ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM, KNIGHTS HOSPITALLER
Under the Constitution granted in 1964 by his late Majesty King Peter II of Yugoslavia

THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD

PRO FIDE, PRO UTILITATE HOMINUM

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Sovereign Council

BRUGES 2024

1/2024 EDITION

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Lent 2024.
A Message & Greetings from
H.E. the LIEUTENANT-GRAND MASTER

Dear Brethren in Christ,
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Saint John,

Once again, a Sovereign Council approaches. Apart from the two-yearly opportunity for the looked-upon necessary meeting of old and new member friends, the Council will, as it is the norm, deal with nominations and elections for the government of the Order for another two years to come. The importance of the election of this government is presented to us all, members of the Order, by the Constitution of our Order which makes it clear that no single individual has absolute powers. Hence this opportunity being given by the King Peter's Constitution is to be taken as a duty of each member to take part, directly or through the elected leaders of their Unit, in the election of this government.

Apart from the election of the four Conventual Bailiffs who constitute the Petit Conseil of the Order, the Sovereign Council, during the meeting, also touches upon various other important matters to include the presentation of reports by H.E. Lieutenant Grand Master; by the Chairperson of the Supreme Court, by the Chairman of the Ecclesiastical Council; by the Conventual Bailiffs and by the activity reports of the Grand Priories and Priories given by the respective Grand Priors and Priors which (…)

(…) will, in themselves, be dealing with the Administration of the Order; Audited Accounts; membership and oblate-ons; and the International Charity Project.

Worthy of note is the great advances that the information, being given quarterly to members by the International Herald, has made. "Every member is to be a 'reporter'." The Herald is keenly interested in what each member has to say and all members are encouraged to submit material directly to the editor or through their Prior, Commander, or unit Herald, who will serve as contributors and co-editors. At this point I heartily thank all those concerned in the giving of information, the editing of the material and the editor in the competent production of the paper.

Also worthy to note is the slowly but surely functioning of the website of the Order which is another important source of communication and of information being given not only to members but also to 'the outside world' showing the loyalty of the Order towards its motto 'Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum'.

Even more: another indirect, but of utmost importance, source for the structure and administration of the Order is the wise decision taken by the Petit Conseil to appoint, for themselves, Lieutenants who are to be the representatives of every Unit of the Order. This results that all Units of the Order are, through their representatives, taking part in every Petit Conseil meeting. These Lieutenants being given the right to speak would be the voice of and a courier to their respective units.

Furthermore the formation of the Ecclesiastical Council of the Order being of great (…)

(…) importance for the 'Pro Fide' part of the motto of the Order, can pride itself that all major denominations do represent all major Units. May the Ecclesiastical Council always shine forth the 'pro fide' values for our Order. Let it be a beacon of light for all of us members of the Order. Let it be a source of inspiration and of information to us all.

Having said that I cannot but not refer to the coming of Easter. The feast when us, Christians, celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Faith in the Risen Christ is the foundation of our hope in the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. It refers to a definite victory over death and precisely from this certainty, Christian hope springs. "If Christ has not risen, our faith is vain" (1 Cor 15:17)

Referring to this text reasoning tells me that "If Christ did not rise from the dead, then Christ decomposed in the grave like any other individual. He is dead and decomposed. If this was the case then Christ was a teacher like any other, and can no longer be of help; and once more we are orphaned and alone. We are in a sort of 'hell' where we can do nothing but dream, roofed in, as it were and cut off from heaven".

The Lord of life was dead; but now He lives. He triumphed. If it were fake news we Christians would be imposters, but only because it is real it makes sense to wish you all members of OSJ(Malta) a "Happy Easter.

Waiting to meet all of you during the coming Sovereign Council meeting, I wish every member of OSJ (Malta) to rejoice by a living faith, a fervent hope and an industrious charity.

Paul M. BORG, OSJ,
Lt.-Grand Master

Meditation on: Lent

Dear sisters and brothers in the Lord and in St. John,

When we look at a house, the first thing we look at is: the facade. We look at the view of the house.
If you are a friend of the house then you see more. You've seen the inside. You know the interior is cozy.
But no one looks at the foundation. Nor can you. Only the architect and the contractor, the concrete engineer and the stability office know that.
People who build are usually very nervous because it all progresses so slowly in the beginning. Those works in the ground-you don't see them progressing.
And yet, whether a house is sturdy, whether it will withstand storms and squalls, does not depend on the beauty of the facade, or the coziness of the interior, but mainly on the firmness of the foundations.

By the way, not only a house has its foundations, but also every human life. The question is: What is the foundation of my life, the driving force? What gives to my life its very foundation? What do you actually live by? What is the supporting ground, the deepest motive of your life?

These are precisely the questions we are asked during Lent. We are invited to descend into the cellar of our lives.

To go to the cellar, you often have to stop and make yourself a little smaller. That too is Lent: learning to make yourself small for your fellow men and for God. Then, at the end of this time, to go up to the light, for the encoun-ter with the risen Lord.

I wish you a virtuous descent into "the cellar" and a joyful ascent to Easter.

Peter VERBEKE, KGSJ,
Prelate,
Prioratus Flandriae Priory,
Benelux Grand Priory

God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

The TENDER PLANT of FRIENDSHIP

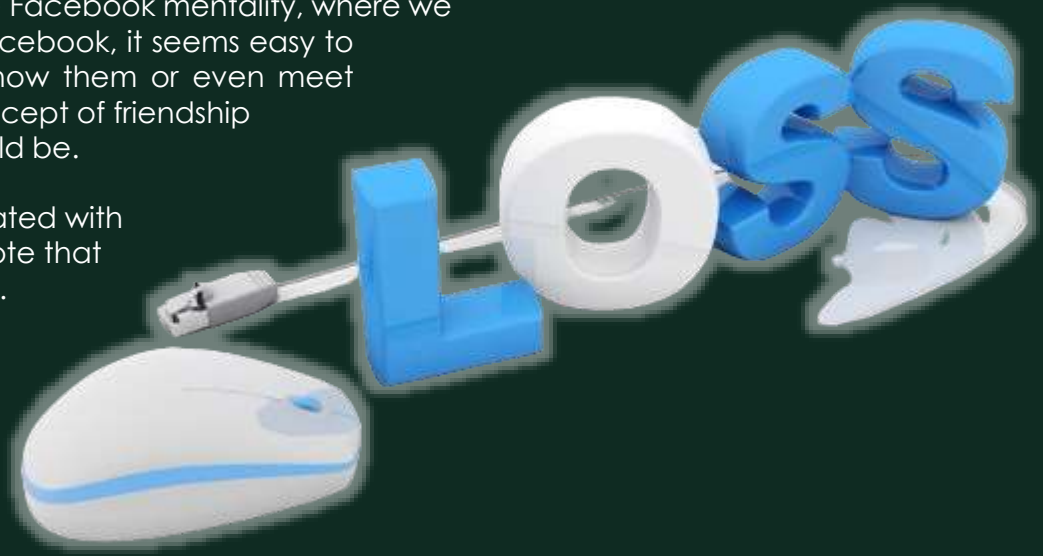
Friendship is something everyone longs for. The feeling of having no friends is therefore a hard nut to crack. That is why it belongs to us as human beings to really seek friendship, to open up to friendship and to do everything we can to cherish the friendship once received. But at the same time, we experience how delicate true friendship is. Tender and delicate in the sense that it is vulnerable, transient, sometimes very temporary and unfortunately sometimes calculated.

Friendship is above all a gift that one receives and that cannot be bought. It reflects divine love, which is planted in man as a seed and can grow and blossom in friendship. While charity is experienced as a duty and is then also the subject of a commandment, friendship grows as a spontaneous love one feels for someone, the warm affection one cherishes for someone. Here any commandment or duty is absent, and any imposed or imposed obligation would make friendship a caricature. Friendship can also find its source in the compassion one shows towards someone who is suffering. I saw the latter in a special way when my mother was dying and how the carers came to her room in the early morning to see how she had spent the night. The several years' stay in the rest home had created a true bond of friendship between my mother and several of the caregivers. No more words were spoken at that point, but the looks that were exchanged spoke volumes.

Everyone will carry within them the capacity to give and receive friendship, but not everyone will be able to fully develop this capacity. One may feel within oneself an inhibition to open up to others, because one has difficulty really confiding in others. One may also be hurt in the friendship, frustrated because the pure intentions one wanted to put in the friendship were not respected by the other. Sometimes one will have to conclude that the friendship was rather calculated, linked to the benefit one could give or receive from the other with it. It is what not few have to establish when they leave a particular position, end their career or lose a piece of awe (...)

(…) and honour due to circumstances. For instance, I once heard a bishop who was on emeritus and feeling totally lonely in his room in the rest house sigh: "And I thought thought I had many friends".

It is perhaps at those very moments that true, close friendship manifests itself and shows its durability. We know the saying that in need, one knows one's friends. Therefore, one should not strive for many friends, but for true and close friends. No, we do not let ourselves drift with the Facebook mentality, where we are artificially invited to become friends. On Facebook, it seems easy to have a thousand friends without having to know them or even meet them in reality. There is a real erosion of the concept of friendship here, even a perversion of what friendship should be.



There is no time when so much was communicated with each other, and at the same time we should note that there may never have been so much loneliness. A screen can never replace the warm human presence and encounter. This was acutely felt during the covid period, when contacts were very limited and visits had to be replaced by online communication via the Internet. We learned to use new tools, but also experienced the literal distance and consequent remoteness that could not be bridged via an Internet connection. With the increasing use of internet communications, despite having more contacts, the danger does loom that they simultaneously turn out to be less profound and lasting. Here too, quantity and quality are not directly proportional. Finally, endlessly chatting on the Internet can turn into an all-out individualistic activity, where people simply forget about real contact with each other.

Therefore, in an age of rising individualism, friendship often really seems to be a medicine, where the other is, as it were, pleasantly invited and even somewhat obliged to come out of his shell and be infected by friendship in order to grow from individual to person, into a true fellow human being. Had there been a friendship relationship between (…)

(…) Cain and Abel, asking Cain where his brother was would have been superfluous. But it was precisely individualism that had turned his heart to stone whereby he had now come to see his own brother not as a blood brother, and certainly not as a friend, but as a rival and an enemy. And then the answer sounded that he did not feel responsible for his brother. This is the response when people start living next to each other indifferently and end up perceiving each other as a burden. Where has friendship gone here?

However, friendship does not mean that we have to be together all the time, and that absence or distance would harm the friendship. Perhaps on the contrary. Through Maurice Zundel, we learnt about Kierkegaard's expression that "Absolute closeness is found precisely in infinite distance". Zundel, a Swiss priest and great spiritual leader, understood the art of keeping this closeness and distance intact and balanced in his contacts as an expression of the enormous respect he showed towards the other. This simultaneously creates and truly cultivates the space to get to know and appreciate more and more deeply the inexhaustible richness of the other. Any friendship that seeks to seize the other, to claim it for itself, will harm and languish precisely the true friendship. Perhaps this is what we see between lovers who, in their first infatuation with each other, are, as it were, inseparable, really claiming each other for themselves, only to grow away from each other just as quickly, precisely because in this form of love they ran out of breath and grew weary of each other.

When a friendship becomes exclusive, and excludes any kind of friendship with others and begins to regard them as a competitor, one must dare to ask the question whether this friendship is really aimed at the wellbeing of the other, or merely aimed at stroking one's own pleasure. For true friendship will always be aimed at the wellbeing of the other and therefore continue to respect the other unconditionally in his or her freedom. One will then reap the true joy of friendship from the happiness one gives to the other with it.

That friendship is a tender little plant that must therefore be nurtured is especially evident at times when every possible benefit that can be attached to this friendship falls away, when all improper motives are jettisoned and (…)

(…) only the friendship "pure" remains. We are reminded of this in the book of Wisdom by Jesus Sirach: "Many a man is your friend as long as it suits him, but he does not remain faithful on the day of adversity. In good times he is by your side and deals confidentially with your servants. But when things go badly for you, he turns against you and does not show himself to you anymore" (Jesus Sirach 6, 10-12). Having to experience this will often lead us to painful disappointment for the so-called friendships that go overboard here, but at the same time to greater appreciation for the few friendships that then remain intact and even grow stronger. It is these friendships that will help us in difficult moments, when we may experience that there is still a shoulder to lean on and even let our tears flow and receive true comfort in them. How beautifully it sounds then finely once again in the book of Wisdom by Jesus Sirach: "*A faithful friend is a mighty bulwark; he who finds him has found treasure. A faithful friend is beyond price: it has a value that nothing can match. A faithful friend is a spice of life; whoever fears the Lord will find it. He who fears the Lord keeps his friendship uncreased, for as he himself is, so is his neighbour*" (Jesus Sirach 6, 14-17).

Frater René STOCKMAN, KSJ,
Brothers of Charity

We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or we can rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.

Abraham LINCOLN

ACCESSION to the THRONE by KING FREDERIK X, Copenhagen, January 14th, 2024.

On New Year's Eve 31 December 2023, HM Queen Margrethe II told that on 14 January 2024 she would step down and leave the throne to Crown Prince Frederik. In Denmark, it is tradition that a regent does not abdicate, but only leaves the throne to his eldest child when the sitting regent passes away. Yes, the tradition is so firm that only ONE regent has previously abdicated. It was King Erik Lam who abdicated in the year 1146 to instead enter a monastery in St. Knud's Monastery in Odense. Here he died later that year.

Since Commandery Dagmar is of course strongly monarchist, we of course had to be present to pay tribute to the new King. 6 Chevs. and Dames went to Copenhagen in different ways, and we actually had just as many different experiences. Here is a brief description of each Knight's experience from the day itself. It must be said that the royal family is incredibly popular in Denmark. 300,000 Danes had turned up to pay tribute to HM King Frederik X of Denmark.

Change of throne

[By Dame Sussi FLORES-AABO CHRISTENSEN, Chancellor]

My daughter Ayla and I wanted to witness the Change of Throne up close. So we traveled to Copenhagen already on Saturday afternoon. We slept in my sister's apartment because we wanted to be there in good time the next morning. At 09:00 we stood in front of Christiansborg Castle. We were surprised that there were not many gathered. We could place ourselves at the very front. We brought camping chairs, food and drink and several layers of clothing. When you're in the same place for so long, you start talking to those next to you. Ayla was talking to some young people sitting next to her. I spoke to an elderly gentleman who could tell that he also experienced the earlier Change of Throne. It had a (…)

(…) completely different atmosphere, since the king had just died and the young Crown Princess Margrethe came out on the balcony and was in mourning and the people were in mourning.

This day, on the other hand, was in a fantastic festive mood and everyone was so happy and excited and flying all over the place. We all waited for 3 o' clock, when our King will come out on the balcony. And what an excitement when he came forward. Everyone clapped and cheered and when the rest of the royal family came forward, the excitement would never end.

The kiss between King Frederik and Queen Mary completed the experience.

CONGRATULATIONS to his majesty King Frederik the X

[By Chev. Preben SLOTH, Vice-commander]

I participated together with veterans and associations from the Skive area in the accession of the new King in Copenhagen on Sunday 14 January 2024. At 05:00 Sunday morning, we left to represent our local associations on the big day. From Skive, colours from Nørrejyske Field Artillery Association, Veteran Café Skive, Danmarks Veteraner Thy-Mors-Salling and Danmarks-Samfundet Skive, of which I am chairman, participated. We met in Nyborg on Funen with other associations from Jut-land and Funen, where we boarded buses and then drove together to Holmens Church to get ready for trooping the Colours.

At 14 we were ready with over 600 banners, which, together with the Guard of Honor from the Home Guard, framed the road from the statue of Niels Juel to Christiansborg, approx. 300 meters, a beautiful and moving spectacle.

I had the great pleasure and honor to present the Colour (…)

(…) for the entire royal family both on the way to and from the accession of the new King, which took place at Christiansborg, the country's Parliament. We were lucky enough to be able to follow the speeches from the balcony and participate in the nine-fold cheer for HM King Frederik X.

A fantastic and moving day, even if it was a little cold for the ears. There was a warm atmosphere among the many spectators and us standard bearers, many interested questions were asked and many warm comments were shared. Even when the police tried to move alle the banners, TV cameras and spectators, it was done with a smile and people tried to help each other in the best way.
There was an atmosphere among the participants with colours and the many spectators who showed solidarity and understanding in the best possible way and the many tourists got an experience of a lifetime. I spoke with locals as well as spectators from all over the country while we waited for the processions and I also got to exchange words with guests from 5 different nations, who were interested and asked how we could be allowed to stand so close to the royals, when they passed in cars and carriages. It was clearly something they were not used to from their home countries.
After the parade of colours resignation, the trip went back to Skive and we were home again at 22.30. A really wonderful day.
The warmest congratulations to the entire royal family and a heartfelt thank you to Her Majesty Queen Margrethe for a particularly well done service.

Presence of succession with obstacles

[By Dame Mette Møller, Editor Nordic Herald]
On Sunday 14 January 2024, my friend Louise and I had agreed that we should watch our Crown Prince Frederik the 10th be named HM King Frederik the X of Denmark.
Louise and I had agreed that I should pick her up at the railway station at 9.22 in Middelfart and that we then had to drive on to Copenhagen to drop the car off in Valby and take a public bus further into the centre. The coronation itself would take place at Christiansborg Castle, where the Danish Parliament is also housed.
I was listening to music, while I was getting ready and was in a good mood, so I didn't hear that my mobile had been ringing several times. It was Louise who had missed her first train. We talked about different options and ended up agreeing that Louise would take the next train. I had barely hung up before our dear Commander Kim (…)

(…) called. He knew I was going over there too, as we had talked earlier in the week.
Kim should have taken a veteran bus to Copenhagen. But he had overlooked an email and had therefore not been able to catch the bus, as it was running earlier than he first thought.

So the plan was for me to pick up Louise at the railway station and for us to pick up Kim in Nyborg and from there on to Valby, where we had to park the car. The drive went really well and we also found a good parking space. However, it was bitterly cold. So mittens and hats were a necessity for some of us, *except Kim, who is almost a Viking. He is also crazy about winter bathing, on this point I am definitely no Viking.*

We got our masted forward so that we were close to Christiansborg, Kim wanted to try to get further forward, as he had the Ordenr' banner with him and the plan wasfor him to go over and stand with the other veterans, in cluding Preben, who had come with the veteran bus earlier .
Louise and I stayed standing, It was really great to stand together with so many other people and know that you were a live participant in such a big event. There was no going back, but you could anyway at some point.
It turned out that access to Christiansborg had been opened up, so Louise and I could now get even closer. We ended up standing so that we could see the balcony from the side and just glimpse what was going to happen later. Some time passed, but suddenly a huge human roar was heard. It turned out that the Crown Prince had come out onto the balcony. He waved to the crowd and they, incl. us hobbled back. During the session, the Crown Prince was proclaimed HM King Frederik X, by our Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, The entire royal family also appeared on the balcony and waved.

It was very cold to stand there and although we would have liked to have experienced more, we chose to go back to the main train station, where we knew Kim was. Unfortunately, his phone had broken after being in close contact with the large crowd. This was what Sussi had told us, whom we had met earlier.
All in all, this was a very memorable day filled with lots of good and fun memories. I'm so glad I took part, what a story to witness.

Mette MOLLER, DGSJ,
Editor Dagmar Cdry.,
Nordic Priory

CALL for CONTENT

WE WANT

YOU

for The International Herald !

Make yourself heard from **all** OSJ units. We **DO** want to know how you are doing over there on our motto ***Pro Fide, pro Utilitate Hominum*** !

Send in your contributions soon for the next **02/2024 edition** in Word format and in separate Jpeg pictures **to:** lambrechtnot@skynet.be, **by the end of May** to come, at the latest.

Many thanks !

Be our Guest !

But please observe the following deadlines for registration & subscription:

- ***First come, first served***, limited availability **for all tours:**

The **Flanders Fields' Day.**

Cultural walking or guided tours:

the ~~**Domain Adornes**~~**: fully booked**

the ~~**Saint John's Hospital/**Memlinc collection~~**: fully booked**

the **Women behind the Duke**, and

From Oak tot Panel: the Flemish Primitives painters.

- Overall deadline for all assemblies, meetings, functions and banquets or walking dinners: very last date is **18th March 2024**.

The SC24Bruges-website link: https://sovereigncouncil2024.org/

Participants are kindly invited to download this website on their electronic devices to have constant access to all useful information on the SC24-website.

Things to Do & See in Bruges

St Donatian's church: 12th C. remains of an ancient Roman Choir in the basement of the Crowne Plaza venue hotel, and the foundations of the Saint Donatian's Church. We will celebrate there together !

Old City Wall: the remains of the 10th C. city wall can be seen in the basement of the venue hotel.

Belfry* and Halls, Markt 7, Brugge, 8000: enjoy a panoramic view of Bruges and surrounding from the Belfry tower, located on the main square, a stone's throw away from the hotel.

Basilica of the Holy Blood*, opposite the venue hotel: exceptional location for the **Laudes** and our **Ecumenical Service** on Sunday ! Cfr. 3/2023 to 1/2024 International Heralds,

City Hall, opposite the hotel: one of the eldest and most beautiful town halls in Europe. Don't miss the **reception** in the Gothic room on Friday, gently offered to us by the Mayor and Town Council of Bruges.

Boat trips on the town Canals: a visit to Bruges is not complete without a boat trip on its canals. Get on board and enjoy this wonderful Venice of the North city from a different perspective.

The **Hospice of St. John:** it's a medieval hospital, it's called St. John's, it's extremely well kept and restored… We refer to previous editions of the International Herald.

Chocolate Museum, **Groeninge** Museum, **Memlinc** Museum, **Lace** Museum, **Beguinage***, **Church of Our Lady, Historium** Museum.

The Bruges Triennial 2024 'Spaces of Possibility': a close look at Bruges and the public space. This 4th edition of TRIBRU challenges artist and architect, viewer and user to think about the future of Bruges and cities worldwide.

The *Belfry, the Beguinage, the whole **city centre of Bruges** and **the Holy Blood Procession: all UNESCO world heritage.**

The Benelux Hospitality Team is at your disposal for assistance in the **venue hotel lobby.**

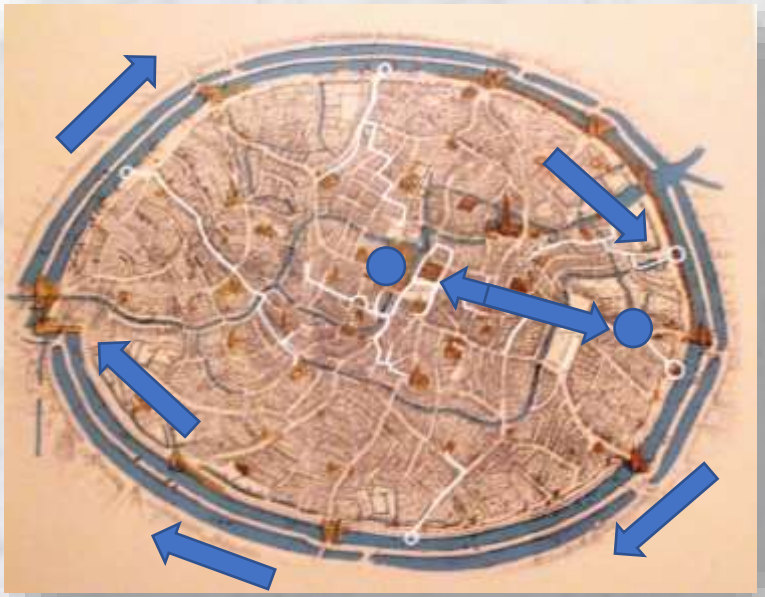
BRUGES & THE HOLY BLOOD
Origins, veneration and popular devotion

Author: Dr. William De Groote, chairman of the vzw Heilig Bloed-processie [non-profit organisation Procession of the Holy Blood]
Translated by Dr. Jan Cordonnier, board member of the vzw Heilig Bloed-processie and Main Intendant Priory Low Countries, CGSJ.

THE CHANGING FORMAT OF THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY BLOOD THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

The Bruges Procession of the Holy Blood is a unique symbiosis between the historic city of Bruges, its population, and its most important relic. With the emergence of Western cities at the end of the first millennium, relics played an extremely important role in the identification process of these city centres.

The origins of the Procession of the Holy Cross in Bruges, forerunner of the Procession of the Holy Blood, is difficult to date with any accuracy, but we do know that at the end of this procession on the Feast of the Cross on 3 May, the Relic of the Holy Blood was shown from the gallery of De Steeghere in front of the Chapel of the Holy Blood on Burg Square. The Procession of the Holy Cross became the Procession of the Holy Blood in 1304 and, during the years that followed, the medieval format of the procession changed into a veritable circumambulation of the city. The purpose of this festive parade was to implore the city's protection against war, fire, flooding, epidemics, hunger... (…)



The medieval procession started on Burg Square and then proceeded via Saint-Hubrecht-ten-Dullen, to Boeveriepoort before going all around the city, more or less following the second city ramparts, partly via the outer and inner ramparts before finally returning to Burg Square for the final blessing with the Holy Blood.

(…) The procession featured profane and religious elements, including groups of statues. The medieval procession started on Burg Square and proceeded along Breidelstraat, Steenstraat and Boeveriestraat in the direction of Boeveriepoort [former city gate]. Near Sint-Hubrecht-ten-Dullen, the municipal Dulhuus [mental home] and home for abandoned babies on Boeveriestraat, the members of the highest office, the prelates and the members of the Confrerie left the procession to enjoy a sumptuous meal.The procession then moved along through Boeveriepoort before continuing all around the city in a clockwise direction. After this circular route around the city, the procession would re-enter the city via Boeveriepoort during the afternoon. The dignitaries who had enjoyed their meal in Sint-Hubrecht-ten-Dullen, then rejoined the procession in the direction of Burg Square, where the final blessing with the Relic of the Holy Blood took place. This annual Ommegang of the city on Holy Blood Day was held uninterruptedly until 1577.

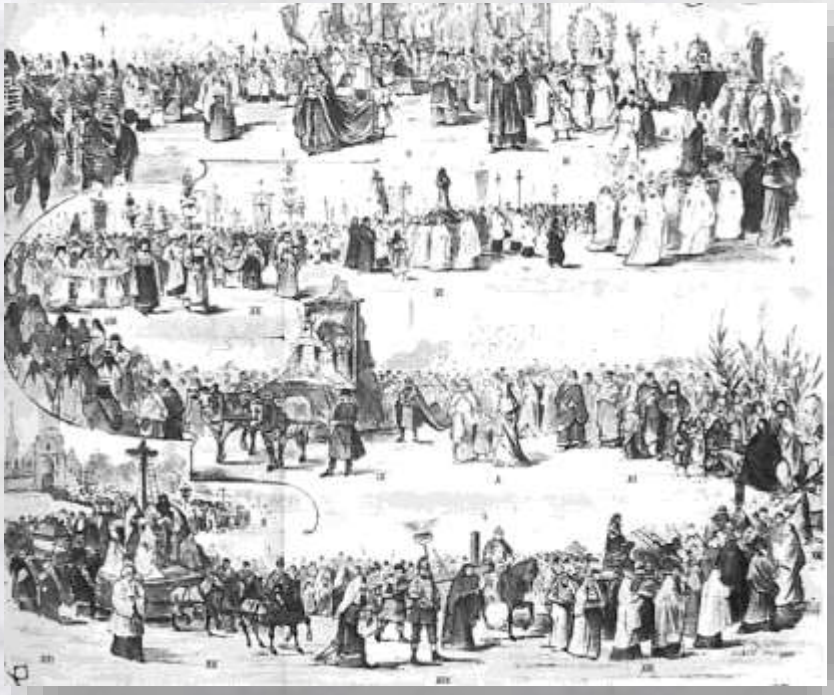
The floats of the trades during the procession of 1749,

It wasn't until the era of the Calvinist Republic in Bruges from 1578 until 1583 that this annual rhythm was first interrupted. After the era of the Calvinist Republic, and for safety reasons, the circumambulation of the city was replaced by a procession through the city centre from Zand Square to Molenbrug. On its return, the procession became a far more devout affair, but under the influence of the Jesuits and the ideas of the Counter-Reformation, the procession became an expression of the "victorious Catholic Church". The Jesuits turned it into a "cavalcade", i.e. a horse parade. During the 18th century, floats made their appearance, which the guilds used to act out their own activities through biblical scenes.

While the procession was organised by the city and guilds during the Ancien Régime, it was the Noble Confrerie of the Holy Blood who took over its organisation from 1819 onwards, after the Ommegang had been suspended during the French era. The trades and guilds had been abolished and, under ultramontane influence, a fairly flat procession saw the light of day, consisting of schools and congregations of the various city parishes carrying around (…)

(…) the relics of their patron saints on Holy Blood Day.

At the end of the 19th century, after a 3 century-long period of "*Bruges la morte*", Bruges enjoyed a historic revival during which the city wanted to rekindle its medieval grandeur again. Telling are the plans for a new seaport in Zeebrugge, the rise of neo-Gothic architecture in the city, but also the organisation of historical parades, with inter alia the parade for Blessed Charles the Good in 1884, and for Blessed Idesbald van der Gracht in 1896. 1887 also saw the unveiling of the statue of Jan Breydel and Pieter De Coninck on The Markt *[Market Square]*.



The revamped procession concept for *the Ommegang* of the year 1900

Even the Noble Confrerie of the Holy Blood opted for a new format for its Procession of the Holy Blood and asked painter Flori Van Acker to design new costumes and floats. The procession was to become a combination of historical and biblical scenes. For the first time, new procession statues like the "Ecce Homo" and the "Pietà" were included in the parade.

In 1931, Reverend Alfons Maertens, priest of the Potterie, became the new director of the Procession of the Holy Blood. On the theme "redemption through the blood of Christ", he developed a theological layer between the Old and the New Testament, on the one hand, and the veneration of the Holy Blood, on the other hand. Not only did he revamp the costumes and floats, but he also introduced talking and singing groups into the festive parade.

In the run-up to the 1958 World Exhibition in Brussels, the Confrerie of the Holy Blood instructed Director Guido Cafmeyer to come up with an entirely new procession (…)

(…) concept, based on the Eucharistic profession procession of 1956. In his urge for innovation, the new director opted for a modern design and inter alia fitting the new floats with sound systems, replaced the declamation and choirs, and got the extras to lip-sync. Most of the floats were moved along by pushers.

From 1931 onwards, Father Alfons Maertens's procession concept was built around the theme: "Redemption through the blood of Christ".

But criticism of his new concept was not long in coming. The Bruges natives no longer recognised their procession, and the numbers of spectators soon began to dwindle. Frictions arose between the Confrerie and the director, both about the concept and about the diminished interest. That diminished interest was also partly due to the fact that the procession was still being held on the first Monday morning after 2 May, so on a working day (as only people working in the Bruges region had the day off), which made it difficult for the working population to attend the event. (…)

The modernistic procession concept of Director Guido Cafmeyer from 1958.

(…) For that reason, the Noble Confrerie of the Holy Blood took a drastic double decision in 1969. On the one hand, the procession would henceforth be held on the afternoon of Ascension Day and, on the other hand, together with a historian, the Reverend Antoon Viaene, the medieval procession concept, with its guilds, trades and nations evoking the various scenes, would once again be reverted to and be based on a theoretic medieval vision.

The current procession concept was developed by a historian, the Reverend E.H. Antoon Viaene in 1969; Arno Brys was in charge of costume design and Tony Willems became the new director.

The overall format of the new procession is a three-fold one. A first part is an evocation of the Old and New Testament, and, hence, of the Passion story. The second historical part shows the translation of the Holy Blood from Jerusalem to Bruges by Count Theodoric of Alsace after the second crusade. The third part is the religious section with as highlight the Noble Confrerie's Ommegang through the streets of Bruges, with the Holy Blood in its procession shrine. The procession concept devised by Reverend Antoon Viaene has remained the basic format and was key to UNESCO recognising the Procession of the Holy Blood as Immaterial Cultural Heritage of Humanity as of 2010. (…)

In line with the medieval procession concept, the various pageant scenes are introduced by representatives of the Bruges guilds, trades and nations, such as here: the Guild Brothers of Brokers announcing the Abraham group.

(…) **THE BREAKS IN THE ANNUAL OMMEGANG PATTERN**

The annual tradition of the Procession of the Holy Blood did experience a number of interruptions:

• The rhythm of the annual pageant was first interrupted during the regime of the Calvinist Republic which lasted from 1578 until 1583.

• In 1749, Bruges was occupied by the French forces and no Ommegang was held.

• The same happened between 1794 and 1818 because of the evolutions in the French era.

• During WWI, there was no Procession of the Holy Blood between 1915 and 1918.

• In 1940, the pageant was still held on 3 May, one week before the German invasion of Belgium, but then experienced a break from 1941 until 1943. After the liberation of Bruges on 12 September 1944, a double Ommegang was organised in gratitude for the city's liberation.

• During these troubled times, the Holy Blood was generally hidden in the homes of private citizens for safekeeping. During the Calvinist Republic, it was Jan Perez de Malvenda who kept it safe while Baroness Gertrude de Pélichy was entrusted with its safekeeping during the French era.

• More recently, there were a number of rare cancellations, like in 2015 when the Ommegang had to make way for a procession to pray for rain, and during 2020 and 2021, when the Corona pandemic put a stop to gatherings of any kind.

THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY BLOOD "COMPANY"

These days, the procession is organised by the vzw Heilig Bloedprocessie, an appendage non-profit organisation of the Noble Confrerie of the Holy Blood. Practically speaking, "the Procession of the Holy Blood "company"" is led by the procession committee within which the governing body of the non-profit organisation teams up with the coordinators, the director, the choreographer, the director of music and the person in charge of the religious aspect of the procession.

To optimise collaboration with the city of Bruges, a covenant was signed between the city of Bruges and the Noble Confrerie of the Holy Blood. This covenant stipulates that delegations of the bench of Aldermen and of Brugge Plus shall have a seat in the governing body and in the general meeting of the vzw Heilig Bloedprocessie.

The current-day procession is a mass event featuring 1800 extras, across 53 groups, amongst whom 260 musicians. It also boasts quite a menagerie, among which sheep, donkeys, camels... plenty of riders and eight floats usually drawn by draught horses (only the crib cart is drawn by an ox). No less than 300 logistics staff, both during the preparatory phase and on Ascension Day itself, ensure that the procession on Holy Blood Day goes off without a hitch. (…)

(…) People want to take part in the pageant as an extra for various reasons. Some see it as their duty given their Bruges DNA, others do it as a personal intention or as a pilgrim, while, for others, the group spirit is the most important trigger. Many have become attached to their role of extra, which some of them have been impersonating in the procession for decades.
The procession's current format is a mass spectacle, with large groups, plenty of colour, dance, music, street theatre, fire breathers and flag twirlers.

The Procession of the Holy Blood is a mass spectacle, with large groups, plenty of colour, song, dance, street theatre and floats.

During the reception after the procession, which is held in the courtyard of the city halls, the ultimate Bruges fraterisation takes place, with a sense of community that reflects the true Bruges DNA.

The large floats in the procession are drawn by teams of horses, while the crib cart is drawn by a 1.200kg ox.

During the middle of the previous century, not only a procession but also a Holy Blood Spectacle was organised on the Bruges Grote Markt, evoking Christ's Passion story and the translation of the relic to Bruges on a large stage in front of the city halls. However, the arrival of the modern media did sound the death knell for this initiative.
(…)

(…) **THE ORGANISATION OF THE ANNUAL OMMEGANG**

With its 40 to 60,000 spectators on Ascension Day, the Procession of the Holy Blood is by far the biggest one-day event in Bruges. It is also the absolute highlight of the city's tourist year.

Professor of History Pamela King from Glasgow catalogues the Bruges Procession of the Holy Blood, along with the Semana Santa in Seville and the Palio in Siena, as one of the three most important historic event evocations in Europe.

The organisation of the annual pageant gets underway on the first Monday of September and the subsequent months are taken up by working on the planned innovations, restorations and communication with the extras.

With its 40 to 60,000 spectators, the Procession of the Holy Blood is by far the biggest event in Bruges.

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The Holy Blood Spectacle, performed on a stage in front of the city halls, on the Bruges Grote Markt, mid-20th century.

Five weeks prior to Ascension Day, the procession costumes and props are brought from the warehouse to the (…)

city halls, where the extras come to fit their costumes and rehearsals take place.
Two weeks before the Ommegang, the pageant flags are hung all along the route. These flags depicting Christ's Passion story are based on the engravings by Bruges native Joannes Stradamus (Bruges 1523, Florence 1605) and were produced by Benoit Kervyn.
On the day of the procession itself, the extras assemble in the city halls at noon, where they are dressed, made up and given their wigs and props, and where the procession is formed.
The enthusiasm and expressiveness of these extras who, with their voluntary commitment, not to mention the dedication of the logistics staff, form the cornerstone of the organisation, is extraordinary.

Heritage factory

During the week after the procession, all the costumes and props are returned to the new Erfgoedfabriek [Heritage Factory] situated at the site of the Port of Bruges where they are cleaned, repaired and safely stored. The floats are brought back to the shed in Dreef ter Panne.
Because of the planned restoration works to the Bruges Belfry and the city halls over the next decade, the BMCC, the Bruges Convention Centre, will once again be used as make-up and starting place for the procession.

SAFEGUARDING UNESCO'S RECOGNITION OF THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY BLOOD AS IMMATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

To retain its UNESCO recognition as Immaterial Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the vzw Heilig Bloedprocessie has set itself the following objectives:

- professionalisation of the procession management;
- digitalisation of the procession format and communication;
- further investment in splendid costumes and floats;
- the conservation of traditions;
- reinforcement of the religious aspect during the procession;
- accentuation of the heritage;

In sum, the pursuit of a medieval evocation format, with respect for the Bible and history.
Respect is also the common thread that runs through the vzw Heilig Bloedprocessie's declaration of commitment which its governing body drew up in 2023. This declaration of commitment entails that: (…)

****

(…)

• the overall organisation shall deal with the extras, staff, spectators and anyone interested in the procession in a respectful manner, without any form of exclusion or stigmatisation on the basis of age, gender or origin;

• the Ommegang is committed to being an inclusive event, so that spectators, extras, and staff get the most out of the procession;

• the organisation demands respect for the three-fold procession concept, devised and elaborated by Antoon Viaene and based on a medieval Ommegang with medieval scenes and street theatre;

• the organisation also requests respect for the Catholic religion, the cultural-historical and traditional ritual, linked to the veneration of the Relic of the Holy Blood;

• Lastly, the organisation asks that the animals used in the procession are treated with respect, in line with an animal-friendly attitude.

To retain its UNESCO status, the Procession of the Holy Blood must also continue to revamp and reinvent itself. Thanks to a generous annual subsidy from the National Lottery over the past decade, entire groups could be supplied with new, high-quality costumes and the floats could be given a complete makeover.

THE POPULAR DEVOTION AROUND THE RELIC OF THE HOLY BLOOD

For centuries, God and his patron saints of ailments, illness, and dangers were the last resort in times of illness and doom in a world without science. Praying was the only remedy. In Bruges, the Chapel of the Holy Blood used to be the epicentre of popular devotion. People came to "serve" there in the hope of a cure or in gratitude of someone's cure. On the one hand, people come to pray in the lower Chapel of the "Nood Gods" [Pietà Chapel] at the statue of "Christ on the cold stone" (Ecce Homo statue), known in local parlance as "Jezus-ip-zyn-blokstjie", a historic procession statue that evokes the Passion of Christ. Here, prayer ends by touching the knees of the statue of Christ. This is a contact ritual where one hopes for a divine transfer (…)

In line with medieval tradition, the Ommegang evokes the translation of the Holy Blood from Jerusalem to Bruges by Theodoric of Alsace in 1150.

(…) of power to deliver a cure and protection in difficult times.

The lower Pietà Chapel, with the procession statue of Christ on the cold stone, whose knees have been worn because of the "contact ritual".

This contact ritual also forms part of the veneration of the Relic of the Holy Blood when it goes "on display" in the Basilica. Here, worshippers hope that, through the Holy Blood of Christ, the divine power of protection and healing will be transferred.

In difficult times, there are still residents of Bruges who complete a novena of the Holy Blood. This involves covering the historic route of the Procession of the Holy Blood between Zand Square and Molenbrug, starting from the Chapel of the "Nood Gods" [Pietà Chapel] and ending with a veneration of the Relic of the Holy Blood, on the throne of the Basilica for nine consecutive days, in prayer.

People especially came to "serve" before the Holy Blood for two pregnancy-related issues. In first instance for a successful birth, but in the past people especially visited the Holy Blood to ward off "the flow", postpartum bleeding, for postpartum haemorrhaging was one of the prime complications of childbirth, one that almost invariably led to the death of the new mother.

The veneration of the Relic of the Holy Blood, on the throne of the Basilica of the Holy Blood.

To prevent this serious complication, people visited the Holy Blood to collect "red ribbons" or "blood threads", (…)

(…) which became a tertiary relic after they had been held up against the primary Relic of the Holy Blood.
People did believe in fact that touching the Holy Blood would transfer the supernatural power or "virtus" to this little piece of textile and would prevent haemorrhaging after childbirth. The mother had to gird the "red ribbon" during childbirth. As a precaution, she could also eat little bits of the red ribbon during the weeks coming up to childbirth.

During childbirth, mothers had to gird themselves with a "red ribbon or blood thread" to prevent "the flow" or postpartum bleeding.

With the advent of modern obstetrics, this pregnancy ritual obviously disappeared but many people still come to venerate the Holy Blood for a cure or to ward off illness or epidemics. Exceptionally, in October 1859, when Bruges was ravaged by a terrible cholera epidemic, a kind of penance procession with the Holy Blood was organised, to deliver Bruges from this "contagious and dangerous disease".

CONCLUSION

With the Relic of the Holy Blood, Bruges has one of the most important relics in the Christian world. To many, the veneration of the Holy Blood remains a specific goal of faith and also the annual Ommegang with the Holy Blood, during the Procession of the Holy Blood on "Brugges schoonste dag" [Bruges' Most Beautiful Day], still draws tens of thousands of pilgrims, tourists and spectators to Bruges' inner city.

We'd love to welcome you for the Lauds and Ecumenical Service on Sunday 21st April in the **Holy Blood Basilica**: this extraordinary and directly Crusade related sanctuary.

Heilig Bloedprocessie Brugge

Dr. Jan CORDONNIER, CGSJ,
Main Interndant,
Low Countries' Priory

Flanders Fields' Day:

- Offer to search for the fallen relatives graves.-

One of our members, Jean-Charles Matttheesens, KJSJ, an experienced wargraves guide, kindly offers to do an anticipative search of the last resting place of OSJ members' relatives who paid the ultimate price and are laid to rest in the Flanders Fields region. This not only considers the specific war cemeteries we visit on the Flanders Fields' Day on April 22nd 2024, but any other war cemetery in the area as well. If one is interested in having such a preliminary search for the exact final resting place of a family member before arriving in Bruges, please send to jcmat@telenet.be as much as possible of the following details you might have:

Name and Commandery of the OSJ member enquiring: ……...

Family name and christian name(s) of the fallen: ……..

Date of birth of the fallen: ……...

Date of passing away of the fallen: ……

Army unit your family member served in: ……

Which battle took your family member's life: ……...

Lest we Forget !

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Matthew 5: 8

HABEMUS PRIOREM

Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum; habemus Priorem, (I announce to you a great joy; we have a Prior). Of course, things were not that official during the election of a new prior for the Prioratus Flandriæ.
Day of the event: Saturday, December 9, 2023. Location of appointment: the castle of Moerkerke near Bruges (Belgium).
Traditionally, the meeting started with lunch, followed by the Chapter Mass in the crypt, presided over by Fra Stefaan Franco.
After the agenda had been dealt with, the election procedure could start, the highlight of this meeting: the election of a new prior. According to the statutes, a prior may head the priorate for a maximum of two four-year terms.
Fra Luc Van Eeckhout said goodbye to his task as prior in an emotional speech; eight years of service to our priory. An overview of all those years of organizing St. John's festivities and chapters, contacting speakers, maintaining relations with Malta and other priories, especially with the priory of the Low Countries, etc.
Ultimately, after a short voting round, the following name emerged: Fra Mario De Maet KJSJ. This former Chancellor, with a service record of almost 18 years at Prioratus Flandriæ, was born on March 17, 1972 and lives in Helkijn (West Flanders).
He is a corporate lawyer for the 'Organisatie Broeders van Liefde' (Brothers of Charity) for 25 years, which is active in mental health care, elderly care, care for the disabled and (special) ordinary education.

Erwin VANDECAUTER, KGSJ

Prior Mario DE MAET

Ret. Prior Luc VAN EECKHOUDT

Reflections on: CO-OPERATION IN AFRICA

Coöperation in Africa.

The Order of St John of Jerusalem (Hospitaller Knights – Malta) put the OSJ motto of *Pro Utilate Hominum* into action every day and in every part of the world, generously contributing their time and skills to help others. OSJ Commanderies and Priories carry out service projects that address critical needs locally and internationally. OSJ Volunteers are vital to the success of this humanitarian work. The Grand Hospitallier and his Hospitallers from the Commanderies foster active volunteer participation at home and abroad, drawing upon the spirit of community and global service that lies at the heart of the OSJ International's mission. The OSJ Brothers and Sisters share their time, their talents, their expertise to successfully carry out projects that tackle a vast range of humanitarian and social issues. They share their compassion, their enthusiasm, and their commitment to help those in need and make a better world. But a certain knowledge how to act can be important. How can we as a Western Christian Non-Profit Organization be aware of some African sensitivities in what we doing Pro Utilitate Hominum.

I. Altriusm, neocoloniasm and volunteerwork.

The concepts of cooperation, altruism, and neocolonialism in Africa are deeply interwoven within the continent's socio-economic and political landscape, reflecting both its rich history of communal support and the complex legacies of colonialism and external influence.

Coöperation, Altruism and Neocolonialism

Coöperation: in Africa has deep roots in traditional societies where communal living, shared resources, and mutual aid are not just cultural values but essential survival strategies.

Start-up of a sewing training for reusable hygienic female disposables, to avoid school absence, combined with unwanted pregnancy avoidance

Altruism: the selfless concern for the well-being of others, is similarly ingrained in many African cultures. It manifests in various ways, from everyday acts of kindness and community support to organized efforts addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and informal networks often lead these efforts, striving to improve livelihoods and resilience against both natural and human-made adversities. (…)

(…) Neocolonialism: refers to the practice of using capitalism, globalization, and cultural imperialism to influence a country, in lieu of either direct military control (imperialism) or indirect political control (colonialism). In the African context, it often implies the continuation of colonial-like exploitation through economic, political, and cultural pressures by former colonial powers and new global actors like multinational corporations and other states.

Chinese view on 'aid': massive loans for many decades

This influence is evident in various sectors, including the extraction of natural resources, agricultural practices, and financial systems. While foreign investments and aid are sometimes presented under the guise of cooperation and altruism, they can also perpetuate dependency, undermine local industries, and exacerbate economic disparities. This dynamic complicates the relationship between external actors and African states, between notions of aid and exploitation, and between genuine altruism and strategic interests.

Balancing Acts

The challenge for Africa lies in navigating these complex dynamics to foster sustainable development, social cohesion, and economic independence. This includes leveraging cooperation and altruism within and across African societies while critically engaging with external partners to ensure that relationships and agreements promote equitable development and respect for sovereignty.

Efforts to combat neocolonial practices include advocating for fair trade, promoting regional integration and cooperation through entities like the African Union (AU), and pushing for debt relief and more equitable terms in international trade and investment. Additionally, there's a growing emphasis on innovation, education, and technology as tools for empowerment and autonomy.

In summary, the interplay between coöperation, altruism, and neocolonialism in Africa is a testament to the continent's resilience and its ongoing struggle for a more equitable and self-determined future. While challenges remain, the enduring spirit of unity and mutual support, coupled with strategic engagement with the global community, offers a pathway toward overcoming the legacies of the past and building a more prosperous continent. (…)

Start beekeeping training

Medical outreach in the villages & registration

Provide drinkable water

(…)

II. Bantu-philosophy and Western volunteer-work in Africa.

Bantu philosophy refers to the worldview and philosophical heritage of the Bantu-speaking peoples, who inhabit much of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa. It generally emphasizes community, interconnectedness, and the importance of ancestors and spirituality in daily life. One of the foundational texts that introduced Bantu philosophy to the Western academic world is "Bantu Philosophy" by Placide Tempels, a Belgian Franciscan priest, published in 1945 (republished in 2023 by Noordboek – A. Roothaan). Tempels argued that Bantu societies have their own distinct philosophical systems, which were largely misunderstood or overlooked by Western colonialists, NGO's and volunteers. Central to Bantu philosophy is the concept of "vital force," a kind of life force that exists within every being and object, which dictates the balance and harmony within the universe.

How can we understand now the Bantu-philosophy in our volunteer work?

It is assumed here that God is a force in himself and that all beings are placed in a hierarchy. Every being, whether animal or vegetable, received a certain life force from God, but it is at the service of the strongest being in creation: man.

The life force is the very being of these beings. The meaning of human life is to strengthen this life force and to ward off any diminution, until death through progeny.

To understand this, *hiërarchy* is therefore *very important* in *Bantu philosophy. This being is a dynamic fact and would be contrary to the static (Western) view. In addition, there is a hierarchy between people in the family, with the eldest being higher in rank, but also in the clan, with the chief embodying the highest life force. Hence the king or 'Mwami',*

who is the possessor of all the lands, all the cattle, the whole crop, and all his subjects, has an omnipotence (…)

(…) that seemed unbounded, which made him appear inviolable. As chief justice, therefore, his rulings were not subject to appeal. He also had to ensure peace, which is why he was first judge, but he also had to calm the tensions between different rival groups. That is why he was also called a 'rex pacificatus', a kind of justice of the peace. The omnipotence of the Mwami is therefore logical in Bantu philosophy. Their view of life has everything to do with life force. The force theory says that lower forces cannot invade higher forces. Consequently, the supreme power of the Mwami cannot be influenced. Consequently, a person's free will can be controlled by higher forces and powers. Consequently, when the customary head of society, the king, has tried a case, all parties will accept it. The moral attitude of the Bantu is therefore to promote the vitality of human beings. Evil takes away people's life forces through misdeeds or influence through lower life forces (magic). Through initiation, young people are initiated into this world of power.

What about the young people who have studied ?

The problem with this view is that Tempels, the white European who suddenly appeared in the Bantu world, was given a stronger life force because of his technical advantage, above any other Bantu. This vision nips any change from the younger generation in the bud under moral pressure from the elders. Only the elderly have the wisdom. *In a society in transition, this view is no longer tenable.*

Hence, the dialogue between Bantu philosophy and volunteering *can be very complex. Volunteering should not be seen as a form of neocolonialism.*

On one hand, Bantu philosophy, with its emphasis on community and interconnectedness, offers a counter-narrative to the individualistic and exploitative nature of colonial and neocolonial enterprises. It provides a framework for understanding African societies on their own terms and for critiquing the disruptions caused by colonialism and continued in neocolonial practices.

On the other hand, the ongoing effects of Western volunteerwork based on neocolonialism challenge the practice and preservation of African philosophies and ways of life. Economic pressures, cultural domination, and political interventions from former colonial powers and multinational corporations threaten the autonomy and cultural heritage of African nations, including the philosophical traditions of the Bantu-speaking peoples.

The resurgence of interest in African philosophies, including Bantu philosophy, can be seen as part of a broader movement to decolonize knowledge and resist neocolonial influences. This involves reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems, philosophies, and cultural practices as a way of asserting autonomy and fostering development that is in line with African values and needs.

Reference: Placied Tempels, Bantoe-filosofie, Noordboek Filosofie (A. Roothaan, 2023) en Tertio (17/1/2024).

Dr. Jan CORDONNIER, CGSJ,
Main Intendant,
Low Countries Pry. (B)

"Until you make the
subconscious
conscious
it will direct your life and
you will call it fate."

Carl JUNG

General report: Priory of the Pacific.

To begin I must report that unfortunately the Commandery of King Valdemar the Great has dissolved its organization due to a dwindling number of members. Many are deceased or left the area of its installation.

On the brighter side it is the intent of the Priory to establish a new Commandery with the efforts of several of our members who have moved to the northwest. We will provide updates as they occur and request guidance at an appropriate time.

During the recent past we have also memorialized one of our keenest members, Chevalier Charles (Chuck) WEGHORN, KGSJ. He was a friend to all and supported all of our programs vigorously during his tenure. Chuck will be sorely missed. The accompanying photos are attached from his memorial service that took place at the St Francis Yacht Club on 19 November. I, as the Prior, rendered a military hand salute as Chuck's widow, Dame Barbara Weghorn, CGSJ, passed onboard a vessel with members of the Commandery, family and friends following a sailboat that Chuck had previously owned. Inside the Yacht Club later Dame Barbara presented Chuck's robe and regalia to the care of the Commandery to the Prior while Bailiff Christopher Barnes looked on. The day weather-wise was spectacular as only San Francisco Bay can be.

All programs we support are recommended by the Commandery membership. The criteria for recommen- (…)

(…) dation are as follows:

- It must benefit combat-wounded veterans.
- The organization must be local, in the Greater San-Francisco Bay Area.
- It should be an early phase registered, charitable program, where a little money goes a long way.

The Upcoming Year 2024

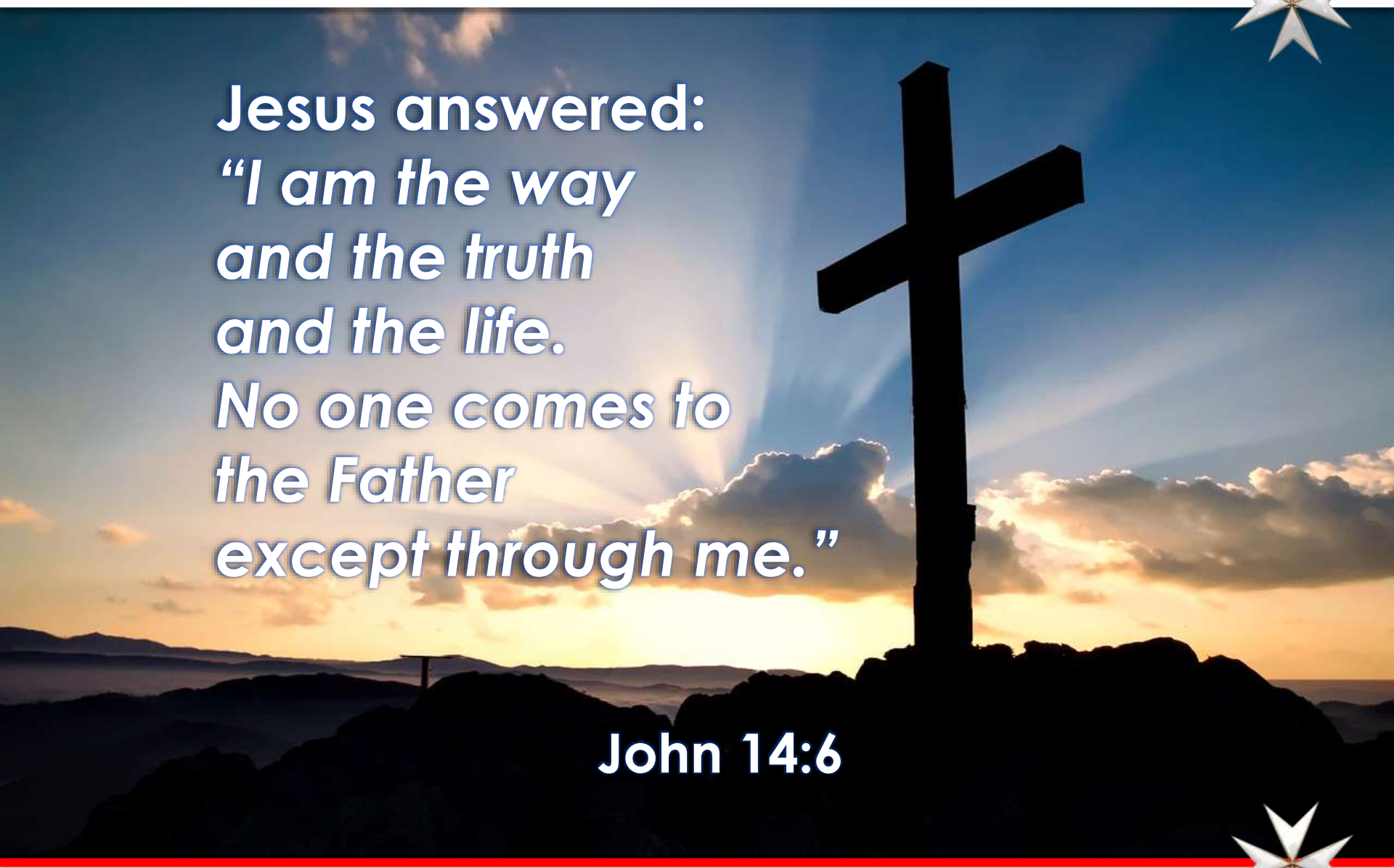
The Commandery of St. Francis will celebrate the next investiture of new Aspirants June 1st, 2024. The Prior, Chevalier Bill Chadwick, and Chevalier Kermit Claytor will be organizing the event. Our next fundraising event will be our 13th polo extravaganza on August 18th.

Membership

Seventy percent (70%) of our membership should be serving or retired officers, but others are welcome and encouraged to fill the remaining membership spots. We want to attract 1) Members of faith, 2) leaders in their community that possess a philanthropic attitude and desire to give back to society, and 3) who will help the Commandery as an organization not just with donations but also with their time. Please take a look on our website https://www.osj-sfc.org/ for more information.

Yours in St. John,

Bill
William I.
CHADWICK, KJSJ,
Prior.

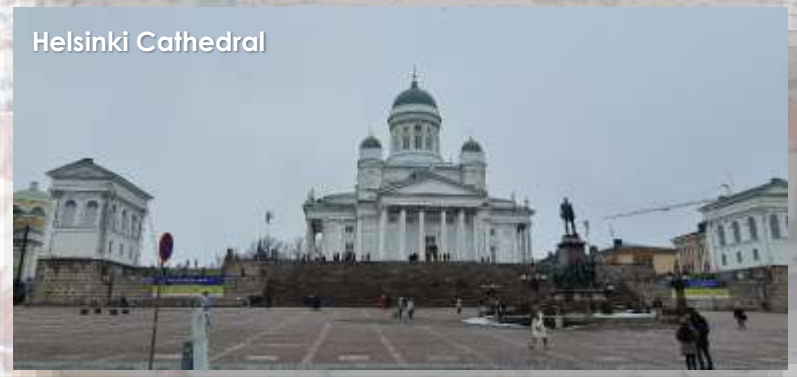

Jesus answered:
"I am the way
and the truth
and the life.
No one comes to
the Father
except through me."
John 14:6

THE FINNISH COMMANDERY IS ON ITS WAY !

Prior Frank Jakobsen and I have regularly talked about how it would be good to re-establish the Finnish Commandery. During the Investiture in Denmark on Saturday 30th September 2023, we shook hands with each other to transform thoughts into action. Several telephone conversations between Norway, Finland, Malta and Denmark ended in Prior Frank Jakobsen, Chancellor Sussi Flores Aabo Christensen and me travelling to Helsinki, Finland at the end of February 2024. Here we were accommodated at The Folks Hotel Konepaja.

We had one day of being tourists. Helsinki is an exciting city, but the plan to sail to the old fortress Suomenlinna had to be shelved. The harbour entrance was covered in a thick layer of ice, which made any navigation impossible. Instead, several churches were visited: Kallio Church, Helsinki Cathedral, Uspensky Cathedral and Church of the Rock, also called Temple Square Church. The dome of the latter consisted of 22 kilometers of copper wire ! (…)

No trip to Suomenlinna


Helsinki Cathedral

Church of the Rock

(…) On a unique date – Thursday, February 29th, 2024 – we met. We were 5 Knights of the Nordic Priory: we 3 aforementioned as well as Commander Emeritus Nikolai "Nicki" Marschan and Chev. and pastor, Aleksej Sjöberg. In connection with the re-establishment of the Finnish Commandery, the goal was to create a new leadership under Chev. Aleksej Sjöberg and set the framework for the administrative work. In the important work ahead, he will be in good hands with Nicky Marschan, whose vast experience will be an important and solid support. Together we reviewed the guidelines from Malta and included Commandery Dagmar's internal regulations and statutes as ideas for the Finnish Commandery. We made plans for the work ahead. It will take time, yes, but the Finnish Commandery has a good and sound plan for the future. Along the way, Chev. Aleksej Sjöberg also presented his long-awaited Knight's Diploma. Brother Aleksej was appointed Knight of Grace in 2020 during the time of Covid-19, when all activities had been cancelled. The distance has since meant that the physical handover has not taken place along the way. Prior Frank Jakobsen stated that the most important thing for the Finnish Commandery was not speed, but rather good and solid fundamental work. Prior stood ready with support, as did Commandery Dagmar. If another visit to Finland is necessary, we are ready for another trip to the northeast.

The meeting ended in good spirits and Chancellor Sussi was able to put down her pen in the minutes. We went out into town to have a good lunch, and the meeting participants could shake hands on a shared, fruitful future. We look (…)

Re-establishing the Finnish Commandery

Presentation of the new Knights Diploma

A well deserved lunch

The nature in Finland is cold, but their hearts are warm !

Uspensky Cathedral

(…) forward to the Investiture in Skanderborg Castle Church in August in Denmark this year. Here will Chev. Aleksej Sjöberg be installed as Commander of the Finnish Commandery.

It is a great pleasure for us to see the Nordic Priory grow. Soon it will consist of 3 active Commanderies: The Finnish Commandery, Saint Sunniva (Norway) Commandery and Dagmar Commandery (Denmark). In addition, we have established very close ties with the Swedish Priorat Saint Eskil, with whom the Nordic Priorat and in cooperation with Malta have launched a large aid project for young children in Greenland. In addition, a small group of people in the Faroe Islands have set up a support group.

The future is bright, the future is good!

Kim AABO CHRISTENSEN, KJSJ,
Commander Dagmar Cdry.
(DK)

The Finnish Cdry. Coat of Arms

Talent hits
a target
no one can hit.
Genius hits
a target no one else
can see.

Arthur SCHOPENHAUER

Toast to the Order

Grand Prior, Excellencies, Distinguished Visitors, Knights and Dames.
When Prior Tony Woods asked me to propose the toast to the Order, I had to ask myself: "What exactly is this thing we are toasting?"
Yes, yes, we know it is an ancient religious Order of Chivalry founded by Brother Gerard 1,000 years ago to care for pilgrims in the Holy Land, and yes, we know it later also defended and protected them.
But that was a long time ago and many things have changed since then. For example, the Order then was incredibly exclusive: to be a Knight of Justice you had to have noble blood going back four generations on both sides of the family. We're a bit more egalitarian than that now.
Knights originally took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Today we are not strong on poverty and chastity. Obedience? Of course, we all do remain dutifully obedient to the least wishes of our Prior, do we not?
The Order was once highly influential in Europe and the Middle East. What are we now? Have we degenerated to some sort of social club, parading in colourful costumes? No, we have a higher calling. We are rich in history and steeped in proud tradition. But, stripping away all the pomp and ceremony, what are we essentially? What is the core of our being?
Well, first and foremost, we are Christian: individually, in private and in public, we profess our faith in Jesus Christ; he commanded us to love God and to love our neighbour.
Collectively, we're a community; we work together - as do priories all over the world - to provide help for the sick, the poor and the needy, in accordance with our motto: "For Faith For Service to Humanity". As you know, this Priory chose to maintain the compassionate tradition of the early Hospitallers, principally by supporting the Mary Potter Hospice, an organisation that tends to the dying, a truly worthy cause. (…)

(…)
And we're ecumenical; we do what little we can to bypass the shameful ruptures that have for too long fractured Christendom. Though we belong to different denominations, we emphasise the beliefs we hold in common, displaying the unity that should mark Christians.
Today the blood of our knights and dames might not be noble but our aspirations remain noble. Although we undertake our work in earnest, that does not mean that we cannot come together to enjoy each other's company and to have a great time … now and again - and again - and again, as we do this afternoon to celebrate the investiture of new knights, fittingly on the feast day of our patron St John the Baptist. So we rise to acclaim the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller, an ancient religious Order in a modern world.
Knights and Dames, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Order !

A knight from the South Australian Priory.

"If you feel pain, you're alive. If you feel other people's pain, you're a human being."

Leo Tolstoy

REFLECTIONS on: CLIMATE CHANGE
Partim II: what is its IMPACT on SOCIETY ?

I. Climate change impact on infectious diseases.

Climate change has the potential to significantly impact infectious diseases in various ways. While it is important to note that climate change is not the direct cause of infectious diseases, it can influence their distribution, transmission patterns, and overall prevalence. Here are some key impacts of climate change on infectious diseases:

1. Vector-Borne Diseases: Climate change can affect the distribution and abundance of disease-carrying vectors such as mosquitos, ticks and fleas. Rising temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns can expand the geographic range of vectors, exposing new regions to diseases like malaria, dengue fever, Zika virus, Lyme disease and others. Warmer climates can also accelerate the development and reproduction rates of vectors, leading to increased transmission.

Saint John the Baptist: third from the left, 1666: the year that the plague was officially terminated in Bruges.

2. Water-Borne Diseases: Changes in precipitation patterns can result in more frequent and intense rainfall events, leading to flooding and water contamination. This can facilitate the spread of waterborne diseases like cholera, giardiasis and cryptosporidiosis. Additionally, rising sea levels can contaminate freshwater sources with saltwater, further compromising water quality and increasing the risk of disease transmission.

3. Food-Borne Diseases: Climate change can impact food production, storage, and distribution systems. Changes in temperature and rainfall patterns can affect crop growth, leading to altered agricultural practices and potential food shortages. Disruptions in food supply chains can increase the risk of food contamination and the spread of food-borne (…)

St John Baptist: above left. 1637: Our Lady surrounded by Plague Saints.

(…) diseases such as salmonellosis and E. Coli infections.

4. Respiratory Diseases: Climate change can influence the prevalence and distribution of respiratory diseases. Rising temperatures and increased air pollution can exacerbate respiratory conditions such as asthma and allergies. Additionaly, changing climate patterns may affect the distribution and circulation of airborne pathogens, potentially leading to changes in the transmission dynamics of respiratory infections.

5. Infectious Disease Outbreaks: Climate change can create conditions that favor the occurrence of infectious disease outbreaks. Extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods and heatwaves, can disrupt healthcare systems, compromise sanitation infrastructure, and displace populations, increasing the vulnerability to infectious diseases. Disruptions in healthcare access and weakened public health infrastructure can hinder disease surveillance, prevention, and control efforts.
Addressing the impacts of climate change on infectious diseases requires a multifaceted approach, including mitigation efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation strategies to strengthen public health systems, improved surveillance and monitoring systems, and enhanced research and collaboration among various sectors.

II. Climate change impact on migration.
Climate change has the potential to significantly impact migration patterns and populations worldwide. While it is important to note that climate change is not the sole driver of migration, it can act as a significant contributing factor. Here are some key ways in which climate change can influence migration: (…)

(…) 1. Environmental Displacement: Climate change can lead to environmental degradation, such as rising sea levels, droughts, desertification, and extreme weather events. These changes can render certain areas uninhabitable or unsuitable for agriculture, resulting in the displacement of populations. People may be forced to leave their homes and migrate to more hospitable regions in search of better living conditions, including access to water, food and shelter.

2. Disruption of Livelihoods: Changes in climate can have severe impacts on livelihoods, particularly in rural and agricultural-dependent communities. For example, droughts can lead to crop failures and loss of livestock, making it difficult for communities to sustain themselves. This can push individuals and communities to migrate in search of alternative sources of income and livelihoods.

3. Increased Natural Disasters: Climate change is associated with an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. These events can cause widespread destruction, leading to displacement and migration. Communities affected by repeated disasters may choose to relocate to areas less prone to such events, which can result in internal or cross-border migration.

4. Conflict and Social Instability: Climate change impacts, such as resource scarcity, can exacerbate existing social, economic, and political tensions, leading to increased conflict and social instability. Climate-induced conflicts can displace populations, both within countries and across borders. The Syrian civil war, for example, has been linked to a combination of climate factors, including drought, which led to population displacement and contribution to social unrest.

5. Urbanization: Climate change can also drive migration from rural areas to urban centers. As agricultural activities become less viable due to changing climate conditions, people may move to cities in search of employment (…)

(…) opportunities and better living conditions. This influx of migrants can strain urban infrastructure and services, leading to various social and economic challenges.

It is important to note that the impacts of climate change on migration are complex, interconnected, and can vary across different regions. Addressing the challenges associated with climate-induced migration requires a comprehensive approach that includes climate mitigation efforts, adaptation strategies, improved governance, and international cooperation to protect the rights and well-being of affected populations.

III. Climate change impact on religion.

The impact of climate change on religion is a complex and multifaceted topic. While climate change itself is a scientific and environmental issue, it has profound implications for religious beliefs, practices, and organizations. Here are some key ways in which climate change can influence religion:

1. Theological and Ethical Reflection: Climate change challenges religious communities to reflect on their theological and ethical teachings in light of environmental degradation. Many religious traditions emphasize stewardship, compassion, and the interconnectedness of all life. Climate change prompts believers to consider their responsibility to care for the Earth and its inhabitants, leading to theological discussions and the development of eco-theology and environmental ethics within religious traditions.

1, Environmental Spirituality: Climate change can deepen and shape religious experiences and practices. It can inspire believers to develop a deeper connection with the natural world and foster a sense of awe, reverence, and gratitude for creation. Some religious communities incorporate environmental rituals, prayers, and ceremonies into their worship to express their concern for the planet and seek guidance and solace in the face of environmental challenges.

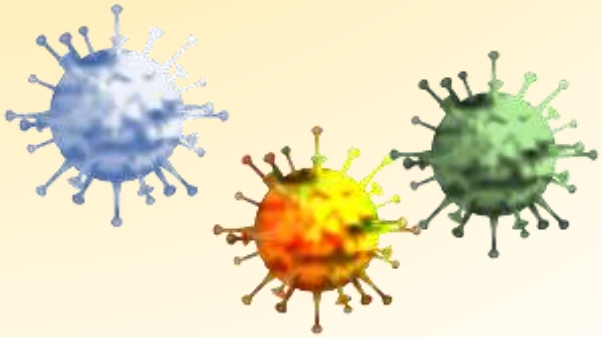
2, Social and Advocacy Movements: Climate change has sparked social and advocacy movements within religious communities; Many religious organizations and leaders have become actively engaged in environmental activism, advocating for policies that mitigate climate change, promote sustainable practices, and support vulnerable (…)

(…) communities affected by environmental degradation. See Pope Franciscus: Laudato si (2015) and Laudate Deum (2023). Climate change has become a key issue for interfaith dialogue and collaboration, bringing together diverse religious groups in common cause.

4. Community Outreach and Environmental Justice: Climate change disproportionately affects marginalized and vulnerable communities, exacerbating social inequalities. Religious organizations often engage in community outreach and social justice initiatives, including efforts to address environmental injustice and climate-related impacts on marginalized populations. Religious institutions may provide support for climate refugees, advocate for fair and equitable environmental policies, and work toward sustainable development that prioritizes the well-being of all.

5. Adaptation and Resilience: Climate change necessitates adaptation and resilience strategies, and religious communities can play a role in promoting sustainable practices and supporting local communities in coping with environmental changes. Some religious organizations establish eco-villages, promote sustainable agriculture, and engage in disaster response and preparedness efforts. They may also provide spiritual and emotional support to communities affected by climate-related disasters.

It is important to recognize that the responses to climate change within religious communities vary widely. While some religious groups actively engage in climate action and environmental stewardship, others may have different priorities or interpretations of the issue. Nonetheless, climate change has undeniably influenced religious discourse and prompted reflection on the relationship between faith, the environment and human responsibility.



Dr. Jan CORDONNIER, CGSJ,
Main Intendant,
Low Countries Pry. (B)

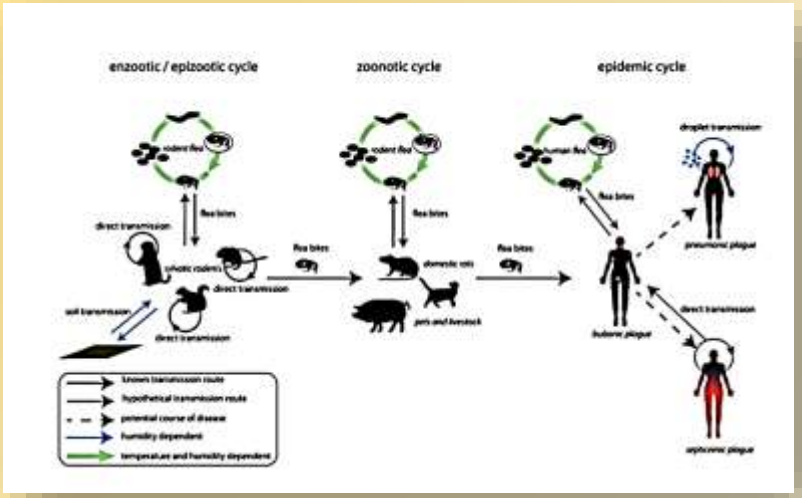
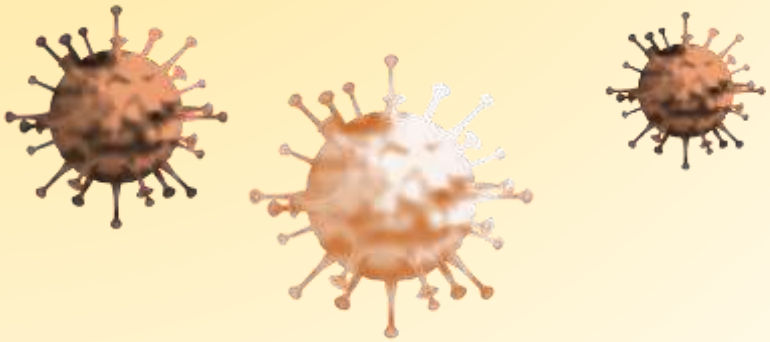


Figure 1: Transmittance of virus from rodents on domestic animals to humans (by Fabienne Krauer).



On the right:
Climate change: rising temperatures, increasing precipitation, floods, forest fires make diseases easier to spread (see Figure 2).

Two illustrations on **Partim I on "Climate change and DISEASE"** in the **4/2023 International Herald (pages 55 tot 57)** were most unfortunately not added to the article, while these were intended to clarify the content, for which **apologies** by your Editor.

On the left:
Population growth: mankind is increasingly penetrating animal environments where viruses can be found which can cross the species barrier and jump to humans (see Figure 1).

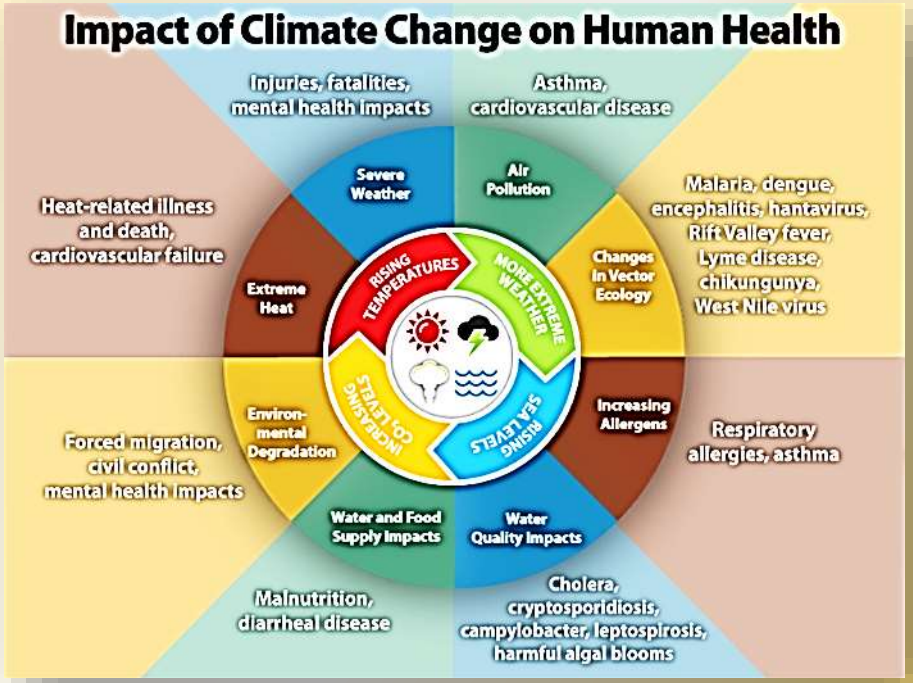


Figure 2: from CDC - Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA.

CHECK OUT OUR INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE !

OUR ORDER HAS A WEBSITE

courtesy of our Australasian Brothers and Sisters.

Here's the link: osjmaltaknights.org

The website consists of **two sections**:
The **main part** gives the **information** to the **general public** and includes the **International Herald** and reports on the Order's **charity actions.**
We have a **private section** as well for voting members of the **Sovereign Council**. This Private section consists of :

- the Constitution of King Peter II;
- the Manual of Rules;
- Newsletters and approved Nomination Forms;
- Sovereign Council Financials;
- List of Bailiffs and other private matters.

To log in to this private area, Sovereign Council voting members need an allocated Username and Password as sent by the Grand Commander.

Every member is kindly invited to provide us with any relevant content for the public section, for instance on active charity projects.

COLUMN on: BACK TO REALITY

There has been a time – when the television set was an add-on feature, that people gathered around it as a family, to watch the news or some entertaining programmes. All broadcasts were publicly owned, so there wasn't any need for competition regarding viewer ratings. This was about the time when animals still spoke.

Now sometimes it looks as though TV programmes have replaced family life. Every day's rat race leaves hardly any time for family exchanges around the dining table, and social media contribute a lot as well. Even if you try to tell something, one of the kids might say 'Sorry dad, I didn't hear you, there was this important message coming in, and I already didn't notice I had a plate in front of me. Can you please repeat ?'(Actually they mean: Rather don't ! My time on social media is precious…).

And yet, there must be some genetic reminder about what family life could have been, because inherently, we miss it. That's where the TV soaps come in ! Since we don't find the time to enjoy real cosy family life on our own, we watch it on TV, or on our own private screens, sitting next to one another on the coach. Soaps like 'Home', 'Family', 'Neighbours', 'Friends' prevent us from forgetting how family life could be – since it disappeared from our own daily experience.

And there are a lot of possibilities to choose from the menu. Most of the time from commercial broadcasting companies. So a lot of competition. How do you make sure that spectators will prefer your programming over that of another entertainer ? You simply have to do better ! Be more attractive ! In the beginning, 'more sex' was the answer. Then it became boring. We can try with unexpected forms of relationships. Or hobbies. Or… As long as it goes beyond what the others offer. (…)

(…) The Belgian writer Amélie Nothomb wrote a satiric book (Sulfuric Acid) about a reality programme 'Concentration' on TV, in which random people are kidnapped and forced to work in a concentration camp. In her book, the program breaks all records. The viewers are crazy about the suffering and sadness of the prisoners… So far, to my knowledge, it hasn't been produced in reality. Probably there weren't enough actors left at the end. But it reminds us of the success the Latin author Plautus had with his plays.

Awaiting Nothomb's book to be turned into a soap, another novity appeared on Flemish TV. It was effectively called 'back to reality'. Two celebrity stars went to live for a month in sheer poverty, with their children - whilst their 4WD was parked on the neighbor's driveway. But it was taken off screen after just one episode. Apparently, the public wasn't ready yet for poverty to be exposed as convenient cozy entertainment. We'll have to wait a bit longer for 'Concentration' to reach a record beating rating…

In the meantime, before poverty becomes fancy and entertaining virtually, let us nevertheless continue to try to do something about it in the real world. Pro utilitate hominum. Et pro fide. But's that for the next episode.

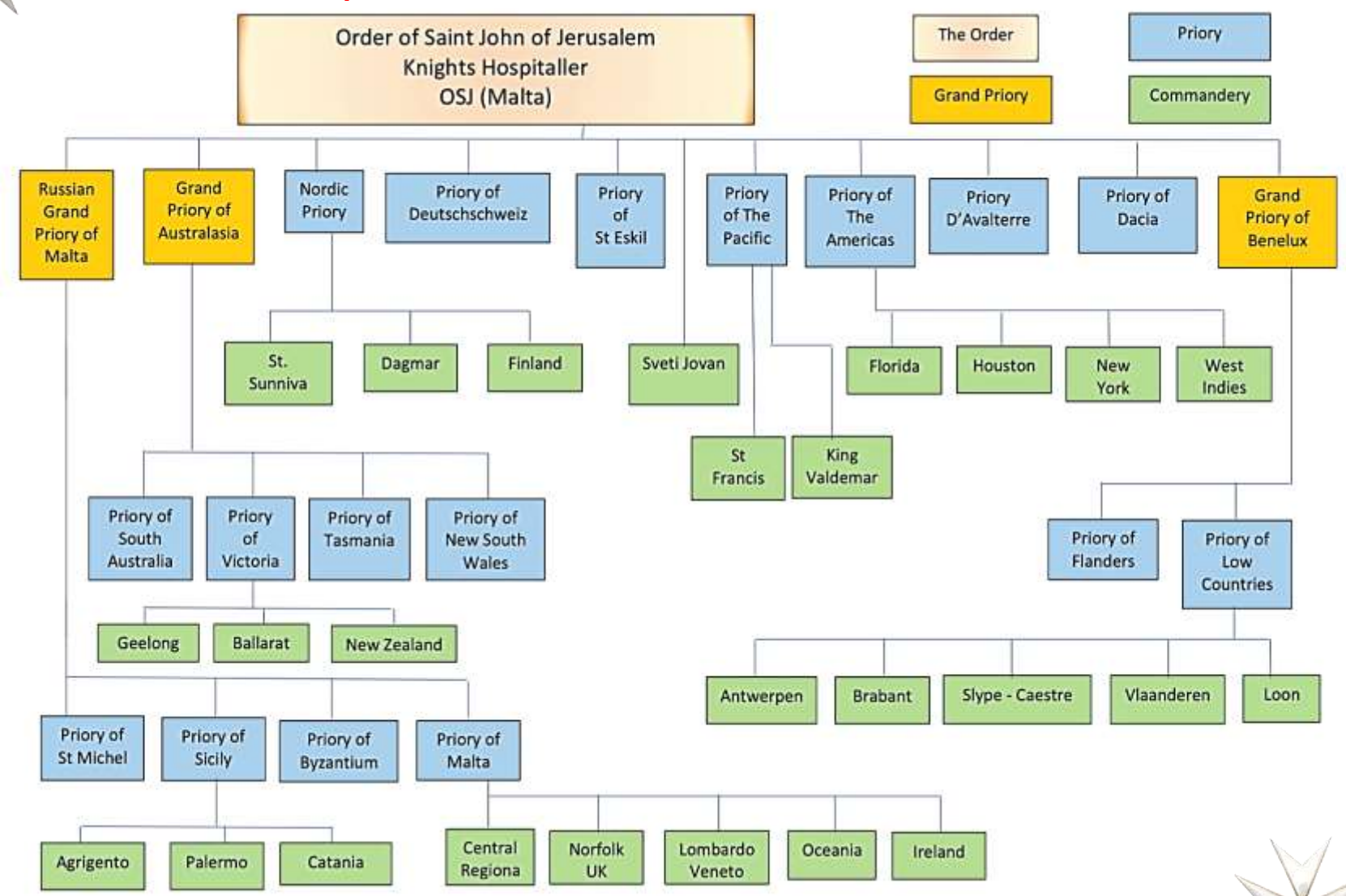
Dominic VERHOEVEN, KGSJ,
Secretary to the
Ecclesiastical Council,
deacon and
Director Caritas Flanders.

These are the **very last days** to register for all SC24Bruges meetings, events, functions, services, gatherings and cultural tours.
All listings will be closed on March 18th.

https://sovereigncouncil2024.org/

Password: SC2024! The exclamation mark is part of the password…

Updated international STRUCTURE of our ORDER



Thomas was a doubter,
Jacob was a cheater,
Jonah was disobedient,
Sarah was impatient,
Peter had a temper,
David was an adulterer,
Abraham was a liar,
Moses was angry,
Paul was a murderer,
Lazarus was dead:

SURELY GOD CAN
USE YOU TOO !!!

THE ONLY REAL CURE FOR FEAR AND THE FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF FEAR

SAINTS AND SAGES, holy people and prophets never speak of things they have not gone through; they are not imaginary philosophers. The only difference is: they experience a little and understand much, while ordinarily we experience much and understand little. In understanding fear and fearlessness, we can simply say, "Don't be selfish and you will be fearless," but it is very difficult to do. Is there an easier way? One immediate answer is: at least we can reduce our selfishness by some understanding. This is easier to attain than being totally selfless. Let's say, if you have power or wealth and relative freedom of mind and body, you may feel mighty to some extent. Is it possible to use your God-given talents and bounties judiciously, beneficially, not hurting others?

If I'm an artist, I have freedom to express my richness of art, my power of art, as long as I do not exploit anyone. The art piece is inanimate, but let's imagine, if it were to use me, how would that be? Immediately it comes to mind that if I am not a creative artist, if I am not a really high-class artist, then art gets to be a monotonous expression. Every time I go to the canvas and palette and brushes, I start painting the same things over and over. It becomes boring. It's using me now. I am not free.

Often it happens that those who have talents and bounties, to whatever degree, every time they get into action - work, a situation, relationships -they do the same things over and over again. Let's say you have certain bounties or talents. Each time you come into a certain situation, you repeat the same things, day after day. Eventually this monotony, this pattern, begins to control you. You become a victim of your own bounties. Then your mind creates the pattern of making you secure it. If it were spontaneous, creative and fresh, not bound (...)

(…) or limited, you would not need security. Once the sense of security comes into your mind, the other side of that is fear of losing it. So security actually makes you fearful.

We are each born with certain bounties and talents that flourish within us during our lifetimes. There is nothing wrong with that. Is there any way that we can draw a line where we use those bounties but they do not use us? Is it possible to acknowledge: "This is my limit of using my power, my talents, so that they don't use me"? Unless we understand the genesis of fear, we cannot be free from fear. We all say, "I'm afraid of this… I'm afraid of that…" We fear bad news, all kinds of things. I've gone through these things too, but I have seen that as long as we are holding tenaciously to our sense of security, fear tenaciously holds us as well.

True fearlessness leads to freedom of the soul, but ordinarily the freedom we want is of mind, thoughts and ego. This is a misplacement of freedom. As long as we are holding on to security in this limited sense, fear will remain.
The fundamental cause of fear is the illusion of separation from the divine or universal consciousness. When individuals forget their inherent connection to the divine source or higher power, they experience a sense of isolation and vulnerability, which manifests as fear.

The ultimate cure for fear lies in transcending the ego and realizing one's true nature as an inseparable part of the divine consciousness. Through spiritual practices such as meditation, self-inquiry, and surrender to the divine, individuals can dissolve the illusion of separateness and experience a deep sense of inner peace and security.

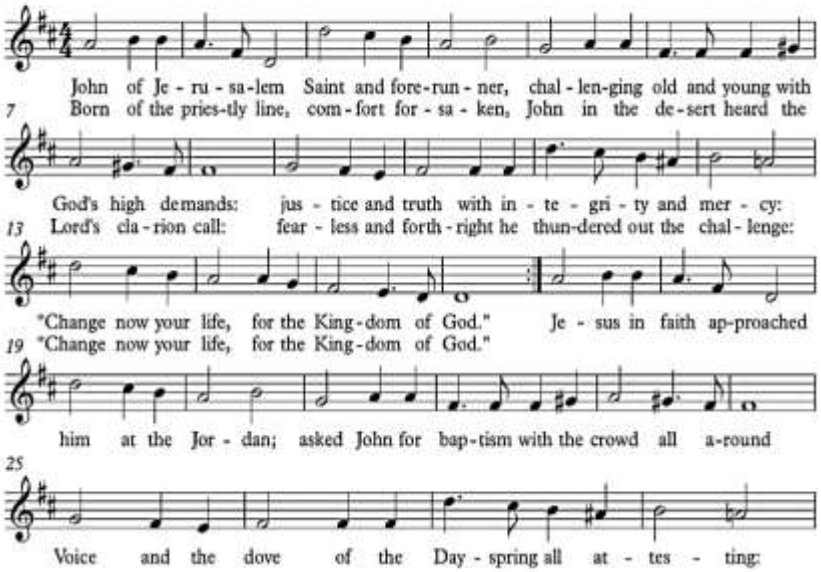
Inspired by the Teachings of Swami Amar Jyothi.

Inez VERMEULEN, DGSJ,
Loon Cdry. Intendant

WE ARE GOING TO SING OUR HYMN TOGETHER in our ECUMENICAL SERVICE !

Don't forget to practice in the privacy of your pool-house or convertible classic car. However: a professsional soprano, the Basilica choir and the Basilica organist will guide us through…

A. Lvov (1799-1870)



1. John of Jerusalem, Saint and forerunner,
challenging old and young with God's high demands:
justice and truth with integrity and mercy:
"Change now your life, for the Kingdom of God!"

2. Born of the priestly line, comfort forsaken,
John in the desert heard the Lord's clarion call:
fearless and forthright he thundered out the challenge:
"Change now your life, for the kingdom of God."

3. Jesus in faith approached him at the Jordan;
asked John for baptism with the crowd gathered round:
Voice and the dove of the Dayspring all attesting:
God in three persons the Trinity blest.

4. All praise to God the Lord, now and for ever,
Thrice Holy God hear now our praises on high;
Grant us your peace and let service be our purpose,
In holy love, as one Body in Christ.

Push button, no need to insert coin.

"Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Luke 1:78-79

THE POISON OF ENVY.

We have just said goodbye to Jean-Paul, a Congolese priest who stayed for several years as a priestly student in our house in Rome. Because of a serious illness he had been sent to Rome for medical treatment, and at the request of his bishop he had begun studies there, in order to remain under proper medical control for a longer period of time. He was cured, graduated and had just returned to his diocese when the disease struck again and, after being rushed back to Rome, he died quite unexpectedly and far too early. An earnest and deeply religious man who, despite the heavy suffering he had to bear, always kept a smile on his face. In him we certainly experienced and met a glimpse of God's infinite goodness and kindness. But during the homily delivered by one of his confreres, I was struck by the unflattering indication of how much hatred and envy he had endured in his recent appointment as chancellor of the diocese. It was like an antithesis to all the other beautiful and positive words spoken. One must be Congolese to dare to name this so directly and publicly. Hatred and envy, and that among priests....

But some time before that, during a conversation I had with a sister, the same theme was brought up unasked, when she told me how she had experienced envy and jealousy in her religious community because, after higher studies, she had received a difficult apostolate that she apparently knew how to manage like no other. "It was because of my fellow sisters that I had to experience the most severe opposition, and that because they were jealous of me." Envy and jealousy, and that among religious....

Apparently, neither priesthood nor religious life is a remedy to be delivered from this cross that affects so many of us and with which groups and communities are afflicted and, above all, divided. Yet we should expect and hope otherwise. And then we talk and even pray about love, unity and reconciliation, especially during the week of prayer for Christian unity that we have just concluded. It sometimes seems easier to promote love, unity and reconciliation with people and groups outside our own circle than to actually accomplish this in our own midst.

Where are the roots of this weed that threatens to develop like an invasive plant in our lives and does not (...)

(…) seem to spare even the most so-called religious places ? Wherever people live together, be it within families, communities, workplaces or associations, envy and jealousy lie in wait to set people against each other and, above all, to sow a lot of discontent in hearts. Because with envy and jealousy, two parties are always affected: the one who is the victim of this envy and jealousy, but also the one who allows himself to be led by it and no longer grants the other the light of the sun. If we usually attribute the sowing of discord as one of his greatest attributes to the devil, then we may certainly put envy and jealousy on his account as well, and perhaps even in the first place. But it is man who is tempted to it, and that as a corollary of the first and greatest sin and also the cause of all other sins with which we are all afflicted: pride. For it is from a prideful heart that we do not grant happiness to the other, as if his or her happiness would disturb our own happiness. It is from a prideful heart that we look envious when another apparently has more and is doing better. Can we still truly rejoice with someone when they succeed in life without pretension, and thanks to their own efforts, bring a job to a good end, build their life according to their predetermined ideal ? Or must we always compare and try to come out as the better one ?

We must go back to the book of Genesis where in an astute way our human nature is outlined, first as an unwritten leaf, as man in total harmony with God, with himself, with fellow man and with all creation, and then as a stained leaf, man henceforth as the plaything of the cunning and crafty intrigue of evil, of the devil and tainted by sin. And where did the devil find the entrance gate to break through our original harmony? By tempting man to want to become his own god and place himself outside and above God.

Here pride was born, and directly in the highest degree, for is a greater pride imaginable than wanting to make oneself equal with God, to want to be one's own god and even to elevate oneself above God ? It is this primal sin that is henceforth given to us in and with our human nature and against which we will have to fight all our lives. And a few pages later in the book of Genesis we read what pride leads man to: Cain becomes envious of his brother Abel and kills him. Envy and arrogance are the offshoots of pride when not brought (…)

(…) under control in time, when we allow it to fester and sour our lives and the lives of others. Again, the writer succeeds in expressing this so aptly by putting the following statement in God's mouth: "Why are you furious, and why is your face so grim ? If you do good, there is cheerfulness; but if you do not do good, sin lurks at your door as an attacker, ready to seize you. Will you be able to master him?" (Gen. 4:7). Indeed, we see it on the face when someone is in the grip of pride, can no longer master it and has allowed himself to be caught in the safety net of envy and jealousy. The face becomes grim and all cheerfulness has disappeared from it. And then it is a small step to express this envy and jealousy as well, by belittling the other, by speaking ill of the other, by refusing to look the other in the face and greet him, by taking a detour so as not to have to meet the other, to refuse the other even the wish of peace during the Eucharist. All these we call expressions of arrogance with the result that peace and tranquillity disappear from one's own heart, there is no more room for cheerfulness, and, what is worse, whereby one transfers this discontentment and unrest to the other as well. It is like an infectious disease with which one infects the other, creating a circle of negativity. For the discontentment that one allows to grow in one's own heart and also causes in the other of whom one is envious, will also sicken the environment with its tentacles. Just as a community shares in the joy of its members and will reap the positive benefits of it, the same community will also suffer at the envy and jealousy that prevails there.

With any disease, one will ask whether there is an adequate therapy available, and with an infectious disease one will even search for an appropriate vaccine. Does this also apply to our highly contagious disease that listens to the names envy and jealousy ? Perhaps there is only one vaccine and at the same time therapy available here that succeeds in eradicating this disease at its root, and that is our radical struggle against the cause of all sin, namely against (…)

(…) pride. As long as we are in the grip of pride, envy and jealousy will always flow from it and we will react and act arrogantly toward others. Love will have to give way to hatred, and peace in one's own heart and in the heart of one's perceived rival will have to give way to discontentment, turmoil, and on one's countenance there will be bad grimness.

The only antipode to pride is humility, and we know how uncomfortable and even corny this virtue sounds today. As Christians, however, we have a prime example here: Jesus who went to the extreme in humility. For "*He who existed in divine majesty ... humbled himself*" (Phil. 2:6-7). We strike a nerve when we make a plea for more humility today, in an environment that puts everything on exalting oneself, putting oneself on display, wanting to be first and best. Showing off titles, showing off money, showing off power: that is doing extremely well today. But daring to efface oneself, to consciously take second place in order to give the other also a chance, and, I repeat, to be happy that the other also has something, also can do something, also succeeds in the task entrusted to him or her: are we speaking words here from another era ?

Ultimately, it will always be about the place we really want to give to love in our lives. At the solemn vespers service on the feast of the Apostle Paul's conversion, the primate of the Anglican Church, Archbishop Justin Welby spoke of the attitude that truly set the Samaritan free to become the compassionate fellow human being for the stranger lying there: it was love that set him free, while it was lack of love that made the two pass in an arc. When humility has expelled pride from our hearts, space will once again be created for love, and it will be with this love that we will look at ourselves as well as others. Then envy and jealousy will have no chance to infect us and drive us to arrogance. Will this remain a pious dream, or do we try to make it work today ? And this with the grace of God, through the intercession of Mary, with the support of others and, of course, a little effort of our own.

Frater René STOCKMAN, KSJ,
Brothers of Charity

In the midst
of a storm ?
Look up
to heaven
and praise God.
An upward glance
always changes
an earthly
perspective.

Stacy L. SANCHEZ

"You hold my world in the palm of Your hand and I'm yours forever."
Revivals 697

PERSONALIA

International obituary:
Several members in different Priories unfortunately passed away from this life. Our deepest gratitude remains for the achievements and fraternity of all deceased within and beyond the Order. May they all rest in the peace of our Lord; their name liveth for evermore !

Elections and Nominations, Promotions
No specific messages reached us about the election or appointment of Dames or Knights in any office.

THE INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE

You know the Order has an international website, courtesy of our Australasian Brothers and Sisters. The link is as follows:
osjmaltaknights.org.
Every member is kindly invited to provide us with any relevant content for the public section, for instance on active charity projects.

SOVEREIGN COUNCIL 18-22 April 2024: WE MEET IN BRUGES (B) !

We are very much counting down to coming April 18th to gladly meet all our OSJ Brothers and Sisters in the wonderful medieval town of Bruges, to renew old bonds with friends within the international Order and to make new acquaintances and friends, to learn from each other's spirituality and charity project successes, to indulge ourselves in the warm Brother- and Sisterhood of our Order, and to debate in the Sunday morning workshops on a continued bright future of our Order on both domains or our motto.
This edition of the International Herald is the last one to keep you informed before the Sovereign Council weekend is happening. Please chisel the **link to the temporary website** in your smartphone, in your other digital tools and toys, to check from there on all moments and from all locations on the agenda of the weekend, the gathering times, the dress codes, the regalia actually or not to be worn:
https://sovereigncouncil2024.org/
and the password is **SC2024!** (beware: the exclamation mark is part of the password. All heads of International units were informed that their **powerpoint slides** regarding their speeches are (…)

(…) awaited by the hosting organization **on coming April 2nd at the very latest** to have these slides properly integrated in the on screen projection that will be done during the meeting in the Sovereign Council meeting hall. This is a major point of interest to oblige to for a swift course of the meetings, as these slides will be most helpful to endorse and adorn your points of view on your unit's plans and intentions for the coming two years' span until the next Sovereign Council.
Please, observe that the **very last** still standing **deadline for any subscription for any event** of the Sovereign Council 2024, unregarding one's rank or function, is: coming **March 17th !**

DISCLAIMER

Please note that the information in this magazine, including all articles, does not make any claims. Any information offered is expressly the opinion of the creator/author of that material. It is respectfully offered to you to explore, in the hope and with the intention that exploring this material will be informative and helpful to you. This magazine contains (…) material protected under International and Federal Copyright Laws and Treaties. You may not publish, display, disclose, modify, distribute, or create derivative works based on the magazine contents or any part thereof.

DIAMOND JUBILEE

On March 19th, we celebrate the **sixtieth anniversary** of our **Order's Constitution** being granted in Paris **by the Late King Peter II of Yugoslavia**: that is a **diamond jubilee ! Congratulations to all !**

LITTLE WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Brothers- & Sisters-in-Arms, I hope you'll **enjoy this 1/2024 International Herald** edition. My sincerest gratitude goes out to all authors. Keep up the splendid action on both domains of our motto, and **do NOT forget to send me content**: texts in Word and - separately – useable pictures in Jpeg or comparable format, **by the end of May to come** at the latest, for the 2/2024 edition to be issued.
Celebrate a **deepening Lent** and feel reborn on a **wonderful Easter: He is risen, just as He said !**

See you in **Bruges…**

Yours most sincerely in X° and St-John,

Jan Lambrecht

OSJ, Editor,
Benelux Grand Prior