

THE ORDERS OF ST. JOHN A SHARED TRADITION

THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM, OF RHODES AND OF MALTA and the four orders in The Alliance of the Orders of St John of Jerusalem - DIE BALLEY BRANDENBURG DES RITTERLICHEN ORDENS SANKT JOHANNIS VOM SPITAL ZU JERUSALEM, THE MOST VENERABLE ORDER OF THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM, DE JOHANNITER ORDE IN NEDERLAND and JOHANNITERORDEN I SVERIGE - share a commitment to the traditions established by The Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in the middle ages.

The Medieval Order

The Hospital of St John of Jerusalem was an order of the Catholic Church, which expressed love of God and neighbour in practical action. Its brothers and sisters were committed to a radical version of the Christian ideal of service to poor pilgrims, 'the holy poor of Christ', whom they cared for when they were sick and treated as their 'lords', irrespective of their religion. In time they extended this care to every sick person, whatever his or her condition. To them a sick man or woman really represented the person of Christ and should be treated as such. And so they aimed to provide nursing and medical care of the highest quality in appropriate surroundings.

The order also came to express its vocation in helping to defend the poor, and, by extension, all Christians, when they were physically threatened. It developed into a 'military order', which played a prominent part in the defence of Christian Europe until the late eighteenth century. In that rôle it paid that attention to excellence which it had already shown in its care of the sick.

It was, therefore, a Christian religious order, the functions of which were expressed in the phrases *tuitio fidei* (defence of the faith) and *obsequium pauperum* (allegiance to the poor), as well as in the motto *pro fide et pro utilitate hominum* (for the faith and the service of humankind).

The Modern Orders

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta is the original order. It is an order of the Roman Catholic Church. The four orders in the Alliance, stemming from the same root, are orders of chivalry as well as being Christian confraternities. The Balley Brandenburg and the Dutch and Swedish Orders are Protestant. The Most Venerable Order has members drawn from all Christian denominations. In all these orders there is the obligation to uphold and exemplify the Christian faith.

Military functions have been abandoned, but values which are traditionally associated with nobility and chivalry are still of central importance. They are reflected in terminology, such as in the use of the title of knight; in discipline; and in very strict conditions for membership.

Sharing a unique vocation to subject themselves to the lordship of the sick and the poor, these five orders are committed to treating the infirm, whatever their religion, as their superiors, rendering to them that respect and quality of treatment which would be due to Christ himself. This, and their centuries-old tradition, distinguishes them from other international or national bodies engaged in similar charitable work.

.....
HMEH Fra' Andrew Bertie
Prince and Grand Master
The Sovereign Military and
Hospitaller Order of Jerusalem,
of Rhodes and of Malta

.....
SKH Prinz Oskar von Preussen
Herrenmeister
Die Balley Brandenburg des
Ritterlichen Ordens Sankt
Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem

.....
Mr Eric Barry
Lord Prior, for and on behalf of
HRH The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO
Grand Prior
The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of
St. John of Jerusalem

.....
Jonkheer J Pieter de Savornin Lohman
Coadjutor, for and on behalf of
ZKH Prince Bernhard der Nederlanden
Landcommandeur
De Johanniter Orde in Nederland

.....
Professor Thomas Ihre
Kommendator
Johanniterorden i Sverige

Rome
22 October 2004