foundations for the growth of a relationship, capable of proceeding beyond the “legal” level of mutual

rights/duties towards a more intense and friendly human bond.

In social life, justice prompts us to be active players in orderly and fair communal living. To achieve this we need virtuous civil dispositions, such as the desire to participate, the sense of legality, the spirit of dialogue and the courage of civil denunciation.

Faced with the decline of a shared *ethos* with all its values, we have to tackle the core issue of the responsibility of adults in the formation of youth. We have an urgent duty to support children, adolescents and young people in their gradual process of maturation, in the responsible exercise of their liberty, in a critical attitude towards the threats of standardization, in the crucial issues of existence and in professional and vocational discernment with regards to the contexts to which each of us belongs.

Education in justice is an urgent task of every member of the Order²⁶.

²⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1807; R. GUARDINI, *Giustizia*, in *Virtù. Temi e prospettive della vita morale*, Brescia 2001, pp. 57-66; ID., *La giustizia davanti a Dio*, cit., pp. 209-226; J. PIEPER, *La giustizia*, Brescia 2000.

Fortitude

“With the help of the third, which is Fortitude, you shall show magnanimity, on occasions worthy of a true and religious Knight.” (Rite of Profession).

Fortitude is the virtue which, when in difficulty, ensures firmness and constancy in seeking the good.

Fortitude is the “mature” experience of the baptised. It was the apostle Paul who proposed it when, outlining the ethical horizon of the disciple of Jesus, he reminds us that *“we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves,”* but *“speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him”*. According to St. Paul this is how to ensure that *“the body of Christ may be built up”* and thus help to construct the *“perfect man”* and attain the *“whole measure of the fullness of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:12-16).

This is the lofty objective that would be unthinkable if we had not been made new in Christ with baptism and given a supernatural grace that makes us His sons (Romans 8: 14-17), part of the experience of the New Man par excellence who is Jesus (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

This is where the real meaning of the Christian virtues lies: energies given by the Spirit of God which

have to be practised, strengths (the Latin term *virtus* da *vir* corresponds to the Greek *dynamis*) that support us, gear us up for the superhuman vocation of “builders of the body of Christ”. These strengths must however be translated into concrete choices and actions.

Fortitude, like the other virtues, is part of this virtuous dynamics that is both a *gift* and a *pledge*. It calls for energy, strength, determination and the decision to make God’s action bear fruit in us. With prudence, justice and temperance, this virtue is called “cardinal” in the Church’s traditional language because, like the other three, it is considered a “hinge”, precondition or keystone for good Christian behaviour. The Fathers of the Church had already accepted the Greek philosophers’ stoic plan of these four virtues considered fundamental for a moral life, and Ambrose, Augustine and then Thomas remodelled it in the light of Christian faith.

Fortitude is seen as one of the most important “ethical principles” in Christian life. In the commitment required today from every man of goodwill, and not only from the Christian, we need inner energies closely connected to fortitude to live a just life. To be strong so as not to cravenly shirk an adult life plan, avoiding responsibilities and following everyone

and everything. The virtue of fortitude is to be exercised with the awareness that it is in the little everyday things that we have to show the human and divine energy we possess, renouncing the logic of violence and obeying the apparently paradoxical criterion of faith: *“for the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength”* (1 Corinthians 1:25). Being a strong Christian means following inclinations that, in the context in which we live, can seem weaknesses: goodness of heart, aptitude for giving, for forgiving, for mercy, for accepting, for listening.

The apostle Paul gives a good description of the Christian paradox of strength-weakness: *“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”* (Ephesians 4:1-3). Many authors, referring to Paul’s words, point out that Christian fortitude is accompanied by “ancillary” virtues: magnanimity, patience, constancy, firmness, nobility and generosity of spirit, munificence and perseverance.

The exercise of Christian fortitude also calls for courage, strength of mind and the control of one’s emotions and passions; knowing how to balance, as Augustine tells us, a healthy indignation about things

that are wrong with a calmness that does lapse into rancour, hate or revenge. The paradoxical and complex composition of the cardinal virtue of fortitude once again highlights our need for the theological virtues of faith, hope and love.

How can we practise such an uncomfortable virtue if we have only our own forces to rely on?

Realizing that fortitude is first of all a gift of God is already an answer to this question.

There can be no fortitude²⁷ without turning to God and confiding in Him in a continuous practice of faith, hope and communion with the “rock of our salvation”.

It is God’s strength that supports our weakness (2 *Corinthians* 12: 9-20).

Temperance

“With the help of Temperance, the fourth, you shall so govern your senses and feelings as to become a very perfect, gentle Knight” (Rite of Profession)

Temperance is the virtue which moderates the attraction of pleasures and makes it possible to

²⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1808; J. PIEPER, *La fortezza*, Brescia 2001.

obtain a balance in the use of created goods. It ensures that desires will prevail over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of honesty.

In the New Testament it is also called “sobriety”. *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:11-13).

Besides this New Testament citation given in the *Catechism*, the term *sobriety* is often to be found in Paul’s epistles and especially in his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus.

The majority of references to sobriety are to be found in the frequent New Testament “lists of virtues” and temperance and sobriety must be inserted in the broader framework of the ethical training of the believer.

In the Greek world, temperance (*enkràteia*) is a very important virtue that often lies at the foundation of religion. Temperance evokes controls over impulses and senses, it is self-discipline, reason that governs the body; in many cases it indicates continence in a sexual sense.

In the New Testament, temperance does not

appear by itself, but is generally listed together with the other fruits of the Spirit; it does not only have a sexual significance but rather indicates self-control (*Galatians* 5: 23). As the “fruit of the Spirit”, “self-control” is not only the result of a simple human effort at self-discipline, but is a gift received from God in the course of a life directed towards others.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians (9:25), the apostle Paul attributes the adjective temperate to the athlete who has full self-control and knows what training is necessary to obtain the prize; the apostle Peter, in his first letter (5:8-9), also invites men to temperance and to vigilance: “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith*”.

The invitation to be sober is accompanied by the invitation to rise up, effectively recalled in the Rite of Profession²⁸. Many texts of the

²⁸ The Superior who receives the Profession “*shakes the shoulder of the R. pronouncing the words “Arise! Never hesitate so to value and magnify these virtues. They may earn you honour and recognition from other men. Rise now above your vices and be vigilant in the virtues and in the Faith of Christ, which you must always defend*”.

Old and New Testament²⁹ invite men to “wake up”³⁰.

Being *sober* is proposed as a consequence of being a *son of the light*³¹ and here is once again seen from the perspective of the gift “from above” and not only that of self-fulfilment.

For the stoic philosophers, temperance was one of the four cardinal virtues, called *sophrosyne*, indicating the right measure, moderation and temperance understood as the sign of inner balance.

The New Testament terms to indicate temperance belong to the ethical heritage of the time, and especially to that of Greek philosophy. The New Testament does not shrink from promoting the typical virtues of the Hellenistic world, but at the same time reintroduces them from the perspective of a

²⁹ We only cite *Isaiah* 52:1-2, *Jonah* 1: 6.

³⁰ Cfr. e. g. Ephesians 5, 14, (citing *Isaiah* 60, 1): "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."; or Romans 13, 11: "It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed".

³¹ Paul invites us to vigilance while awaiting the coming of the Lord, fighting as sons of the light and not of the darkness: "*You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet*" (1 *Thessalonians* 5: 6-8).

typically Christian humanism, illuminated and supported by grace.

The *sobriety* in the New Testament, unlike that proposed by stoicism, comes from the profound experience of man's lack of self-sufficiency. Paul thanks God for his ability *to be self-sufficient*: “*I can do everything through Him who gives me strength*”. It does not involve only moderating or tempering our character, but remaining faithful to our vocation as disciples of the Lord³².

Conclusion

The Rite of Profession repeatedly invites the Knights of Justice and every member of the Order to root the cardinal virtues in the theological virtues: the supernatural *ethos* of the Christian perfects and elevates the natural *ethos* of the *gentleman*, of the naturally noble man.

This link between natural and supernatural virtues is vibrantly expressed by St. Thomas when he says that grace does not destroy nature, but presupposes it, perfects it and completes it³³.

³² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1809; J. PIEPER, *La temperanza*, Brescia 2001.

³³ *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2: “*Cum enim gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat*”

St. Thomas' phrase is illuminating but does not tell us how God operates in man and man operates in God.

The Christian can sometimes give the impression of going against natural prudence because he bases his action on a reality that he can only learn about through faith.

Does grace replace the natural knowledge of natural things?

Does faith make the assessment of the concrete situation and the concrete action superfluous or does it substitute it?

To these and similar questions St. Thomas replies: "*Men, who need to be guided and led by others, when they have grace they at least know how to do this: to ask for counsel from other men and to distinguish a good counsel from a bad one*". The specification "*when they have grace*" signifies that grace does not suppress but perfects human counsel.

As for prudence, it is possible to find the *Christian difference* for every virtue; to conclude our consideration on man's *Christian image* we shall just mention the difference between a *gentleman's Christian* and *natural* fortitude.

The difference between Christian and natural fortitude lies basically in the theological virtue of

hope. Hope means that we expect a successful conclusion; supernatural hope offers man, who lives in the *grace of God*, a conclusion that surpasses every expectation, a conclusion we call eternal life. All our life's expectations can vacillate, human hopes can become impossible, but the Christian's fortitude is based on the hope of eternal life, on the hope of a *new heaven in a new earth* (*Apocalypse* 21:1).

Fr. Costantino Gilardi, O.P.

Fidelity and Detachment in the Order of Malta

Fidelity can be defined as faithfulness, being faithful, loyalty, and allegiance to a person, party, or bond. Those terms require little elaboration. Fidelity is one of the most admirable of human qualities and surely has a supernatural origin whether it is seen in a religious or secular context. It is the stuff from which heroes and saints are made, and it is an indispensable quality in all meaningful human relationships and in our relationship with God too.

Detachment is defined as disengaged, to separate and spiritual separation from the world. At first sight the definition may seem inadequate, but it invites some further reflection. Generosity, unselfishness, and thoughtfulness are additional meanings. In the daily prayer of the Order, it is expressed by the phrase “forgetful of myself”. In other words, it is clearly a necessary characteristic of fidelity.

Every knight or dame of the Order of Malta should possess faithfulness. The legends and reality of knighthood are all about fidelity. A knight had to be faithful to his lord and to his vocation. He had no right to expect remuneration or recognition for his services which were performed out of love for God and for his neighbour. They were fundamental to his

calling as a Christian, and as a member of a religious order and a chivalric order at that. Each of these levels of involvement carried additional obligations and responsibilities. The presumption of privilege without acknowledging responsibility would have been grotesque. They went together, and they still do. One is made a knight, or a dame, in order to serve in a special way and with special dedication.

How to become/ member of the Order of Malta

A frequent question many of us are asked is how we became knights or dames of Malta. The answers given can be very interesting and curious. Commonly, the reply is that they were invited to join by friends or relatives who were already members. Probably this is the way by which the Order obtains most of its members, and that can be a good thing. Others will say that they received it from the bishop or more likely, “the cardinal”, whoever that might be. Some have even said that it was given to them by the Pope! Any attempt to get an elaboration of how or why this happened is usually met by a lot of vague statements or by no explanation at all. Some feel that the invitation to join the Order is also a mandate to expect a leadership role in government of the Order.

Others are of the opinion that the Order exists to protect their own personal, social, or professional interests, whatever they might be while others maintain that the Order exists to preserve the aristocracy.

The lack of knowledge by many of the members of what the Order of Malta is or of how it functions is disconcerting. Members have said that they have been told it is forbidden to ever read the *Constitutional Charter* and the *Code* (the statutes of the Order), and this did not seem to bother them. One would never think of joining a golf club that forbade its members even an elementary explanation of its features, privileges and obligations. Normally, one does not enter into contractual responsibilities without knowing what they are, and yet there are some who have no problem with entering into a religious commitment without knowing what it entails.

When entering the Order of Malta, or when moving in it from one class to another in it, one makes a commitment he claims he intends to keep, and to which he affixes his signature. It is a contract of sorts. It is difficult to imagine the Order readily admitting persons who have no intention of being loyal and dedicated to the work of the Order. It bears repetition that it is not an order of merit given in

recognition for distinguished services already given. While it may be a mark of prestige, it is much more than that. One associates himself with an ancient and unique group of Catholics known for their service to the less fortunate.

Basic elements of the Order of Malta

History may not be interesting to everyone, but it is difficult to ignore in an organization as old and as curious as the Order of Malta. Well over nine hundred years old, it is a subject of international law exercising sovereign functions including the issuing of postage stamps, currency, passports, and exchanging diplomats with more than one hundred countries and international agencies. More importantly, it is the fourth oldest religious order in the Catholic church. It has health related projects in more than one hundred and twenty countries and associations of members actively involved in local charities in more than fifty-five countries.

Like any religious order, it exists for the promotion of the glory of God and the sanctification of its members through devotedly living the faith and service to it. In the case of the Order of Malta, care of the sick and the poor in accordance with its ancient

traditions without distinctions of religion, race, origin, or age are means by which these are faithfully accomplished.

Someone has said that the Order of Malta is “by tradition modern”, and this is very true. Our hospitals and clinics are as modern as any anywhere and the quality of care is exemplary and given the highest priority. There are numerous documents in the archives of the Order in which the patients were referred to as “our lords the sick and our lords the poor” whereas the knights and dames who cared for them, many of whom were noble, became the servants. This was revolutionary in its time and it still is.

It comes as no surprise at the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes to see princes and countesses as well as common people pushing wheelchairs or beds or assisting people at the baths. This goes on in many other places every day and can be seen in hospitals and homes for the elderly, handicapped children, and people suffering from aids. No less important is the relief work done in areas of natural disaster and armed conflict where dedication and unselfishness are necessary. Those who have been made helpless or disadvantaged have a right to a better life, and what cannot be eliminated or remedied can surely be alleviated.

Motivation and quality of the service

In his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI, among other things, speaks of the distinctiveness of the Church's charitable activities. (31) He speaks of three qualities necessary to those involved in health care: professionalism, humanity, and heart. Fidelity is expressed in each of these qualities. To be faithful only some of the time and negligent or indifferent the remainder of the time would be cruel and unthinkable. Commitment is not only desirable, it is expected, and this is traditional with the Order of Malta.

As Pope Benedict puts it: "Following the example given in the parable of the good Samaritan, Christian charity is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison, etc. The Church's charitable organizations ought to do everything in their power to provide the resources and above all the personnel needed for this work. Individuals who care for those in need must be professionally competent: they should be properly trained in what to do and how to do it, and committed to continuing care. Yet, while professional competence is a primary, funda-

mental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern. Those who work for the Church's charitable organizations must be distinguished by the fact that they do not merely meet the needs of the moment, but they dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity. Consequently, these charity workers need a "formation of the heart": which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbour will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. *Gal 5:6*).

Fidelity and detachment, therefore, are basic to the spirituality of the members of the Order of Malta. No less than with any Catholic we are expected to be faithful to our religion and to all of its teachings. To be merely a "cafeteria catholic", picking and choosing whatever truths strike our fancy, or are easy while ignoring important other ones is unacceptable.

The rules and guidelines of the Order likewise are not optional but are to become part of our belief system and a further basis for loving and responsible

action. An authentically religious attitude prevents us from presuming to judge God and accusing him of permitting misfortunes and not having compassion for his creatures.

Prayer, Pope Benedict reminds us, “as a means of drawing ever new strength from Christ is urgently needed. People who pray are not wasting their time, even though the situation appears desperate and seems to call for action alone.” As Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said “We need this deep connection with God in our daily life. It does not detract from effective and loving service to our neighbour but is the inexhaustible source of that service.” (Lent 1996)

Fra' John MacPherson

Humility and Simplicity

(Translate from italian)

Humility and simplicity are virtues which go hand in hand: one implies the other. Humility is a basic disposition of the soul and so is simplicity. Together with our way of being, they express how we refer to concrete things, to relationships and to action.

Humility. The Benedictine Rule is based on humility. In “The Rule of St. Benedict and the SMOM” the Grand Master Fra’ Andrew Bertie gives us a brief outline, pointing out its aspects of humility and obedience and how they can be useful for the Order of Malta’s spirituality. Without going into the Order’s relationship with the Augustinian Rule, I would imagine it was initially based on the Benedictine school, as were other orders of chivalry. St. Bernard reflected lengthily on humility analysing it, as did his teacher Benedict, through the seven degrees and defining it: “*Humility is a virtue by which a man knowing himself as he truly is, abases himself*”. Strong words, that St. Bernard exalts when speaking of the degrees of love (De Diligendo Deo).

Humility seems difficult to describe in concrete terms. Who can say: I am humble? Romano Guardini (Message to the Young) asks: “*But what is humility?*” and

asserts: *“It is a virtue that is part of strength. Only he who is strong can be truly humble...humility cannot have its origin in man, but in God”*. The same theologian, in his work *“The Lord”*, has a chapter entitled *“The Humility of God”*.

Simplicity. Simplicity is as difficult to define as humility. We must immediately remove from the term simplicity, Christian simplicity, the meaning which ranges from ingenuousness to gullibility. Our Lord Jesus did so when he told us: *“Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves”* (Mt. 10:16).

The astuteness of a serpent, unlikable in itself, is set beside the candour of a dove without taking anything from its charm. There is a delightful comment by St. Francis de Sales in a letter that he wrote to the Baroness de Chantal in July 1607: *“In fact the poor, white doves are much more attractive than serpents; but I would like to give the prudence of the serpent to the dove, because it would not cease to be beautiful”*.

Humility and simplicity are recognised in the Old Testament. In the Book of Sirach, for example, we read: *“For great is the power of God alone, and he is honoured by the humble.”* (Sir., 3:21). They are also frequently mentioned in the Psalms but acquire their true value and meaning in the New Testament, becoming full “Christian virtues”. *“Christian simplicity is a mystery and operates as such,”* writes Hans Urs von Balthasar in

the introduction to his booklet “*The Simplicity of the Christian*” and adds that, instead of being the result of human effort, in the Christian simplicity is the reflection of a divine light, which comes to him as a gift..

Simplicity and humility in following Christ

We read in a sermon of St. Augustine: “*Let us then follow Christ’s paths which he showed to us, above all the path of humility, that in which he himself set out. Indeed he committed to us the path of humility by his teaching and he walked through it suffering for us*”. It is Jesus himself who gave this spiritual guidance: “*Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart*” (Mt. 11:29). Gentle and humble in heart: these were the classic epithets of the poor in the Old Testament, the heirs of the *anawim*, the poor in spirit, those who maintain in their heart an attitude of detachment and docility.

-St. Paul to the Philippians (2:5 et seq.) holds up the example of the Son of God in a passage permeated by profound theology: “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant*”. He literally emptied himself (*kenosis*). The Son of God did not shed his divine nature, but rather the

glory that belonged to him and which should have shone in his human nature, as for brief moments it was seen in the Transfiguration. But, taking the form of a servant, he chose a path of humble submission. His Father will glorify him after his passion. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus was to say to the two disciples: *“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”* (Lk. 24:26).

-It was customary among the Jews that, when inviting friends to dinner, there would be a slave at the entrance to the dining room who, wearing the apron, washed the guests' feet. In the Last Supper it is probable that circumstances did not permit this service, albeit useful for those who, like the Apostles, wore sandals when travelling. Jesus rises, protecting his tunic with a towel, pours water into a bowl and passes from one disciple to the other, kneeling and washing their feet. An intense disquiet must have gone through the atmosphere of that room among the Apostles: their Master performing the task of a slave! We can understand Peter who, with his usual impetuosity, exclaims: *“You will never wash my feet!”*.

Then Jesus teaches them: *“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. Exemplum dedi vobis”* (Jn. 13:1 et seq.).

This is an unquestionable example of love. John, when recounting the washing of feet, starts by saying: *“having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end”*. Thus Jesus who kneels and washes their feet does it as an act of love and Peter, uncomprehending it, refuses this act of love. We must see here not only the Son of God, the Teacher who loves, but also the Son of God who is humble. The washing of the feet is consistent with what Paul writes to the Philippians: *“Though he was in the form of God, he made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant”*. It is the profundity of this abasement that Jesus indicates to the Christians: *“you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you”*. An example therefore of love of one’s neighbour and an example of humility. The only true charity comes from humility.

Simplicity and humility in Jesus’ teaching

The Gospel, in the very words of Jesus, is revealed to the simple: *“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children”* (Mt. 11:26). The Evangelist Luke, (10:21) when recounting the same words of Jesus, asserts that He *“rejoiced in the spirit”*. The

Lord rejoices in this truth and makes it one of his favourite teachings. We find it repeated with vigour in the Beatitudes: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Mt. 5:3). Poor in spirit because emptied of themselves, willing, open to the will of God. Little children: in Matthew’s description, the Lord Jesus wanted to stress this truth (18:1-4) when he asked his disciples: “*Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “*Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*”.

Children feel protected by their parents, they have no hidden intentions, they trust, they don’t think too much about themselves. This is where their simplicity lies. It is commonly said: to have the simplicity of a child. In spiritual life this is the way towards perfection, it is the little way of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, the path which led her to love and to sanctity.

The Holy Father, in his pilgrimage to the Mariazell shrine in Austria, in September 2007, invited to address a plea to the Madonna: “*Show us Jesus!*” and added “*Mary responds, showing Him to us in the first instance as a child. God has made himself small for us..... He invites us to become small ourselves, to come down from our high thrones and to learn to be childlike before God*”.

The teaching of the Lord is no different when he tells us to have a simple eye. Matthew (6:22) and Luke (11:34-36): *“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light”*; Luke then adds that the luminosity of the body comes from *“a lamp with its rays that gives you light”*. Thus the eye receives the light from the lamp; it is transparent. We are reminded of the radiance of the eyes of the Saints, of the Curate of Ars, of Thérèse de Lisieux or of Mother Teresa, which expressed a source of inner light, light from God. The Curate of Ars was simple in attributing to St. Philomena (who perhaps never existed) the prodigies which through him were performed. Mother Teresa was simple in bringing her rosary even to the most formal meetings. The Lord Jesus emphasizes humility when, noticing the guests at the wedding feast who took the places of honour, exhorted: *“But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place”* (Lk. 14:10). *“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”* (Mt. 23:12).

The Apostles, who initially were not free of ambitions – the mother of James and John had asked the Lord that her sons could sit one on the right and the other on the left of Him in his kingdom -, learnt their lesson after the Lord’s passion and death. Tradition has it that Peter in his martyrdom wanted

to be crucified head down out of humility and admonished the Christians: “*Gird yourselves with humility* (1 Pet.). And Paul echoed him: “*Have heartfelt humility*” (Col. 3:12). Our Patron John the Baptist was entirely humble: “*The strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.*” (Jn. 1:27).

The Virgin Mary was a model of simplicity and humility: in the Annunciation she entirely entrusted herself to God as a willing servant with an unconditional Fiat. “*Humilitate placuit*” God was pleased with her humility and this became a glorious motif in the Magnificat: “*Magnificat anima mea Dominum, quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae; he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed*” (Lk. 1:46-48).

Appealing in his simplicity is the Blessed of our Order, John XXIII. He prayed “*Lord Jesus, preserve in me the enjoyment in practising this simplicity which, keeping me humble, brings me closer to your spirit*”.

II

Simplicity and humility in the Order of Malta's tradition and life

1- Testimonies and recommendations

The document cited by the Grand Master Fra' Andrew Bertie merits a special mention. It applies to the life of the Order's members recommendations inspired by the Rule of St. Benedict. The Grand Master stresses the obedience and humility contemplated in this Rule: In Chap. II we read: "*The first degree of humility is obedience without delay.*" St. Benedict was particularly severe with a monk who murmured.

Unfortunately, murmuring is often found in religious communities and our Order is a religious Order... One can understand how St. Benedict gave strict admonitions against murmuring which he wanted eliminated also from the heart. It is the heart that counts in the school of a Christ meek and humble in heart.

It is significant that St Bernard (1090-1153) had similar thoughts. In the book 'De laude Novae Militiae' written for the Templars at the request of Hugh, Grand Master of the Temple, where he describes the way of life of knights, St. Bernard writes: "*An insolent word, the profitless deed, coarse laughter, even the least murmur or whisper does not go unrepaired when perceived properly.*" (IV:8).

A mention of humility that is reflected in the way of life can be found in the 'Rule' of Raymond du Puy, the successor of our Founder: "*their clothing should be humble, because Our Lord's poor, whose servants we*

confess ourselves to be, go naked. And it is a thing wrong and improper for the servant that he should be haughty, while his Lord is humble.” (II:1-3).

This is echoed by the comment of Fra’ Andrew Bertie in the cited document when, commenting on the passage in Benedict’s Rule ‘*the monk should be content with the meanest and worst of everything,*’ he writes: “*the Knight of Justice or the member in Obedience should do without extravagant or unnecessary goods, making use only of practical things for performing efficient work*”. And finally, referring to the same Rule which, in the sixth degree of humility, invites the monk to consider himself inferior to others not only in words but in his innermost soul, the deceased Grand Master concludes: “*there is no place for ‘prima donnas’ in the Order*”.

Retracing the long and tormented history of the Order of Malta, notwithstanding the wise rules and shining examples of religious life as well as of heroic courage offered by the Knights in Palestine, in Rhodes and in Malta, we also find abuses and upheavals – as in almost all human institutions – difficult to hold up as models of simplicity and humility.

Indubitably the ideals are great, but their achievement is not always on the same level. Now as in the past, communities are threatened by controversies, envy, jealousy and murmurings that lead to division and demoralization.

2- Gains and losses

The Knight or Dame who enters the Order following a vocation bring with himself acquired values and professional experience as well as a Christian formation and a solid family education. In a certain sense they enter as “volunteers” and although constitutional and other documents give a certain classification, they are not involved in the traditional career ladder. Is it thus easier to talk to the members of the Order of Malta about simplicity and humility? In principle yes, humility and simplicity, as ‘evangelical’ virtues, are object of the spiritual education of members of a religious order such as ours and enter into the exercise of its activities. These are all ‘gains’.

The risks can come from our human nature and also from the fact that the members of the Order enter it with their own personalities and their own rich living and working experiences. They can thus encounter different visions, occasion of ambition, jealousies and divisions in this new environment that can affect their spiritual life and that of the Order. The Order’s balance sheet can contain also the ‘losses’ item.

This is not surprising; in the end each of us painfully comes to terms with his or her spiritual poverty when faced with the world’s need for love, service and active comprehension.

3- *At the school of Jesus*

The members of the Order of Malta are asked to remain in the school of Jesus and to measure themselves with his example and his teachings on humility and simplicity, as when washing feet: *“I have given you an example..... you also should do just as I have done to you”*. Here are example and words full of meaning: humility, love, service. Romano Guardini (“The Lord”-“Humility of God”) writes: *“Jesus in the Last Supper knelt before his disciples and washed their feet; not to debase himself, but to reveal to them the divine mystery of humility”*.

When the Knight or Dame “wash feet”, that is they serve the poor and the sick, they see in them the person of Jesus Christ. He himself has said so (Mt. 25: 34 et seq.). They see in the poor and the sick a mysterious dignity that makes them call them ‘Our Lords the Sick’.

Jesus’ example and counsel also apply to relationships between the Order’s members. How many examples can we cite here! Some situations require courage and the ability to keep silent or to give in so as not to offend or upset other people. Paul well interprets Jesus’ teachings when he invites the Galatians to: *“Bear one another’s burdens,”* (Gal. 6:2).

The child, whom the Lord Jesus told us to be

like, has a simplicity of eye and heart. Taking the lowest place at banquets is not practicable when there is a certain protocol to be respected. But there is always ample space for feelings and practical behaviour in the place that each of us occupies in the life of the Order so as to perform our work without placing ourselves in the limelight. As for ‘functions’, St. Francis de Sales writes: *“Humility is always simple...true humility exercises functions with simplicity”*.

Simplicity and humility do not however signify passivity or timidity in action. The Holy Father, speaking to the crowd of young people gathered in Loreto at the beginning of September 2007, said: *“Have the courage of humility”*.

Humility and simplicity are essential qualities for prayer. In the Gospels, Jesus praised the publican who from the last place invoked the mercy of God. We read in the Psalms: *“Lord thou has heard the desire of the humble”*... *“The prayer of him that humbleth himself pierce the clouds”*.

+ *Angelo Acerbi*

***Obsequium pauperum* in the Order of Malta**

*“Then said Jesus unto him,
Go, and do thou likewise!” (Lk 10,37)*

The motto of the Order of Malta, “*Tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum*”, describes the charisma of our Order. The term charisma has many associations. Firstly one thinks of a particular effect, a particular ability, that is not acquired but granted from the beginning. In our context one could perhaps say that it refers to a particular mission given to the Order by God, for which God has equipped the Order with the necessary “talents”. This charisma gives the Order its unmistakable character.

In its decree relating to religious orders, “*Perfectae Caritatis*”, the Second Vatican Council urged the orders to constantly return to their founding charisma, to ensure that it would remain alive within the orders and not be buried beneath the changed conditions brought about by time. Its charisma places the community of an order in a particular position within the Church and in the world, to fulfil a very particular and unique mission without which something would be lacking in the whole edifice of the Church. It is therefore right that we should regularly re-examine the unique character of this charis-

ma. I would like to attempt this with some thoughts on “*obsequium pauperum*”.

The Order’s mission of “*obsequium pauperum*” has two directions, outwards into the world and inwards within the Order. Its outward meaning is to make possible to the world the experience of Christ’s love through service to our neighbour and concrete aid to the suffering¹, and thus to increase the glory of God. Inwards it is directed towards God’s sanctification of the members through the fulfilment of this service. Thus the charisma of “*obsequium pauperum*” simultaneously aims at the practice of love of neighbour and the development of the member towards greater perfection. Both aspects are interconnected and they cannot be fulfilled separately. The purpose of our work is to help the sick and poor. In so far as we care for them in accordance with the charisma of the Order and in fulfilment of the calling of the Order, we may be permitted to hope for God’s sanctification. This is why the Order’s Constitution and Code so clearly emphasizes this service as a personal obligation

¹ “In everyone who is sick, no matter who, you must recognise that you serve Christ; let them perceive through your actions and words the signs of His merciful love” Benedict XVI in his homily on the occasion of his visit to the Order’s hospital of S.Giovanni battista, La Magliana, Rome 2 December 2007

(Art.9 Para.3 Const.; Art. 236 Code).

From the beginning, the members of the Order have understood service to the sick and poor as service to the Lord. The words of the Lord in Mt 25, 40 *“Inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me”*, are stamped into the outlook and experience of the brothers of the Order. The experience of encountering God through their service, and of serving Him in their performance of service to the sick, forms the very nature of their service, as one may already clearly read in the first Hospital Rule of Roger de Moulins.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10,25-37) gives us further indications as much for our correct inner standpoint as for the conduct of service in the Order.

The man who fell among thieves went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was on his way down from the Jewish centre of God’s worship, from the city of the Temple on the Mount, into the depths of the despised, heathen city of Jericho. This is interpreted by the church fathers as an allusion to Jesus Himself, who went down from Heaven to an Earth laden with sin, and in descending to save mankind was “fallen upon” by this same mankind. In contrast to the priest who was also going down – but evident-

ly with no intention of saving – aid came from the Samaritan who was going up in the opposite direction. Here again, the fathers interpret the Samaritan “*journeying*” up to the mountain as mankind in the search for God.

In the Order of Malta too, true “obsequium pauperum” takes place on the path of the search for God. God cannot be found without love of neighbour. The way to God is through our neighbour, and the way to our neighbour is through God.

“Obsequium pauperum” requires movement. It is not enough for me to distribute generous alms from where I am. I must move, leave my ivory tower, subject myself to the inconveniences of a “*journey*”, in order to encounter God and my neighbour. It is no accident that for us in the Order of Malta the pilgrimages with the handicapped and sick, especially to Lourdes, have such an irreplaceable and ultimately mysterious significance.

This movement is ascending and descending at the same time. In the ascending journey to the place of God’s worship, we must time and again also follow the Son of God on the road of descent, in that He descends to those who are lost in order to save them. Thus, above and below lose their old meanings. God is now also to be found down below, among the

“pauperes” of all kinds. He has declared His unbreakable solidarity with them, so that service to them is also service to Him. The word “obsequium” carries with it the meanings of “follow”, “obey” and “subordinate”. “Obsequium pauperum” calls on us personally to follow the “pauperes” to where they are to be found, to obey our lords the sick and to subordinate ourselves to them.

This is an extremely demanding programme, virtually a lifelong programme of education, for which there is no easy recipe and “a service which demands great self sacrifice”². To carry out this ‘mission’ with distinction, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us, “you must seek, to «put on the arms of the light» (Rom 13,12): the Words of the Lord, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the grace of the Sacraments, the theological and cardinal virtues; you must fight against the evil and sin which darken our existence”³. It is almost a consolation that often enough along this road we ourselves may discover our own poverty, so that we can sometimes join the ranks of the poor in the certain knowledge that, in so doing, we have Christ on our side.

² Benedict XVI in his homily on 2 December 2007

³ Benedict XVI in his homily on 2 December 2007

The difficulty does not only lie in the training of our inner attitude, but is also a quite practical one. Often we must decide for and on behalf of the “pauperes” how we should help them and with what means, since they are not in a position to take the appropriate decisions for themselves. To retain the attitude of service in these circumstances and to allow the poor as much autonomy as possible is not always easy; it takes time, strength and patience. Real solidarity is required, through which we also learn to see the world, so to speak, through the eyes of the poor.

Our help and our involvement is in many cases not simply a question of “caritas” but equally a question of justice, to which Pope Benedict XVI has again drawn our attention recently⁴. This too presents us with a great challenge. We members of the Order of Malta belong almost exclusively to the privileged in human society. Even when we personally strive to be just and to behave with decency in respect to our wealth, we cannot avoid admitting that we live in an unjust system in which some people are exploited while others profit. Globalisation has made this phenomenon even more clear. Nevertheless it

⁴ (Jesus of Nazareth, pages 198-9 of the English edition)

is uncomfortable to perceive this in one's own position and attitude, and to allow oneself to be "disturbed" by it. The words of Jesus about the "mammon of unrighteousness" apply precisely to this situation. Thus, "obsequium pauperum" is very often not "only" a question of love of neighbour, but an answer to the call for justice.

The Good Samaritan helped the wounded man in a decidedly expert manner. He did not only bring goodwill and the right attitude, but also the appropriate know-how. In those days oil and wine were the means of choice for good emergency wound treatment. Equally, the aid we give must be not only well-meaning but also skilled. High quality of expertise has always been a hallmark of the care provided in the hospitals of the Order. They have often stood at the pinnacle of progress in medical and nursing provision.

But here again, in this respect too we are confronted by difficult questions. A distinctive feature of our Order is the work of voluntary helpers in many fields. These bring to "obsequium pauperum" their own important special qualities of care and devotion. But they often lack the comparable specialist qualifications of professional aid workers. Here it is important to determine precisely whose

activity is appropriate and necessary in any given situation, and to resist the frequent tendency to unnecessarily overstretch the qualification criteria for volunteers and thus deter them from contributing.

The Good Samaritan also recognised that his responsibility went beyond first aid. He undertook complete responsibility for the wounded man, whom he had only encountered by chance. He helped financially, and then stayed in contact to ensure that the good-quality care would continue. This too belongs to the “professionalism” of aid, just as it does to the taking of responsibility for the aid recipient. Reliability and loyalty to the aid recipient are important criteria in what we do.

Many of our projects require active fund-raising. And successful fund-raising requires public relations work. Both of these are therefore also part of the duty of “obsequium pauperum”. The epitaph of the Blessed Gerard that is handed down to us states: *“He was provident in many things, painstaking in all he did. He undertook many tasks of diverse nature. Stretching out his arms diligently to many lands, he gathered from everywhere the means to feed his people.”* In so doing, we must resist the temptation to use public relations only for the service of our own fame and prestige. Our motive must remain the care of others.

A decisive aspect of our relationship to the “pauperes” must be our understanding of their “royal dignity” as children of God on the one hand, and as representatives of Christ on the other hand (“ye have done unto me”). It is especially wherever this dignity is threatened and attacked from without, or can be no longer felt and “believed in” by the sufferers themselves, that our aid is called for.

This concept represents a significant difference to contemporary organisations that are specially dedicated to the preservation of human rights. Human dignity takes precedence over human rights. It is, so to speak, their God-given basis. Human rights are a necessary means for the protection and defence of human dignity, but they are not the only – and also not the only necessary – means. It is often material poverty and/or the loss of self-respect that drives people into circumstances that mock their human dignity.

In some countries a public or overly vociferous criticism of deficiencies in the human rights situation would lead to our access to the victims being blocked. It thus becomes a question of determining our aid priorities in every individual case, with the aim of providing the most effective aid to those in need. Reliable discretion has traditionally been one of our

greatest strengths, providing us with access to situations that remain completely closed to others. This discretion must in no circumstances be confused with indifference towards violations of human rights.

Human dignity also demands access to spiritual and pastoral services. Many people, often prisoners for example, are denied these services.

In many societies, human rights enjoy exemplary protection but certain groups of people are denied their humanity. It is particularly tragic and cynical that, in many places, human rights receive a high level of protection, yet the recipients of this protection come under increasing restriction at the beginning and end of their life, thus denying protection to those especially in need of it. It must be a hallmark of our involvement that we clearly oppose these tendencies. Embryos, unborn children, terminally sick old people need our support. For this reason we are participating in the debate on bioethics through the newly-founded “International Association of Catholic Bioethicists”. The expansion of palliative services and the hospice service also go in the same direction.

Today the challenge of our “*obsequium pauperum*” goes far beyond the needs that lie just outside our gate. The Second Vatican Council set out a worldwide responsibility for aid and Pope Benedict

XVI has repeatedly drawn attention to this obligation⁵. To remain credible, the Order must face up to this responsibility in an ever wider scope.

In many larger institutions (hospitals, homes etc.), tightening budgets bring the danger that financial aspects can take up a position of overriding importance. Maintaining a solid financial basis is necessary. But we must see that economic and competitive pressures are compensated and balanced by the care of the suffering. *“Inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me”* must remain a clearly dominant motive. Where this motive for our service no longer leads our actions, and other (e.g. economic) criteria take priority, we must question what we are doing before we degenerate into a purely social service undertaking.

According to Gregory the Great, love of neighbour presupposes contemplation. (*“Per pietatis viscera in se infirmitatem caeterorum transferat”* – Only in this way will he be able to take upon himself the needs of others and make them his own)⁶. Christian love of neighbour demands “love”. Love can only be given by those who receive love. Those who wish to

⁵ (Deus Caritas est, No. 25b; 30a; Jesus of Nazareth, *ibid.*)

⁶ See above. The Samaritan ascending towards the place of God’s adoration in the Temple

place themselves in the service of “obsequium pauperum” must open themselves to the love of God. They must be conscious of their own dependency, and (also through mankind) allow themselves God’s love. This is a challenge to our mind, will and heart. It requires a living relationship to God and to prayer, as is ultimately demanded by the Constitution of the Order and as has already been mentioned in the opening paragraphs: the willingness to allow oneself to be led by God on the path to sanctification.

Of the Good Samaritan it is said: “When he saw him, he had compassion”. To see need and to have compassion – both of these are things we must learn. The fault of the rich man was that he failed to see the beggar Lazarus who laid at his gate (Lk 16,19-31). The tendency to overlook or to look away is the first great temptation that is to be resisted. The priest and the Levite, on the other hand, saw the wounded man but had no compassion. This failure is perhaps even worse than that of the rich man. Compassion presupposes the willingness to expose ourselves to our neighbour’s suffering, to permit this suffering to reach our inner soul and as Pope Benedict XVI says, to take the risk of goodness⁷. It is by no means so

⁷ (ibid.)

easy to face up to this demand today, when the mass media serves us a daily diet of misfortune and tragedy, suffering and death, often more for the satisfaction of a gaping lust for sensation and to boost television viewing figures rather than to arouse compassion and stimulate aid-giving.

What is demanded of us must, in the end, lead inevitably to the point at which we must also be willing to encounter suffering in places where no help is possible, where the questioning of God's presence that is posed by this suffering has no answer. We members of the Order of Malta must also be present where modern Jobs cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps 22,2), and act as witness to the hope that we place in a God who himself adopted these words in His own Son (Mt 27,46), in whom we unshakably believe, whom we love but cannot understand. As "miles" and vassals of Christ we are called upon to follow Christ and the poor, His representatives, all the way to this point. This is the place where, in the last instance, it will be shown whether we are willing to be "slaves" to "our lords the sick". Mother Teresa is the best contemporary witness to such love of neighbour. And Pope John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Letter "Novo millenio ineunte" that the future of the Church would be decided by this

willingness as much as by the orthodoxy of her doctrine⁸.

Our forefathers saved the Christian Occident in that they continued the struggle in an absolutely hopeless position and gave up their lives. They thus held out until such time as aid arrived. In many places today the struggle against the culture of death, abortion, euthanasia, the devaluation of the family, appears hopeless. We ourselves, for our works, would urgently require more younger people to accept the calling to the Profession in the First Class of the Order, to bear witness to the charisma of the Order with their whole life. We must do our duty and remain faithful. But ultimately, as servants of the Lord, we can leave all of this to the Lord, precisely where we are especially contested.

The Order's leaders and superiors have a great responsibility to lead the members of the Order along the path I have described. They must establish works of the Order in which the members can personally participate in "obsequium pauperum" and grow into it. It is most encouraging to experience how, in many countries, it is precisely the young who are again attracted by the charisma of our Order and

⁸ (see John Paul II., *Novo millennio ineunte* 49)

bring with them a great willingness to be taken into its service. The Order of Malta has an important and irreplaceable mission, to bear witness to the love of Christ for those receiving aid, and to lead to God those who give it. We must all take responsibility to ensure that the words of the Blessed Gerard will come true: “Our brotherhood will be immortal, because the misery of the world is the ground, in which this plant is being rooted – and because, God willing, there always will be people, who want to work, to decrease these sufferings and to make this misery more bearable!”

Albrecht von Boeselager

II EVENTS

**The visit of the Holy Father
to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist
at La Magliana (Rome) - December 2nd 2007
2 December 2007:**

***a) A report of the historical event published by the
“Osservatore Romano”***

***Title: “The Holy Father consigns the Encyclical
“Spe Salvi” to the sick and the faithfuls of hte
diocese of Rome.”***

The Encyclical “*Spe Salvi*” was opened at paragraph “Action and suffering as settings for learning hope”, chapter 36, when Benedict XVI delivered it, yesterday morning, to the Christian Community. He entrusted it ideally into the hands of a hundred sick people who were sitting in their wheelchairs below the altar prepared under a tent in the courtyard of St John the Baptist Hospital, which belongs to the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta, where the Pope celebrated Mass.

He himself said, at the beginning of the homily: “I would like to take this opportunity of my visit to your hospital, to entrust the Encyclical to the Christian community of Rome, and in particular to those who, like you, are in direct contact with suffering and sickness.”

Thus the visit of Benedict XVI to the St John

the Baptist Hospital in the Roman suburb of Magliana, which is widely considered a reference in neurological rehabilitation and in the care of patients with brain injuries, really took on the significance of a concrete gift of hope to the suffering humankind.

The Pontiff arrived shortly before 9.00 o'clock. Among those greeting him, besides H.H. Fra' Andrew Bertie, Prince and Grand Master of the S.M.O.M., were Cardinal Camillo Ruini, his Vicar for the diocese of Rome; Cardinal Pio Laghi, Patron of the Order; Archbishop Angelo Acerbi, Prelate of the Order; Bishops Benedetto Tuzia, Auxiliary for the West District, and Armando Brambilla, Auxiliary and Delegate for the diocesan healthcare pastoral.

Holy Mass was celebrated under a huge white tent. The place of honour, in front of the altar, was reserved to the sick, among which many were non self sufficient elderly people, all sitting in wheelchairs. Right behind them were the volunteers who, together with the nurses, care daily for them. Behind them, the representatives of the Order, medical doctors, other medical operators who work in the hospital, as well as the patients' relatives.

Fra' Andrew Bertie, after the formal greetings, said to the Pontiff: "Your visit is of great encouragement to all of us, as we continue our privileged work for those who suffer". He concluded asking for his

blessing “for this hospital, for all those who are sick and for the entire Order of Malta.”

We will call Luigi the sick that approached the altar to pay homage to the Pope. He asked not to be cited with his name, because his voice should in effect be the voice of all the sick people who, at that precise moment, would have wanted to personally express their feelings to the Pope. “Beside our suffering, our solitude, our illness – Luigi said – a great light of hope and strength starts shining. Today the successor of Peter is visiting us, bringing us the consoling Word of the Divine Master. Your Holiness, you wished to visit our hospital where, with the help of the Order of Malta, we try to improve our health as well as always trying to do God’s will. All of our prayers, all of our sufferings, all of our hopes are offered to God for the sake of your Apostolic Ministry as well as of the Holy Church, and for the peace in the whole world.. On behalf of all sick people, please accept our filial love, our humble devotion, our Christian faith, our human hope.”

In his homily the Pope spoke about hope; and hope he brought, immediately after the celebration of Mass, right there where hope begets its most deep and human sense, and its most profound Christian meaning: to the beds of the special ward that cares for the comatose patients, at the first floor of the

St. John the Baptist hospital.

Fifteen people lying in the beds of three sterile rooms, most of them victims of car accidents. Their hope to live again is hanging from the thread that connects them to a machine, or depends on the caring hands of a loved one, who continues to transmit that warm love which is always worth living for.

When the Pontiff caressed the face of a child lying in bed, surrounded by his mother and sister, who live with him hoping to see him smile again soon, he really touched the “suffering of the innocents” which he mentioned in his Encyclical.

He could notice from close by the strain of those that seek to “limit the suffering, and fight against sufferance”, even if they know very well that it is a vain effort since “we cannot eliminate it”, as it is written in chapter 37 of the Encyclical. He entrusted it yesterday also to the family that lovingly moistened the mouth of their father, while His Holiness passed next to his bed and blessed the man with a light touch on his head.

A few minutes before 11.00 o'clock Pope Benedict XVI left the hospital. Behind him, as Luigi had wished when greeting him upon his arrival, the light of a renovated hope has perhaps started to shine. (M.P)

b) Homily of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI

Dear brothers and sisters,

“We go in joy to meet the Lord.” These words, which we repeated in the refrain of the responsorial Psalm, convey so well the sentiments which fill our hearts today, this first Sunday of Advent. The reason why we can go forward with joy, as St. Paul exhorted us to do, lies in the fact that we are near to our salvation. The Lord will come! It is with this knowledge that we undertake the days of Advent, preparing ourselves to celebrate with faith the extraordinary event of the Birth of Our Lord. During the coming weeks, day by day, the liturgy offers us the possibility of reflecting on the Old Testament, enriching us with that living and constant desire which inspired the Jews who awaited the Messiah. In prayerful vigil, we too seek to prepare our hearts to welcome the Saviour who will come and will show us his mercy and give us salvation.

Because of this period of expectation, Advent is a time of hope and it is in Christian hope that I wished to dedicate my second Encyclical, which was officially presented the day before yesterday: it begins with the words spoken by St. Paul to the Romans: “Spe salvi facti sumus – in hope we are saved” (8.24). In the Encyclical I write that “We need to have hope

– in large things and small – hope that keeps us going day by day. But this is not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain.’ (n.31). ‘The certainty that only God can be our firm hope inspires all of us, gathered together this morning in this house where the struggle against illness is continuous, sustained by solidarity. I should like to take this opportunity of my visit to your hospital, run by the Italian Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, to entrust the Encyclical to the Christian community of Rome, and in particular to those who, like you, are in direct contact with suffering and sickness. It is a text which I would ask you to study, to find there the reasons for which ‘trustworthy hope helps us to face the present...a present which may also be arduous’ (n.1).

Dear brothers and sisters, “the God of hope who fills us with every joy and peace in the faith of the power of the Holy Spirit, be with you!” With this wish for the congregation, expressed by the priest at the start of the Mass, I cordially greet you. A greeting, first of all, to the Cardinal Vicar, Camillo Ruini and Cardinal Pio Laghi, Cardinal Patronus of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, and the clergy, the

chaplains and the nuns who give their services to the sick. I greet with respect His Most Eminent Highness Frà Andrew Bertie, Prince and Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, whom I thank also on behalf of the personnel of the hospital – the administrators, the medical staff and all those who give their services in the hospital. I wish to extend my greetings, too, to the directors, and in particular to the Medical Director, and the representative of the patients. I thank them for the kind words at the start of this Celebration of the Mass.

But my most affectionate greetings are for you, dear patients and for your families, who share with you your anxieties and your hopes. The Pope is spiritually near to you and assures you of his daily prayers for you; he invites you to find in Jesus comfort and support, and never to lose faith. The liturgy of

Advent will be emphasized to us many times in these next weeks – do not tire of calling on Him; it exhorts us to go and find the Lord, in the knowledge that He is constantly with us. In trial and in sickness, God visits us mysteriously and if we submit to His will, we experience the power of His love. Hospitals and hospices, precisely because they shelter those who suffer, can become privileged places where the Christian love which nourishes hope and promotes

brotherly solidarity, is demonstrated. In the Collect, therefore, we prayed: “O God, inspire in us the will to carry out through our good works Christ who will come”. Truly! Let us open our hearts to everyone, especially those in difficulty, because in carrying out good works for those in need, we open ourselves to welcome Jesus, for it is in them that he is revealed to us.

And you, dear brothers and sisters, in this hospital where the central focus is the loving care of its patients, you effect the safeguarding of their dignity and the commitment to ameliorate their quality of life. Throughout the centuries, the Church has declared its ‘nearness’ to those who suffer. Your prestigious Sovereign Military Order of Malta, which from its earliest times dedicated itself to the care of pilgrims to the Holy Land in its hospital there, reflects this spirit. In following its mission to defend Christianity, the Sovereign Order of Malta has dedicated itself to caring for the poor and the sick and those marginalised by society. A testimony to this fraternal love is this hospital, too, which was established in the 1970s and has today become a centre, both technologically high level and socially close-knit, where alongside the medical staff, volunteers give generously of their time and services.

Dear Knights of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, dear doctors, nurses and all who work here, you are all called to render an important service to the sick and to society, a service which demands great self sacrifice. In everyone who is sick, no matter who, you must recognise that you serve Christ; let them perceive through your actions and words the signs of His merciful love.

To carry out this ‘mission’ with distinction, you must seek, as we recall in the words of St.Paul from the second Reading, to “put on the weapons of the light ” (Rm 13, 12): the Words of the Lord, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the grace of the Sacraments, the theological and cardinal virtues; you must fight against the evil and sin which darken our existence. At the start of this new liturgical year, let us renew our intentions for evangelical life. “It is time to awaken from sleep!” (Rm 13,11), says the Apostle; that is, it is time to convert, to leave the lethargy of sin, and welcome with trust “the coming of the Lord”. For this, Advent is a time of prayer and a vigil of expectation.

The evangelical exhortation refers to this ‘vigil’, which is the key word throughout this liturgical period: “Be attentive, for you do not know in what hour the Lord will come” (Mt 24, 42). Jesus, who in

that Birth came among us and will return in glory at the end of time, comes to us tirelessly, in our daily lives. He asks us and warns us to await His coming, which cannot be predicted, but will occur unannounced. Only those who are awakened are not taken unawares. He warns us that those who in the time of Noah ate and drank excessively were caught unprepared, by the Flood (Mt 24,37-38). What did the Lord want us to understand from this, if not to abandon the preoccupations of enmeshing materialism?

“Stay awake, therefore...”. Let us hear the invitation of Jesus in the Gospel and prepare ourselves to relive with faith the mystery of the birth of the Redeemer, who has filled the universe with joy; let us prepare ourselves to welcome the Lord in His unceasing presence in our daily lives, in joy and in pain, in sickness and in health; let us prepare ourselves to meet Him in His final, definitive coming. His journey is always a source of peace, and if suffering, the heritage of human nature, becomes sometimes unbearable, with the coming of the Saviour “suffering – without ceasing to be suffering – becomes, despite everything, a hymn of praise” (Enc.Spe salvi, 37). Comforted by these words, let us follow the eucharistic Celebration, invoking for the

sick, for their families and all those who work in this hospital and in all of the Order of the Knights of Malta the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, mother of expectation and of hope.

c) Speech Grand Master Fra' Andrew Bertie

Your Holiness,

May I express our immense joy at being able to greet Your Holiness here at the hospital of San Giovanni Battista, La Magliana. It is a true testimonial of the vocation and mission of our ancient institution. In their dedication to serve mankind in the Holy Land, the cradle of Christianity, the first hospitallers in the eleventh century chose to dedicate their lives to those whom they called 'Our lords the sick'. We remain faithful to this choice, for the sick are at the heart of our mission.

Your Holiness' visit to a hospital of the Order of Malta is a most special honour which extends to the Order's 40 hospitals and to all our healthcare institutions in Europe, in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Middle East. It represents a most valued recognition for the members of the Order, the religious, the doctors, the nurses and the health workers as well as all the volunteers who give their services to the sick.

This hospital of San Giovanni Battista, which lies in the diocese of Your Holiness, is well recognised for its high level professional care. It is an example of the great humanity and the deep Christian spirit towards the suffering, most of whom spend a long time here, most need rehabilitation, many recovering from the effects of coma.

Most Holy Father, your visit is a great encouragement for all of us, as we continue our privileged work for those who suffer. It gives renewed energy to all of the Order to renew and deepen the spirituality of our 12,500 members and joins us in the spirit of the admirable Encyclical 'Deus Caritas Est'.

Most Holy Father, with these emotions I offer you my most respectful welcome and the expression of our gratitude.

I ask for the Apostolic Benediction for this hospital, for all those who are sick and for the entire Order of Malta.

Pilgrims in the Holy Land

(Translate from italian)

When the servant of God, John Paul II, decided to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he sent a letter to the Church and to the world in which he wrote: *“It would be an exclusively religious pilgrimage in its nature and purpose.. To go in a spirit of prayer from one place to another, from one city to another, in the area marked especially by God’s intervention, helps us not only to live our life as a journey, but also gives us a vivid sense of a God who has gone before us and leads us on, who himself set out on man’s path, a God who does not look down on us from on high, but who became our travelling companion”*.

With the same spirit that animated John Paul II we, Dames and Knights of the Order of Malta, also started out on our journey. Around 1,400 of us from the Grand Priories and over 20 Associations, to follow in the footsteps of the Son of God made man in that blessed land and to listen again to the voice of God which through the centuries has spoken through Moses and the Prophets. We gathered together in the Bethlehem grotto, under the olive trees in the garden of Gethsemane, and in the great basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth to raise our prayers to God and to recall the events of our redemption.

In this way we gradually realised that the pages of the Holy Bible, of the Old and New Testament, not only express truths about human history and divine faith but also take on real substance. In contact with these places and with the people who live there, the events described in those pages take precise form and outline, enabling us to relive them in “real time”.

In Bethlehem, not far from the grotto where the Virgin Mary, over two thousand years ago, “*gave birth to her son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger*”, stands the Holy Family hospital with its modern equipment, run and financed by our Sovereign Order. Every month thousands of young women come here to give birth, and every year over thirty thousand babies are born, lovingly attended by doctors and nurses. This is the “golden thread” of faith and love which links, in the name of our Order, the grotto in Bethlehem to the Holy Family hospital. After having paused in prayer in the holy grotto all the Order of Malta pilgrims were taken in groups to visit the hospital, symbolically linked to that “golden thread”.

Benedict XVI gives the following explanation in his recent book “Jesus of Nazareth”: “*It is of the very essence of biblical faith to be about real historical events. It does not tell stories symbolizing supra-historical truths, but is based on history, history that took place here on this earth*”.

The factum historicum (historical fact) is not an interchangeable symbolic cipher for biblical faith, but the foundation on which it stands. Et incarnatus est: when we say these words, we acknowledge God's actual entry into history."

During the mass celebrated in the olive grove in Jerusalem, the Latin Patriarch Michele Sabbah, who presided over the celebration, said in his homily, *"return to this holy land, witnesses to the resurrection, and you will find the cross of Jesus alive in the body and spirit of all of us who live in this land: in the unstable political situation, in the mutual hatred, in the difficulties of daily living caused by never ending conflict, in the military occupation of the Palestinian territories, in political prisoners, violence and thus insecurity, and in the wall that separates and deprives everyone of freedom and security.... And everyone, Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims, are all humans, created in the image of God, and all equally have the right to enjoy human and divine dignity given by God to each of them.... Thus with all these human sufferings, without distinction, the Church of Jerusalem remains on the Cross"*.

During our pilgrimage we approached the local people and we realised that, alongside the shrines and holy places, a living church exists and works, a community of believers in Christ. But there are very few of them! Out of a total of some eleven million inhabitants (half Jews and a little less than half

Muslims), Christians do not number more than 250 thousand, all Palestinian. It is a community which has suffered innumerable trials during its history and has undergone painful vicissitudes, internal divisions and persecution from outside. For some time now, immigration has weakened it; it is no longer self-sufficient and thus needs our comprehension and our moral and material help.

“These brothers and sisters of ours, who live where Jesus lived and who, in the vicinity of the Holy Places, are the successors of the very first Church, which gave rise to all the other Churches,” as Paul VI wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation of 25 March 1974, *“enjoy precious merits in the sight of God and a high spiritual credit with all of us. Were their presence to cease, the shrines would be without the warmth of this living witness, and the Christian Holy Places of Jerusalem and the Holy Land would become like museums.”*

The admonition of Paul VI, echoed by his successors in St. Peter’s Chair, has lodged in our hearts: the Dames and Knights of the Order, founded in Jerusalem over nine hundred years ago and which bears the name of that holy city, must bear in mind the conditions of our Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. Because *“this blessed land has thus become in a certain sense the spiritual heritage of the*

Christians of the whole world, who dream of being able at least once in their lifetime to visit it as pilgrims and to express their devotion and manifest their love for God who became the Infant in Bethlehem, the young Worker in Nazareth, the divine Master and Wonder-worker throughout the whole region, the Crucified Christ of Calvary and the Redeemer risen from the tomb” (cit. Exhortation of Paul VI).

We took our leave of the Holy Land by participating in the mass celebrated in the great basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, presided over by H.E. Msg. Angelo Acerbi, Prelate of the Order. The temple, which stands in the grotto where the Angel Gabriel made the announcement to Mary, was packed with Dames and Knights, offering an extraordinary demonstration of faith in the Word made flesh and of filial devotion to the Holy Virgin.

Card. Pio Laghi

**150th Anniversary of the Apparitions
of Our Lady of Lourdes
50th International Pilgrimage of Order of
Malta to Lourdes**

The current year 2008 is full of events: the 150th Anniversary of the Apparitions of the Mother of God to Saint Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes and the 50th International Pilgrimage of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to this Marian city. Our Order thus celebrates two anniversaries in the framework of one single process: to commemorate and revive the Mystery of Redemption, the Mystery of our Salvation, in our lives, following the footsteps of Bernadette and listening to Our Lady, the Immaculate Mother of God.

For the Order of Malta, the special aspect of participating in a Lourdes pilgrimage lies in the fact that it is an experience made in common: In this sanctuary, under the loving care of the Blessed Virgin, the various associations of the Order from all over the world have the opportunity to come together for some days and share the specific character of the “Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem”. Lourdes is indeed among the privileged locations that the Church has recognized as places of exceptional

grace for all those who came there, and we have the most special opportunity – namely through the service in favour of the sick and needy – to live the vocation of our hospitaller Order in the spirit of our founders and predecessors.

The year 2008 is therefore characterized by various main elements: the Second International Hospitaller Meeting in Lourdes (December 2007), marking the beginning of the jubilee year; the Jubilee Year as such, marked by many events in the course of twelve months, by the twelve signs or “missions” of Lourdes. The mission entrusted to the Order of Malta bears the title “The Church in Mission between Nations”. It is linked to the International Pilgrimage of the Order of Malta, which will be open also to the Lourdes population and to other pilgrims who decide to live this mission together with us.

The involvement of the Order of Malta in this event must highlight our special proximity to the important messages conveyed by Lourdes and to the tasks of the Church in our time.

1. Living the Lourdes Jubilee Year

The Jubilee isn't meant only to commemorate an anniversary or to remember memories of the past: It marks a stage and opens to a future. 150 years after the apparitions of the Immaculate Mother of God to Saint Bernadette (whom she told her name "I am the Immaculate Conception"), we must be able to thank for the many favours received and become aware of our mission at the beginning of this third millennium.

This is the real significance of the Jubilee, which not only reminds us of some events of the past, but – in light of the same – also allows us to live our mission as living stones of the Church in the world of our times: right now, in the place where we stand and where we live.

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the apparitions, Monsignor Jacques Perrier, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, expressed the wish that twelve topics, meaning twelve missions that corresponds to today's message of Lourdes, are conveyed by one or two pilgrimages each, which by their very nature are particularly close to these matters.

For instance: Lourdes has always represented a sign for sick people. For many years now, Lourdes

has been an international crossroads, and it recent times the city has even become a place of pilgrimage for believers of other religious communities.

Celebrating the Jubilee means looking into the future with confidence and starting again with new opportunities. This adventure began in 1858, when the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous. Since then, the flow of pilgrims and visitors has increased steadily. The holy places of the spirit becoming more and more important in a torn, afflicted, calculating and difficult world. Lourdes gives us new energy to face the problems of life.

For this reasons, the history of Lourdes, far from being an event of former and long gone times, is written day by day. A message written by Msgr. Perrier, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, reminds us of this: "The name of Lourdes is associated with the 1858 apparitions, and it is true that we have to go back constantly to Bernadette's reports and to the original message. But Lourdes also stands for the missions of the Church in present times".

2. The Mission entrusted to the Order of Malta during the Jubilee Year

The subject “The Church in Mission between Nations”, “a great multitude of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues” (Revelation 7,9), has been entrusted to our Order by the Bishop of Lourdes and by the Sanctuaries. Lourdes, world crossroads: It is all too natural to remember the verse from the Book of Revelation in this context: “I saw a great multitude, ... , of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb” (Revelation 7,9).

And, in fact, the pilgrims coming from all over the globe in extraordinary unity and going in procession towards the grotto of Massabielle, towards the chapel requested by the Mother of God, are they not the unhappy children of Eve, longing for truth and happiness and led by the Blessed Virgin Mary to the only source of all truth and all happiness: Jesus Christ?

3. The choice of a main theme: “Go and tell”

The message of Our Lady to Bernadette Soubirous: “Go and tell the priests that people are to

come here in procession and to build a chapel here”, as historians indicate, refers us to the Mystery of Resurrection in Jerusalem, as it is reported to us in the Gospels.

What strikes us when we compare the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem and the communication of 2 March 1858 in Lourdes is that the message is identical: In Lourdes we have to believe Bernadette, just as the Apostles did in Jerusalem after hearing the announcement made by Christ through Mary Magdalen and the pious women on the day of his resurrection: “Go and take word to my brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see me” (Matthew 28,10).

The announcement is conveyed by women: Bernadette, accompanied by her two aunts, goes to see her parish priest, Abbott Peyramale, while Mary Magdalen and the pious women go see the disciples in Galilee. The pious women have been sent by Christ to the Apostles so that God’s message may be announced to them and they may then spread the faith. As far as Lourdes is concerned, please note that the Blessed Virgin makes sure to express the wish that not only the absolute authority possessed and exercised by God is respected, but that the authority vested by Him in his ministers is respected as well.

“Go tell the priests the priests to build a chapel on this rock” is the image of the Church built on the rock that’s Christ. In Lourdes, the grotto of Massabielle is the symbol of Christ. The source gushing out on the right side of the grotto (and from which the pilgrims of all races, tongues, peoples and nations wish to drink) is the water offered for free to any person who wishes to have it and take it with him, the same water of which the Easter liturgy speaks.

“Go and tell” is like a cry of assent both for the Apostles and for the pilgrims who come to Lourdes. “Go and take word to my brethren to go to Galilee”. Doesn’t Jesus Christ invite his scattered disciples to come together and go to Galilee in order to meet the Saviour, the corner stone, the rock on which the Church shall be built? Today, Christ says to us as he did back then to the Apostles: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20,21).

Living this Lourdes mission in the original charisma of the Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem: This is the message entrusted to our Order during the Jubilee Year in Lourdes, a message that we must remember and in which we must put life. It is the message that the Blessed Virgin addressed to Bernadette, so that the Church of Christ, which since its very beginning consists of

poor, limited, frail, weak and sinful individuals, reminds the world of Christ's real face in a Church made of men and women of all races, tongues, peoples and nations, where everyone has his own role to play fraternally, with courage and simplicity.

To be able to implement the mission entrusted to us by H.E. Msgr. Jacques Perrier, Bishop of Lourdes, and by the Sanctuaries of our Lady of Lourdes in an effective manner, we must avoid boasting of the works of our Order as if they were a publicity for our hierosolymitan institution only, on the contrary: we must give witness to our presence as servants of the Church among the nations through the various activities we carry out in the world. We are members of the Church in mission between nations; the humble Bernadette takes us by the hand, so that, following her example generously, we become her witnesses and show her path everywhere we work with love, under the gaze of Our Lady who leads us towards Her Son, the Saviour of all humanity.

Let's bear in mind what Pope Benedict XVI has taught us in his Encyclical "Deus caritas est": "Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from

the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety. As a community, the Church must practise love” (Nr. 20)

“The personnel of every Catholic charitable organization want to work with the Church and therefore with the Bishop, so that the love of God can spread throughout the world. By their sharing in the Church’s practice of love, they wish to be witnesses of God and of Christ, and they wish for this very reason freely to do good to all” (Nr. 33).

“Practical activity will always be insufficient, unless it visibly expresses a love for man, a love nourished by an encounter with Christ” (Nr. 34).

4. A Patron Saint to accompany our mission: Blessed John XXIII

The Lourdes Sanctuaries have asked our Order to choose an internationally known personality as patron. Following the discussions with the Bishop of Lourdes, the choice fell on Blessed Pope John XXIII, who was Bailli of our Order.

Pope John XXIII showed a keen interest towards the humanitarian and spiritual mission of the Sovereign Order of Malta, which in its turn awarded him the rank of Bailli when he was still a cardinal.

The celebration in honour of Blessed John XXIII is scheduled to take place on 11 October, the opening date of the Second Vatican Council.

To support the theme of our mission in the course of the jubilee year and in particular during our international pilgrimage, the Order of Malta has also been asked to set up a permanent exhibition to illustrate the topic “The Church in mission between Nations”. Furthermore, throughout the jubilee periods the volunteers of our various Associations will make shifts to ensure the reception service for individual disabled pilgrims.

5. Plenary indulgence for the Jubilee Year

The Church must bring forth ever richer fruits of renewed sanctity. Therefore, Pope Benedict XVI has decided to extensively grant the gift of Plenary Indulgence during the Jubilee Year in Lourdes:

“Each and every member of the Christian faithful who, truly repentant, is purified through sacramental confession, restored through the Most Holy Eucharist and offers prayers for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, will be able to gain a Plenary Indulgence daily”.

Since the very beginning of the shrine of Our

Lady of Lourdes, the faithful understood that the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception, wishes to lavish in this place, and in a manner that's full of love, the full salvation of man through the ministry of the Catholic Church.

To remind us of these promises, a “Jubilee way” in four stages has been proposed, and Pope Benedict XVI attached the special favour of Plenary Indulgence to this process:

- The parish church where one can see the baptismal font in which Bernadette was baptised
- The abandoned prison, called the « Cachot » where the Soubirous family lived
- St Michael's Gate, the Arches and the Grotto
- The Hospital Oratory where Bernadette made her first Holy Communion

150 years ago, the Immaculate Mother of God spoke to Bernadette and asked her to come to the Massabielle Grotto. Since then, people of every social standing, believers and unbelievers, sick, disabled and healthy people come to Lourdes and then return to their homes in all parts of the globe. It is a “people of all nations” coming to this place so that they may be regenerated by the mystery of Massabielle, which

is nothing less than the mystery of the Church through its words and sacraments.

“Come drink at the spring and wash yourselves in it”. Baptism makes of us not only children of God and members of the Church, but also another Christ, i.e. witnesses of the radiant life of God. Bernadette, acting at the service of God both as a young girl and later, when she had entered a religious congregation, irradiated the light of God. Her witness was based not so much on the words, as rather on God’s presence in her.

Like Bernadette, we, too, are exhorted by the Mother of Our Lord: “Have the kindness to come here...”; “I do not promise you happiness in this world, but in the world to come”. We must not forget that, during the apparitions, the Blessed Virgin taught Bernadette to prepare her First Communion. We, too, are taught and sent by the message of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Bernadette, a lay woman, has come with humble hope to remind every person of the true face of Christ, where each one of us has a role to play with simplicity and courage: a human Church, where nobody – whether priest or lay person – has the right to remain simply an onlooker or an egoistic consumer.

May the celebrations on the occasion of this double anniversary (150th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady to Bernadette Soubirous and 50th international pilgrimage of the Sovereign Order of Malta to Lourdes) be providential sources of God's grace, through which the Lord comes to revive – in the life of all pilgrims as well as in the life of our hospitaller Order and in ourselves – the love towards the Church, love towards the Eucharist and our commitment to the service of all those we meet on our path and who are in need. Let's live the Church in mission between nations!

Guy Tardivy o.p.

150° Anniversary of the Lourdes Apparitions - International Action of the Church and of the Order of Malta

A contribution to the theme “The Church in Mission among the Nations”

For centuries the Church has been involved in international relations and has put its mark, and exercised influence, on the gradual development of international law and diplomatic practice and customs. This historical contribution is part of the reason why nuncios are recognised, in a great number of countries, as deans *ex officio* of the diplomatic corps. In modern times this diplomacy is exercised in the name of an entity of international public law, namely the Holy See. But the Church's diplomacy has a dimension that is different from that of States. The Church does not operate, as States do, in order to defend a territory, or its own material interests or those of its citizens. It seeks to promote the ethical and spiritual values on which it is based, and in the first instance peace between human beings. This is also part of the reason why nuncios play such an important role in diplomatic life.

In the classical field of bilateral diplomacy the Church has frequently acted as mediator in situations where tensions could have led to armed conflicts. In 1494, following an initiative of the Pope, the treaty of Tordesillas shared territories in the newly discovered American continent between the Spanish and Portuguese empires which were on the verge of confrontation. In 1984, Chile and Argentina signed in the Vatican a treaty defining their respective rights in the Beagle Channel, at the southern tip of the continent. With a time differential of five centuries, the objective is the same: to keep peace.

It is also the promotion of ethical values, and singularly peacekeeping, which explains and animates the participation of the Holy See in the multilateral institutions born at the end of the Second World War. Those institutions were created in view of managing conflict situations in a world where atomic weapons could threaten the survival of the human race. In many organisation of the UN family where the Holy See has observer status its interventions aim at maintaining justice, tolerance and harmony in the international community. For the same reason many papal statements have, in the twentieth century; supported European integration,, an ambitious and visionary enterprise largely responsible for ensuring

peace on the continent after years of terrible conflict.

Similar things can be said about the diplomacy of the Order of Malta. At the time of Napoleon it lost the territorial sovereignty which gave it the character of a normal member of the community of nations. Yet, like the Holy See, the Order of Malta has kept its sovereign status in international law, recognised today by more than a hundred countries around the world. And the Order also tries to be a “peacemaker” in the sense of the Sermon on the Mount (*St. Mathew V, 9*).

“The other name of peace is development” (*Populorum Progressio* N° 76). On top of its numerous diplomatic activities, the Holy See seeks to redress unjust situations, which doubtless have always existed, but which have become singularly unbearable in a world where instant communication makes them immediately visible. The action of the Holy See, and the influence it can bring to bear on the international community, is firmly directed towards development, where possible harmonious and durable, of the less favoured regions of the world. This pursues the same objective as peace keeping, because war is the greatest obstacle to development, as is shown by recent history in the Middle East and Central Africa.

Here also the Order of Malta pursues its own activity in the same direction as the Holy See. Its objective to serve in particular the poor and the sick (*obsequio pauperum*) results in the financing across the world (Africa, Middle East, Asia, Latin America) of dozens of hospitals and hundreds of dispensaries. Malteser International has become a main actor in emergency help in cases of humanitarian disasters. It is a privileged partner of ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Office) which is the world's major source of finance in this field.

We can conclude that the seminar organised at Lourdes should have no difficulty in establishing that the international action of the Church is directed towards peacekeeping, both through its diplomatic network and through development aid, and that the Holy See and the Order of Malta act here in perfect harmony.

Philippe de Schoutheete de Tervarent

III
THE YOUNG

Reflection on the young people's mission: from Marienfield (Cologne) to Sidney.

In the midst of the confusion many young people currently have on essential points about the Catholic faith in general, and on the way each one of us must develop our relationship with God in particular, His Holiness the Pope made an important address in Marienfield on the 20th August 2005, urging us to follow the example of the three Magi who went on a pilgrimage looking for Christ, the newborn King, to satisfy their thirst of Justice for the world.

Even though the Pope had to make a reference to the Three Magi because of the fact that we were all at Cologne that day, he was not forced to use them necessarily as an example. However, he intentionally chose to pivot his whole address on these Three Wise Men, not only because of the place where he was, but also because of the fact that their example is fully applicable to us today. In this sense, we have to take into account that the Three Magi were people of great knowledge, and that currently there is a perception among many young people that the latest scientific discoveries, due to the technological revolution in which we live, give us a special knowledge and tools that past generations did not have. By using this

example, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that what the Three Magi actually experienced was not an outward journey to gain more knowledge, but an internal conversion of their souls: an inner pilgrimage towards the light of Christ, something which cannot be done using any modern navigation GPS equipment or Internet.

In his address, the Pope urged us to take this pilgrimage seriously, despite the time elapsed since the Three Magi went on their journey. The Pope made a brilliant description of the inner pilgrimage of the Magi, and of the obstacles they faced until they found Jesus. The Pilot who navigated them through the search was the Holy Spirit: “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses*” (Acts 1:8).

However, he did not stop there and went on to describe the boulders these Three Wise Men would have to remove in the future in order to get nearer to God.

I.

The first obstacle the Three Magi faced in their inner journey, underlined by Benedict XVI, is the same problem each one of us faces in our own pilgrimage: they had their own preconceived idea of

God, a concept they desperately wanted to find confirmed when they would encounter Him. We also sometimes expect to find confirmed our own preconceived and erroneous concept of God, and we learn from the example of the Magi that we have to learn how He really acts and reject our own conceptions. In Pope Benedict XVI's words, God "*contrasts the noisy and ostentatious power of this world with the defenceless power of love which succumbs to death on the Cross and dies ever anew throughout history; yet this is the same love which constitutes the new divine intervention that opposes injustice and ushers in the Kingdom of God*". In this sense, we must understand that God acts this way and learn how to follow the Path He encourages us to follow: we have to imitate the submission of the Virgin Mary to God's will.

The Pope also has reminded us in his address, that the Three Magi were only the first to give these steps in the right direction, because during the ages they would be followed by the great multitude of Saints. In particular, Saint Ubaldesca teaches us Knights, Dames and Nuns¹ of the Order of Malta, how to make this pilgrimage: at first she is surprised when God (through one of his angels) asks her to

¹ *In Spain and in Malta there are Convents of Nuns following the traditional of the Order of Malta*

enter the Convent of the Sisters of Saint John of Jerusalem in Pisa, because she did not have dowry and her parents could not give her any. She had a preconceived idea of what God required from her, a mental scheme which the Angel dissipates from her mind: God does not ask her for earthly goods but for virtues for the nuns of the convent, virtues which God will supply to Saint Ubaldesca during her life: complying with God's will, she later leads a life of great sanctity. In our own life, we must each try not to harbour any preconceived ideas on God, and, admit that God prefers not to act as we sometimes wish He would: He preferred to come to us as a humble and poor carpenter, respecting man's liberty, but also testing his faith and love, rather than as a powerful King. A good example of this test is when we take care of our guests during the Lourdes pilgrimage. Christ is in each of them and He is testing our capacity to follow Him.

In Pope Benedict XVI's address written for our preparation for the XXIII Youth Day, which is going to take place at Sidney in the year 2008, he asks us to take a step further and learn how the Holy Spirit acts, not only as the Spirit of Truth, but also as the Spirit of Fortitude and Witness: *"to recognize the Spirit's true identity, principally by listening to the Word of God in the*

Revelation of the Bible". He reminds us that the Holy Spirit is presented as "*the promise of my Father upon you*" (Lk 24:49). By reading the Bible, we meet Him as God's Breath: the means He has to create man, to conceive a baby boy in Mary's womb and to give His apostles the "*power that would give them **courage** to go out and boldly proclaim that «Christ has died and is risen!»*" and enable them "*to speak openly with **self-confidence***" (cf. Acts 2:29; 4:13; 4:29,31). As Knights of the Order of Malta, we must learn of the courage shown by our Saints, helped by the Holy Spirit, follow their example.

II.

In Marienfield, Pope Benedict XVI also reflected on the next step the Three Magi would have to take in the future in order to reach God: they truly had to understand that, in order to save their souls, they had to give themselves entirely to God, since this was the sacrifice that He demanded from them. In this sense, we must learn to do the same in our daily life, letting Him mould our souls every day through His Light, and becoming better Knights, Dames or Nuns. We cannot simply make one or two steps in the right direction, thinking we can be good Catholics: we need to follow the whole Path towards God. In this sense, during the Mass held on the day after this

address, Pope Benedict XVI insisted on the importance of the obligation of young people to attend Sunday Mass every week.

This is also reflected in his address to us young people for Sidney 2.008, asking us to take part in the life of the Church: it is through prayer done in the community of our Church that we will achieve “*apostolic and missionary fruitfulness.*” It will be only by acting as “*one heart and soul*” (cf. *Acts 4:32*) with the rest of the Church and in particular with all who take part in the actions of the Order of Malta, that the young will really make a difference on the world: we are challenged to form part of Christ’s Church.

III.

Once the three Magi had changed their attitude, the Pope told us that their next step was to build their lives according to this divine way of exercising power. In this sense the Three Magi would have to change the authoritarian and comfortable exercise of power, a style of government used by Herod, for example, in order to replace it with the exercise of power through the service to their subjects, as Christ did in the Last Supper, when He, the King of kings, washed the feet of the apostles, His “subjects”, in homage and as a sign of immense humility. This humility is required

by Christ by all of us members of the Order of Malta in particular and to all brancadiers in general when we serve our lords the Poor and the Sick. In our daily lives we face continuous tests of our humility, and in those situations we have to expel the desire of being better, stronger, etc. than our neighbour, and concentrate on being as good as we can be.

In his address for Sidney, the Pope asks us to go deeper: once we have this attitude, we have to establish a relationship with the Holy Spirit, and in particular, he asks us to become His pupils and let Him become the Teacher of our interior life, through the sacraments.

IV.

Going back to Marienfield, the three Magi would “only” have to convert themselves and become men of justice, goodness, mercy and forgiveness. This last step is perhaps the most important one, since it is a more definitive step towards God. Even though the scriptures do not give us any more details about their inner pilgrimage, the Pope urged us to follow the path shown by the Three Magi. God himself requires one only sacrifice from us: that we give ourselves entirely to Him, and in exchange, as he did with St. Ubaldesca, he will give us the virtues to

become men of justice, goodness, mercy and forgiveness.

His Holiness wants us to reflect on our missions as young Christians. That is why he asks us to follow the examples of the saints, and he cites in particular Saint Francisco Javier, “*who travelled through the Far East proclaiming the Good News until every ounce of his strength was used up...*”, or we might add, as Blessed Gerard who spread the Good News from the Hospital in Jerusalem.

But perhaps I have written too much, since all of the above is contained in Pope Benedict XVI own words: “*Be prepared to put your life on the line in order to enlighten the world with the truth of Christ; to respond with love to hatred and disregard for life; to proclaim the hope of the risen Christ in every corner of the earth.*” As a young person I feel challenged by these words of His Holiness the Pope to make a fresh start and to truly start the inner pilgrimage towards the light of Christ as a pilgrim on his way to Jerusalem. I can only urge the reader of this article to do the same.

Diego Merry del Val

The Youth Groups in the Delegations

The first aspect to bear in mind when talking about a youth group is its composition. Who actually are the young? Normally one starts to become a youth after finishing secondary school (albeit in some cases 18 and 19 year-olds can be included, using formulas such as *very young*). The more serious issue is up to what age a person can say they belong to the youth group, so that they do not find themselves making their life choices in the company of married couples perhaps even with children.

A mixed composition, that is groups for adults mainly attended by older people, can cause real discomfort. It could mean that the young find themselves face to face with their own parents or relatives in formative moments, talking about issues that do not concern their own lives. For this reason young people prefer to group together, rather than rise to an adult formative environment.

So we return to the question: what is a youth group? Normally, as said before, a youth group is made up of people who have left secondary school and who are faced with making a choice, such as between matrimony and the religious life.

The human and Christian goal of the youth groups is that of helping individuals to develop so they can make a choice for entering the adult world.

This means that a meaningful formative proposal should have another, following group to support those who have just made their choice. Because it is difficult, albeit gratifying and exhilarating, to cope with a young family, whether it concerns the relationship between spouses or the education of the children¹.

It should immediately be said that, on a level of Christian education, an Order of Malta youth group never involves an initial evangelization. Those who choose the Order's charisma must be well aware of the group's Christian character and of the choice of faith, and Christian initiation is taken for granted (there can be exceptions but they are unusual).

This does not mean that a young person has to follow a regular path in choosing the Order. By this we mean those who, after the Christian initiation period, have continued their formation either in their own parish, or in Catholic schools, or through group experiences or movements such as Azione Cattolica,

¹ In the Grand Priory of Lombardy delegation there is, for example, AMA Schuster, an intermediate adult group of thirty-five to fifty year-olds.

Scouts, Communion and Liberation, Opus Dei.... Those for whom the Order is part of their family background, either because their parents or relatives are members or because they have actively participated in its pilgrimages², are also following a regular path. This is the approach for a young person seeking, in a formative pathway already commenced in childhood, a particular charisma, finding in the Order the twofold choice of love of God and of one's neighbour.

But one can also choose to join the Hospitallers after rediscovering Christianity. For example, young people in the Lombardy Delegation are often university students, perhaps in the last years of a degree or specializing in some sector. They might have studied economics or jurisprudence or medicine and could be working in an internship that does not normally give them economic independence. These are people from the higher ranks of society, not necessarily noble, who are linked to other cultural and philanthropic youth groups³. They possess a good education but often have left the Christian experience in adolescence and have discovered a consequent

² Think of the great experience for young assistants in the *Lingua d'Italia's* pilgrimage to Loreto.

³ In the Lombardy Delegation many belong to Rotaract.

emptiness in young adulthood.

The Order is more often than not chosen because the other clubs to which they belong, albeit commendable⁴, do not satisfy their desire to fill the void left by the prevailing culture and by society. The formative pathway must thus be solid and strong, demonstrating that Jesus Christ is the Rock on which to build our house. Young people re-approach faith because in seeking happiness they have discovered the truth in the words of John Paul II: *It is Jesus you seek when you dream of Happiness.*

Formation for young people must not therefore be patronizing, but substantial; it must not focus so much on evangelizing but rather on educating to become adults in faith, able to choose Christ in all the environments in which one lives.

The younger members of the Order of Malta have a social standing that will lead them to occupy managerial positions in the outside world, and they must be able to take a firm stance against the nihilistic and egocentric stimuli of rampant secularism. The experience of faith must make them like a *bronze wall*⁵, the charisma of *tuitio fidei* that stands up against modern cultural relativism.

⁴ Normally they do not leave the experiences of the original group.

⁵ Cf. Jer 1.18

The training requires at least one meeting a month, with not only a lecture but also space for dialogue and discussion. The singular pathway must lead to a spiritual journey, with personal conversations with the chaplain⁶. Over the year the young have to expound, through testimonies or lectures, on both the Order in all its historical and spiritual significance and on topics concerning faith and morals⁷.

The youth group must take into serious consideration the celebrations of its own delegation and important events of its diocese's youth pastoral project, also finding how best to participate both in the appointments that the national church proposes for young people and the World Youth Days⁸.

This catechetical aspect must be accompanied by concrete acts of charity, which go beyond the dimension of the pilgrimage, into specific and

⁶ Through these talks one can help young people to find their vocation, also with a serious and well-tested choice of becoming a member of the Order in its various classes.

⁷ For example, it is as well for young people who are involved with health issues, perhaps because they will become doctors, to be fully aware of bioethical issues.

⁸ It is important to dwell on the messages that the Holy Father sends to young people during the World Youth Days.

tangible services⁹ to help Our Lords the Sick who are at the core of the Order's charisma (*obsequium pauperum*).

A youth group also needs more light-hearted moments. Young people today live in a society that isolates and they need to experience things together. It is interesting to see that the chaplain is also sought for these moments, not only as a friend but also as a good teacher with whom to talk and discuss things more freely (Jesus also liked to evangelize by accepting invitations to lunch!).

Among the various experiences to propose to our young people there is the International Camp. At a more local level there is the choice of days for Spiritual Exercises, a pilgrimage for young people only¹⁰ and reciting together passages of the Liturgy of the Hours.

The young person who chooses the Order of Malta's charisma must thus learn to love the eight-pointed cross, discovering the beauty of the evangelical style of the Beatitudes, in Jesus' crucified

⁹ Specific and tangible means that young people must be placed in well-organized and well-planned services, because study and work needs mean they cannot meet emergency requests. It must also be remembered that the young usually have less economic possibilities than adults, also because their parents are not always members of the Order or similar groups.

¹⁰ The Lombardy Delegation made a very successful youth pilgrimage to Oropa.

love, which makes us strong and happy and which opens us to others in a service that does not humiliate but fills us with a sense of existence.

Alessandro Repossi

In Memoriam

The Most Reverend Maurice Couve de Murville, Archbishop Emeritus of Birmingham (England), died on 3 November 2007. He was born at St-Germain-en-Laye (Diocese of Versailles) on 27 June 1929 into a distinguished French family from Mauritius. His cousin and namesake in the Huguenot branch of the family served as Foreign Minister and, briefly, as Prime Minister under General de Gaulle.

The family moved from France to England when the prelate was a boy. He was educated at Downside, the Benedictine public school, before reading history at Trinity College, Cambridge and Oriental Languages at London University. After studying theology at the Institut Catholique in Paris, where he was a fellow student of Cardinal Lustiger, he was ordained priest in 1957 in the Arundel and Brighton diocese, where he was curate and chaplain for Sussex University. He was then chaplain for Catholic students at Cambridge. Appointed Archbishop

of Birmingham in 1982, he retired from the archdiocese in 1999 to Horsham, Sussex. As Archbishop he was particularly involved in promoting Catholic education, also helping establish an international Catholic college, the Maryval Institute.

For many years chaplain of the Order of Malta, he devoted his work to it after retiring from the archdiocese. He was twice Principal Chaplain of the British Association and, lastly, religious assistant of the Order's Rest Homes. He visited America and the Philippines for the Order of Malta as a highly-regarded preacher and public speaker. He was Consultor to the Prelate. He was preparing an article for this edition of the Journals of Spirituality and was eagerly planning to participate in the Order of Malta's Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A serious illness prevented him from doing so but opened up to him, with his peaceful death, "the blessed vision of peace in the celestial Jerusalem".

A.A.

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