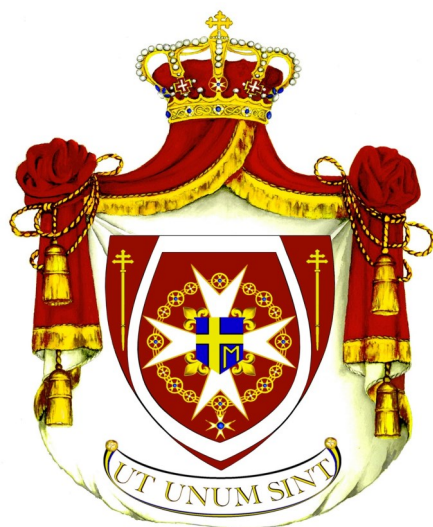


*Sovereign Hospitaller Order  
of St. John of Jerusalem*



**GRAND PRIORY  
OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM**

# The Maltese Cross

The cross that adorns our cloaks has **four arms** and **eight points**, not without reason.

The **four arms** represent the four cardinal virtues:

**Prudence**

**Justice**

**Fortitude**

**Temperance**



The **eight points** are signs of the eight beatitudes:

**Spiritual joy**

**To live without malice**

**To weep over sins**

**To humble thyself**

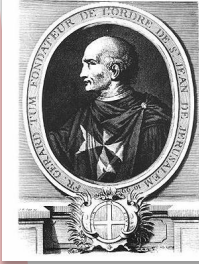
**To love justice**

**To be merciful**

**To be sincere and pure of heart**

**To suffer persecution without complaint or ill will**

# About the Order



**Blessed Brother Gerard**

The Knights' origins are to be linked to a particular moment in European history, the resurgence of the Latin West as a Mediterranean power. The first crusade provided a backdrop for the approval of the Order of Saint John as an Order of the Church in 1113. Founded by the Blessed Gerard, at first the Order focused on the care of the sick but then also contributed to the defence of the territories. Their evolution into warrior monks arose from the pressure brought to bear from the realities of conditions encountered by Christians in the East, in particular the continuous need for armed resistance to the evolving Turkish empire.

Admittance to the Order demanded Knights, who were expected to be of noble origin, to take the vows of chastity, obedience and poverty. Settling in Crete after the loss of the Holy Land, the Order subsequently found its home in Cyprus and then Rhodes. The island's geographical position was considered as being ideal to serve as port of call for the Christian pilgrims on their route to Jerusalem, while also playing a role as a stepping stone towards the liberation of the Holy Land. The Order's tenancy of Rhodes was soon challenged, however, with the first significant attack mounted in 1440. Other attacks followed leading to the siege of Rhodes in 1522, and the ultimate loss of the island into Ottoman hands.

**Settling in Malta and the Great Siege** - Now roaming the Mediterranean, the order received the donation of the island of Malta by King Charles I of Spain. At first it was considered unsuitable, but its large and deep natural harbours, as well as its strategic location in the heart of the Mediterranean, were to be an ideal vantage point for the sea-faring Order and so they took up residence in 1530 under Grand Master L'Isle Adam. Malta's strategic significance has made it a target throughout the ages, and brought it under significant attack on many occasions. The Order set about strengthening its resources and fortifications, and was set the ultimate test of its resolve during the Great Siege of 1565, when Suleiman the Magnificent, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, ordered a Turkish Armada consisting of around 200 galleys



**Esteemed Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette**

and 40,000 men to sail to and take Malta. Under the leadership of Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette, a significantly smaller force of Knights of the Order, combined with Maltese soldiers and civilians, repelled a vicious four-month attack. News of the victory spread far and wide, and subsequently the European monarchies contributed to further fortifications of the island including the city of Valletta, named after the esteemed Grand Master, built upon the hills of Mount Sciberras, the scene of some of the bloodiest battles.

**Departing Malta and the Russian Era** - The Order had effective and firm control in Malta, providing growth and stability on the island and protecting the Christian vantage point in the Mediterranean. On the morning of 9th June 1798, the fleet of Napoleon Bonaparte stopped in Malta on its way to Egypt. Bonaparte requested the Grand Master's permission to enter the fleet in the harbour but was refused, which Bonaparte took as a personal affront and ordered the immediate invasion of the island. The disembarking French soldiers were faced with little or no opposition as the various garrisons in the massive fortifications surrendered, offering no resistance. Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch accepted a truce on 9th June and three days later the capitulation was complete, with the Order signing the agreement by which it ceded Malta to the Republican forces of France.

The following years were tumultuous for the order, with factions appearing and vying for credibility. Under the auspices of Tzar Paul I, a number of Knights at the Russian court at the time of the loss of Malta sought to rebuild both the order's reputation and its finances, while others, who had followed Hompesch to Rome sought to establish themselves in permanent residence there. Considering Hompesch to be negligent in his abandonment of Malta, the Russian knights elected Tzar Paul to be Grand Master and on the 29th November 1798, the solemn ceremony took place by which he formally assumed the title. Russia became the official centre of the Maltese Order, and Saint Petersburg became the residence of the Grand Master.

**The Order in modern times** - This Russian Hospitaller tradition of Saint John continued within the Russian Empire. After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the descendants of the Family of hereditary knights, Commanders of the Russian Grand Priory, with the support of members of the Imperial family, continued that Russian tradition into exile and eventually surfaced in America. In the 20th century the original Hospitaller role of the Order became once again its main concern with charity and social welfare activities were once again undertaken on a considerable scale. In 1976 after considerable discussion between the Order's Pories, it was decided to select the Priory of Malta as the seat of the supreme council and headquarters, the island to be once again the Knights' high command. In 1991 Castello dei Baroni in Wardija, Malta was made available as the Grand Magisterial Chancery seat of the Supreme Council and reigning seat of the Grand Master. Today, the Order is ecumenical in character with its Spiritual Protector in His Eminence Cardinal Sergio Sebastiani. The Knights and Dames of the Order and its volunteers are under the leadership of HIRH Sandor Habsburg-Lothringen the Prince Grand Master, and with HIRH Herta Margarete Habsburg-Lothringen the Royal Protectors of the Order, and work for charity, medical and social welfare care and humanitarian aid worldwide. Important donations made by the Order include mobile hospitals, medicines and equipment to various nations around the world.



**Castello dei Baroni**

# Our Activities



Continuing our Hospitaller tradition, The Sovereign Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem is committed to continued humanitarian and charitable work. The Knights and Dames of the Order, along with many volunteers work hard to raise and distribute aid around the world, to ease the suffering of the sick, the poor, and the disenfranchised. By organising many and varied charity events, the Order raises significant funds which it donates to worthy causes and campaigns in the UK and worldwide through financial donation and the purchase of much needed medicines, medical supplies and other items that make a significant difference to the lives of those in need. An example of some of the donations made in recent years from the Grand Priory of the United Kingdom are:

- ◆ Construction of a railway carriage playroom for a children's hospice in Oxford
- ◆ Donation of 60 hospital beds and other ward furniture to hospitals in Haiti
- ◆ Donation of Medical equipment and 40 beds to a hospital in Macedonia
- ◆ Donation of telephone equipment and furniture to the Samaritans
- ◆ Donation of call centre telephone equipment to Prostate Cancer UK
- ◆ Cash donation to the UK Air Ambulance
- ◆ Donation of incubators and beds to the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital, Gambia
- ◆ Donation of various equipment to orphanages in Ukraine
- ◆ Donation of electronic equipment to the Royal Berkshire Hospital special needs school
- ◆ Donation of a sailing boat for use by under privileged children at the Docklands Centre, London
- ◆ Donation of maternity equipment to a clinic in the Democratic Republic of Congo

# Interested in Learning More?

In order to continue with our charitable work, the Order needs to continue to grow and welcome new members, and so we welcome those interested in becoming an invested Knight or Dame of the Order, or to simply volunteer their time to help in the organising and running of charitable events. No matter their background, expertise or age we welcome all help to continue the mission of our order set out over 900 years ago.

If you have an interest in taking part in our future events, or you would like to find out more about the Order itself and ways to join, then please do get in contact.

**Please send an email to the**

**Grand Priory of the United Kingdom Information Officer**

***Chevalier Laurence Pisani OSJ***

**[chev.laurence.pisani@gmail.com](mailto:chev.laurence.pisani@gmail.com)**



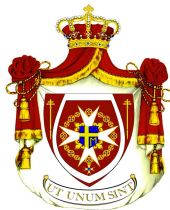






**Prince Grand Master HIRH Sandor Habsburg-Lothringen  
& HIRH Herta Margarete Habsburg-Lothringen**

Royal Protectors of the  
Sovereign Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem



*Ut Unum Sint*

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