

Hospitaller



The journal of the British Association of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta

Winter 2020



In this issue:

**The work goes on: Covid's impact
Ingo Radtke: Malteser International
Stamps of the Sovereign Order**



www.orderofmalta.org.uk

Making a difference:

Catherine Semmence is OSJCT's Head of Volunteering

Catherine looks back on the impact of volunteering for residents of the Homes – and on a special Volunteers Week this past June: 'Despite Covid-19, we spent our Volunteers' Week recognising and thanking our volunteers in a variety of different ways, including the residents themselves, who made beautiful handmade cards for their volunteers. We're proud to have such a fantastic team of volunteers supporting our work and we cannot thank them enough.'



Eighteen months into the position and Catherine is even more enthusiastic than when she started. She comments: 'The volunteers are busy offering their time in some capacity, albeit in a different way from before. Some are in our Homes helping our residents carry on as normal, and let me tell you 'normal' in an OSJCT Home usually involves a whole heap of laughter! For those who can't volunteer in their usual way, they're busy writing cards or keeping in touch with residents via zoom. Others are waving through closed windows or leaving sweet treats and notes at the door. Whatever their volunteering looks like right now, it's making a difference in someone's life.'

When she asked employees why volunteers are so important in their Home, the replies were unhesitating: 'Volunteers help bring the local community into our Home. They are the communities that many of our residents grew up in, so they are able to share stories, even though these sometimes happened generations apart!' Or 'Where do I start? Put simply they're a valued part of our home team.' Or 'It is inspiring seeing how our volunteers can make such a huge difference to our residents' lives.'



Caroline de la Force

The British Association appreciates and thanks you wholeheartedly for all you do for us all.



- 4 The work goes on**
Hospitalier James Pavey on the impact of Covid
- 5 Supporting those in need**
Kate MacKenzie, London Coordinator, on the Companions' year
- 6 Pandemic sees the Companions adapt to new challenges**
by Paul Letman, Chairman
- 7 Fact File: Orders of St John Care Homes Trust (OSJCT)**
Loving care and support during the pandemic

- 8 Malteser International:**
Philippa Leslie reports on Ingo Radtke's proud legacy
- 12 Religion & diplomacy: same goals, different means**
The Sovereign Order's Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Marie-Therese Pictet-Althann, on the Order's work in Geneva
- 14 From idea to reality: a tribute to our Grand Master**
Oumayma Farah of the Lebanese Association on an exciting project

Editor: Philippa Leslie
Hospitalier is the journal of the British Association of the Sovereign Military Hospitalier Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta.

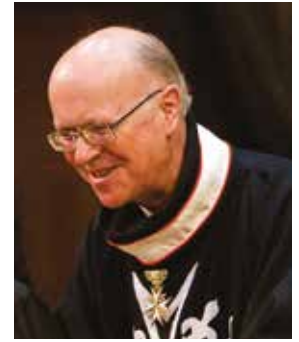
BASMOM
Craigmyle House
13 Deodar Road, London SW15 2NP

Tel: 020 7286 1414; Fax: 020 7286 3243
e: basmom@btconnect.com
w: www.orderofmalta.org.uk

From the President

This has been a momentous year for the world, for us all, and for the Order. In April our beloved Grand Master Fra' Giacomo died, having served for three short but highly effective years in the life of the Order. We mourn his loss.

Thereafter, our new leader, Fra' Marco Luzzago, Lieutenant of the Grand Master, was elected in November to the Order's highest office. He holds the post for one year, after which time a new Grand Master, who will become the permanent head, will be elected. Fra' Marco is a former businessman with a medical training, and thus brings great experience to his role.



In November, too, Pope Francis appointed a new Special Delegate to the Order. Silvano Tomasi, now Cardinal Tomasi, is a former Vatican diplomat whose most recent post was Permanent Observer to the Office of the United Nations and Specialized Institutions in Geneva. He comes to us with valuable ambassadorial experience. We warmly welcome them.

Looking back over these months, I wish most particularly to pay tribute to all our members, Companions, friends and volunteers for the exceptional work you have put in during these very challenging times. In England, the relaunch of our soup kitchens (and a new one in Wandsworth), the creative approach to outside picnics for our breakfast guests, the thoughtful letters, cards and flowers to our 'tea party' guests in London and iPads, cards and flowers to residents and staff in our care Homes; in Scotland food parcels, donations of iPads to a residential home, and Dial-a-Journey support for the elderly housebound, have all meant we have maintained contact with those in need. We have always said that what our guests value most in what we do is the warmth of companionship, above all else. This is indeed the power of Christian care for fellow man.

As well, special causes in support of those in need include a record fundraising for the Lebanon (£106,000), a carol concert coordinated and conducted by Matthew Schellhorn, piano recitals by Thomas Stuart Fotheringham.

In this edition of Hospitaller you will find accounts of our work in Britain, of the Order's international impact as hospitallers and diplomats, a special vignette for Lourdes, and you will read of the efforts and support of our chaplains and our Grand Priory in a world where prayer is aligned to good works.

Thank you again for your devoted service and commitment to those in need: it is a true demonstration of *tuitio fidei, obsequium pauperum*.

RICHARD FITZALAN HOWARD
President, British Association of the
Sovereign Order of Malta

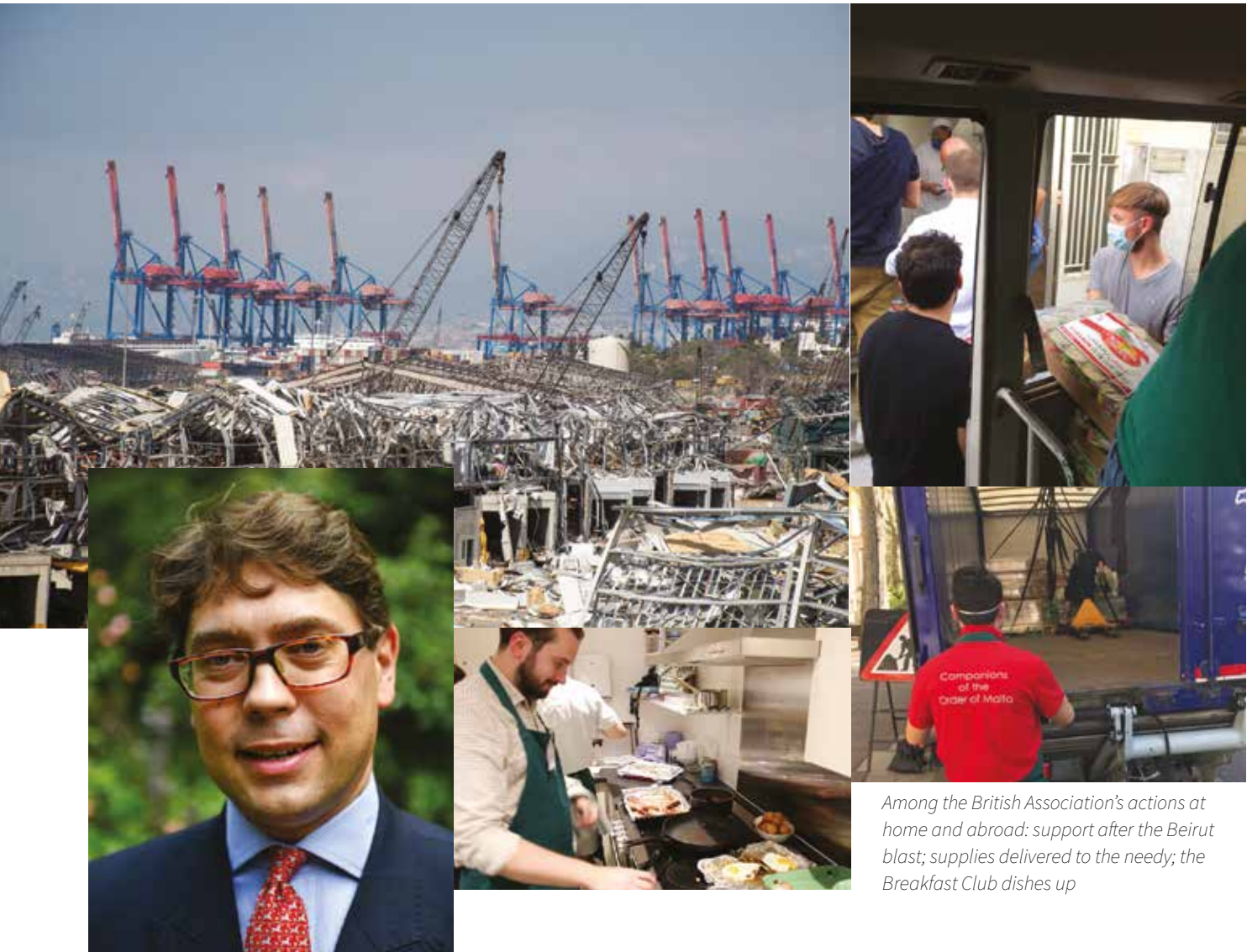


- 16** Cuba's forgotten elderly
Poppy McLean on the Global Fund's appeal
- 17** A year with NEHEMIAH
Joanna Whitaker on what's different, what's changed?
- 18** The Grand Priory, on and offline
Fra' Max Rumney, Procurator, appreciates all that can still be done
- 19** Did you know?
Stamps of the Order
- 24** Stop Press



Cover photo:
Soup kitchen, St James's Spanish Place, London: measuring out social distancing

Submission of images:
Please send high resolution images: ideally 300 dpi at reproduction size.



Among the British Association's actions at home and abroad: support after the Beirut blast; supplies delivered to the needy; the Breakfast Club dishes up

The work goes on

Hospitaller James Pavey: 'Covid's impact doesn't halt our activities'

As the year unfolded and the implications of covid became more evident, we had to take a number of decisions which would have consequences for some important aspects of our work. Whilst we deeply regret that our pilgrimages for this year had to be cancelled, we are optimistic that at least some elements of our pilgrimages will be able to take place next year.

Keeping close contact

We are optimistic, too, as many areas of our work have been able to continue across the range of activities which the Order, the Companions and our many friends and volunteers carry out so

effectively. For our homeless guests in our soup kitchens, our older 'tea party' attendants, the residents in our care homes, our Lourdes pilgrims, and all our friends around the country, we have been keeping close contact through a range of gestures of support.

It is very encouraging to report that the combined Lebanon Appeal in September, run through the Foreign Aid Service, has raised over £100,000 through the generosity of members and friends. This support is much needed for those who are suffering so greatly at the moment in Lebanon, where an already difficult situation was made so much worse by the explosion in Beirut on 4 August.

A splendid occasion to showcase what we do

Next year will bring renewed energy and optimism to all – and the exciting prospect that we will host the Order's International Hospitallers' Conference in London in September. It will be a splendid occasion to showcase our work in an international forum and to learn more about the projects and experiences in all the areas of socio-medical care run by our colleagues around the world.

As always, thank you for all you do, as a member of the Order family in Great Britain, to help our Lords the poor and the sick.



Supporting those in need: the Companions haven't missed a beat

Kate MacKenzie, London Coordinator, on an exceptionally busy year

As the winter winds blow cold and rain dampens the landscape, the help that we can give is much needed, and the consequences of covid have neither dampened our spirits nor our wish to help. The members and Companions of the Order of Malta, together with volunteers and friends, are engaged undaunted in support for those who most need it. Across all our activities, strict observance of government guidelines for covid is in place.

Support around the country

Over 800 parcels were made up by our members and Companions for Christmas boxes for the homeless. Each parcel was packed with 5 items of clothing, 13 different toiletries and a Christmas greeting. Many of these

items were courtesy of the Companions' Winter Warmer Campaign. The parcels were sent to the many linking points – Companions in Aberdeen, Banff, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Colchester, Duns, Edinburgh, Elgin, Felixstowe, Glasgow, Inverness, London (4 centres), Newmarket, Orton Malborne and Oxford.

Support in London

Pre covid the Companions ran tea parties every couple of months for our elderly friends from London care homes. Sadly these have had to be cancelled. But we are still thinking of our elderly friends at the Royal Hospital and the London care homes, with plants and chocolates during the first lockdown, VE Day flowers and Easter presents. For Christmas, 250 decorated mini Christmas trees were sent

Care in action: flowers and cards to care home residents; clothing for the homeless; soup kitchen lineup

to the London care homes.

Pre Covid, we had a Breakfast Club and two soup kitchens in London, and then added another: two at St James's Spanish Place, the third at East Hill. Due to latest lockdown measures these services are temporarily suspended. We look forward to warmly welcoming our guests again. As some have remarked: 'We come for the chat and the companionship as much as anything.'

And through the London lockdowns, the Hub at the Brompton Oratory has packed thousands of items of clothing and toiletries (first lockdown – over 35,000, for example) to deliver to the homeless of central London.

What the pandemic has shown is that generosity prevails in every circumstance.



Assistance in Oxford, Scotland, London, to help the homeless

Pandemic sees the Companions adapt to new challenges

Paul Letman, Chairman, outlines a year of special efforts

Covid – its consequences and the measures we are all taking to protect all with whom we deal – has dominated our year. However, our work carried out around the country has continued apace, albeit with certain restrictions.

In England, the Oxford Companions have been able to provide a soup kitchen for the homeless, Christmas parcels were delivered in Bristol, in our OSJCT Care Homes our volunteers have provided support for activities where permitted with covid measures respected, in Cambridge students distributed winter clothing to the needy, in Colchester covid had closed their soup kitchen but the search is on for a new venue, in London, our four soup kitchen projects are only just

now temporarily suspended, but The Hub which is a clothing and toiletries packing service, continues.

In Scotland, our activities have included the donation of iPads to the Newton Dee Camphill Home for the disabled, the ongoing soup kitchen in Edinburgh, in Caithness a First Responder medical service has been set up, at St Andrews, students helped deliver food parcels to the elderly housebound.

Across the country 65 Christmas wreaths were delivered to the Orders of St John Care Trust Homes (OSJCT) in Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, with chocolates for the carers and staff.

To carry out all these activities, responding to covid, we have

developed rigorous guidelines which follow those issued by the government. They have been approved by Westminster City Council and Public Health England.

Christmas cheer concludes our year

After a hard year, with the relaxation of government regulations, we were able to set up Christmas parties for our London soup kitchens, bring Christmas cheer in the form of cards and parcels for the residents in our Homes and chocolates for the staff, a recorded service of Christmas carols kindly arranged and conducted by Matthew Schellhorn to be played in the Homes, a live carol service at St James's Spanish Place.

In this range of ongoing activities, the enthusiasm and commitment of all involved is impressive and touching. I commend them all. Not all are Catholic, not all are Christian. But all are motivated by the love and care for fellow man. It is indeed a fine example of *obsequium pauperum*.

FIND OUT MORE

www.orderofmalta.org.uk/companions/



Residents enjoy family catchups with iPads, fun activities, and collect their vaccines

Fact File:

Orders of St John Care Homes Trust (OSJCT)

Loving care and support are the focus during the pandemic

The statistics: There are 66 Care Homes in the Trust, and seven assisted accommodation units across four counties. 3,500 residents are cared for by 4,500 trained and dedicated staff.

The impact of the pandemic: The Trust was proactive in sourcing and supplying PPE in the initial weeks of the pandemic and since then, the Government's covid-19 procedures and the Trust's own infection control processes have been put in place and strictly adhered to throughout.

iPads maintain family contacts for residents: Although family and friends were not initially permitted to visit residents, the welcome donations of iPads from the British Association and others have meant close contacts between residents and their families could be maintained as hundreds of the high-spec tablets have been supplied to Homes, as the images here attest. Visitor rooms have also been installed at Homes across OSJCT to ensure that safe visiting can be carried out even during the worst of weathers.

Vaccination programme in action: OSJCT has ensured that colleagues and residents are well supplied with vaccination stocks as soon as they become available. More than 1,800 have already received the vaccine. The Trust has also participated in pilot projects for COVID-19 testing, which was then opened up to all care Homes, and antibody testing, known as Vivaldi2, which will study the medium and long term impact of the virus in care Homes.

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.osjct.co.uk/>

Malteser International:

**“a significant international
player whose highest principle is
the wellbeing of mankind”**

– Ingo Radtke



**Malteser
International**
Order of Malta Worldwide Relief

Malteser International was founded 15 years ago as the international humanitarian aid agency of the Sovereign Order of Malta, performing Christian charity in the international sphere, from a position that is completely neutral and impartial. From then until now, the organisation has been led by its inspiring, hard working, courageous Secretary General, Ingo Radtke, who retired last month.

Philippa Leslie reports on his proud legacy.

Together with his team, Ingo Radtke has achieved an enormous amount, such that Malteser International is now recognised as a brand, that it is part of the World Health Organisation health cluster, that its budget has more than doubled, its workforce too, and that the teams in the field are known for their exemplary service to those in great need. Radtke is deeply appreciative of the work of those on the ground – in Africa, the Middle East, southern Asia, Latin America – for their dedicated professional assistance to the sick and the poor, and explains that many in the organisation have risked their safety, and that some have laid down their lives.

A team that is spread all over the world

When I called him to wish him well – we had worked together for many years – and to compliment him on all that he has done, he said: ‘Thank you very much for the flowers, but I was and still am only a member of a team that is spread all over the world. I prefer to follow the motto of Pope Giovanni XXIII who said “Don’t care about yourself, Giovanni”’

Two British Association members, Charles de Rohan and Raphael Vermeir, have served on the Malteser International Board, and they add their flowers, too.

Malteser International has a mandate for international humanitarian and transitional aid

Charles de Rohan: ‘I had the honour of serving on the Board of Malteser International for four years until 2017. Malteser International has a mandate for international humanitarian and transitional aid, using the Order’s diplomatic relationships with the many countries around the globe, always with its mission to “defend the faith and serve the poor”.

‘In spite of my lack of relevant experience, even before our very first meeting Ingo made me feel very welcome. And from that first meeting, it was also clear to me that the relationships he had with each member of his organisation, whether office or field-based, were deep and full of mutual respect. His energy and interest in each project was obvious, and he managed his team well, often in challenging circumstances. I wish him all the very best in a well-deserved retirement.’

Raphael Vermeir: ‘With Ingo’s strong hand at the helm, Malteser International



Ingo Radtke in Thailand

has grown significantly from a budget of around €30 million per year to now more than €80 million. Malteser International’s involvement stretches far and wide – the emergency response medical teams to disasters such as the tsunami in the Far East, earthquakes in Haiti, the humanitarian crisis in Syria, South Sudan and now Columbia are just a few examples. I have had the opportunity to visit their works in Turkey and Syria: seeing the refugee camps and the field hospitals as well as the mental health and reintegration facilities was a life changing experience for me.

The British Association was a founding member

‘The funding of the work is through governmental institutions and donations of many of our national Associations. The British Association was a founding member and has generously supported their emergency relief activities. Malteser and its works will go from strength to strength and the legacy of Ingo Radtke will stay with us. We will continue our mission on the foundations that he has so strongly established. We wish him all the very best in his new endeavours.’

And on a personal level? ‘He is an organiser, an army colonel who gets things done. He rules the office and he gets involved in minutiae. His wife is very kind and we get homemade jams for Christmas. I always got along with him because I appreciated his style: he has a very generous heart.’

‘These guys deliver!’

And Ingo on himself: ‘I never wanted to be in the centre – it was my job. I started small, it grew bigger and bigger. I had a good team. Malteser International has become a big international player. WHO recognised us. The team now is 80 in Cologne, 65 abroad – with an all-in workforce of 800. The number of partners is growing so the build-up in local societies means our number of employed staff isn’t growing. Today we also have an American office, where the lead, Ravi Triptrapp and his team, are now recognised by USAID, who declare: ‘These guys deliver!’

How it began

Ratke recalls that he joined because of the former head of the MHD, Dr Johannes Heereman, who was looking for someone with military training: ‘To organise things – you need to take a soldier.’ Ratke was a lieutenant colonel with army training in Germany and France. On joining the Diocese of Trier, he was managing the youth pastoral programme and in 1999 arranged a pilgrimage to the Turin shroud. The MHD were there, too, as first aiders. And there he encountered Johannes Heereman.

FIND OUT MORE

www.malteser-international.org



COVID-19: The Order in c

www.order



action around the world

ofmalta.org



Religion & diplomacy same goals, different means

The Sovereign Order's Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Marie-Therese Pictet-Althann, outlines the Order's work in Geneva

The Order has an international voice, as a Christian humanitarian organisation with a unique humanitarian diplomatic network.

'International Geneva' offers a unique platform for the Order of Malta to engage actively in international affairs due to the presence of UN agencies, international governmental and non-governmental organisations, academia, think tanks. It is the biggest centre for multilateral diplomacy and one of the foremost centres of global governance in the world.

The areas of expertise of particular interest to the Order are peace, security, humanitarian action and law, human rights, migration, refugees, health, the environment and sustainable development.

The Order's role as a global humanitarian actor

We emphasise the Order's role as a global humanitarian actor and we engage in dialogue at different levels: diplomatic, cultural, human rights, and among religious traditions.

Faith and religious actors have a crucial part in humanitarian action

Interestingly, religion has become a central topic on today's policy agenda. As over 80% of the world's population identifies with a faith or belief, policymakers are no longer able to get around religion's role in conflict and peace. This is a fairly recent development. Religion and diplomacy can complement each other by working

towards the same goals with different means.

We are witnessing the gaining of strength and visibility of faith and religious actors. To-day, it is generally recognised that they are a crucial part of the international humanitarian architecture. They are often trusted first responders and long-term community partners in crisis situations.

Planting seeds of peace

Cooperation in the humanitarian field between religion-based organisations plants seeds of peace, creating a bond of mutual trust and confidence among people of different religions. It is an essential element to peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, such as, for example, the Order of Malta's close cooperation in Lebanon with different Christian and Islamic communities or our reconstruction projects in Iraq with Kurdish partners. Thanks to this evolution, we are increasingly able to integrate the religious component into our multilateral humanitarian diplomacy.



Opposite page: Marie-Therese Pictet Althann; Above: Woman at Kefraya Elderly Day Care Centre, Lebanon; Order of Malta senior officers and diplomats attend international conferences; UN Geneva symposium on 'Religions together for humanitarian action'

The Order's worldwide activities

In the humanitarian field we develop relations with international and intergovernmental humanitarian organisations to inform them about the Order's worldwide activities and to define possible fields of cooperation. We work with a number of UN offices – for example, our longstanding cooperation with the World Health Organization, where Malteser International is a partner of the Global Health Cluster; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, where we follow and report on refugee policy

established at Headquarters, ensure contacts with the High Commissioner and his staff and facilitate for Malteser International their cooperation on the

over 80% of the world's population identifies with a faith or belief'

ground; and the UN Human Rights Council – where we focus on thematic issues: freedom of religion or belief, extreme poverty, trafficking in persons,

right to water and sanitation, to health and food, rights of persons with disabilities, of migrants, refugees and IDPs, and of older persons.

Our diplomatic involvement, on these many levels, contributes to recognition of the Order's work around the world.

FIND OUT MORE

www.missionorderofmalta.org/

Ave Maria of Lourdes: in memory of Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre



From idea to reality: the most beautiful international tribute to our Grand Master

Oumayma Farah of the Lebanese Association recounts the exciting project

This is how it went: the countdown

Not having missed a single pilgrimage to Lourdes for the past eight years, I was left with the frustration, like everyone else, of not being able to share this spiritual and uplifting experience with our malades and pilgrims from Lebanon and around the world. This was especially in these times of turmoil my country and the entire world are going through and

when the blessings of Our Lady are much needed!

As the date of our usual pilgrimage approached, my frustration grew. And then, one evening, it hit me!

Why not share an Ave Maria with pilgrims from around the world to mark what would have been the first day in Lourdes and more specifically, the procession?

That was on Thursday April 23rd. It was already 7:00 pm in Beirut and the day had been long, dealing with the dramatic situation in Lebanon all day at the office... But this idea gave me so much enthusiasm that I was full of energy again!! I called our President, Marwan Sehnaoui, who loved the idea and said it should be dedicated to the Grand Master (whom we all knew was

very ill). We planned to share it with him as a surprise on Friday May 1st.

With the go-ahead I started planning. Tick tock, time was running!! It had to be ready in exactly one week.

I called our Chaplain, Father Khalil Rahmé, who is also one of the best composers and choir directors in town, to check on the feasibility within the time frame. Once I had his confirmation and his acceptance to supervise all the technical and design work with his collaborator, Fadi Khalil, I called Zina Beani who is in charge of the Lebanese Association's Lourdes pilgrimage organisation, to ask if she could be responsible for the logistics and coordination. Once the team was set up, my next call was to Eugenio Ajroldi, the Director of Communications at the Grand Magistry, to share the idea and get him on board in order to align our communication strategy.

Friday 24th:

Zina Beani called Serena Zapponi, who is in charge of the Lourdes pilgrimage at the Grand Magistry, to ask if she could send an email to her list of Presidents and hospitaliers, to request the maximum number of participants from all the Grand Pories and national Associations. The email went out that afternoon, asking each to name one singer who would participate, and do so in his or her Lourdes uniform.

Saturday 25th:

Participation had to be confirmed by Saturday evening (the next day!). The singer would receive a technical email with the specific lyrics in his/her own language, a music reference, a video demo and specifications of how he/she should record and then send us the video.

Tuesday 28th:

The deadline was Tuesday evening. More importantly we asked our singers to keep it as a secret as it was a surprise for our Grand Master.

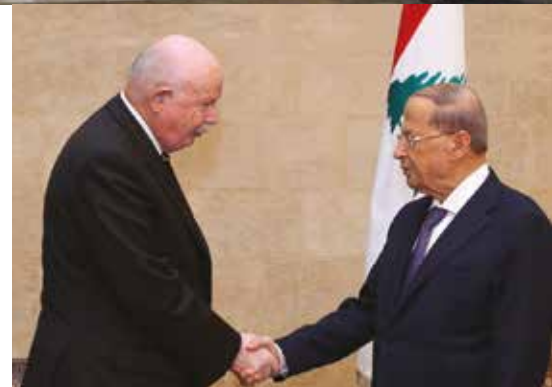
Wednesday 29th:

On Wednesday morning we received 25 videos – but three were still missing and we had to start editing!

Lots of stress was involved as the lyrics were adapted for each participant and we even had to create two more verses to give a line to each singer!



Above: The grotto, Lourdes; Right: Grand Master Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre with the President of Lebanon, Michel Aoun, in 2018



Finally, we received them all. And started the edit.

Thursday 30th:

On Thursday, we heard the very sad news of the death of our beloved Grand Master, but as devastated as we were, we thought that actually this would be the most beautiful tribute!

We doubled our energy and work as we had to re-adapt the edit, particularly the beginning, to pay tribute – which also had to be translated into four languages, other than English!

Friday 1st:

We'd scheduled the film to finish on Friday, but as things don't turn out as we always want, the computer crashed and the rendering process of several hours had to be done all over again!

Father Khalil Rahmé prayed and sprinkled Holy Water all around, while Fadi Khalil hadn't slept for 48 hours!

On Friday evening, President Sehnaoui took the decision that we would postpone the publishing of the video till Sunday since on Saturday, Masses and Rosaries in Lourdes were planned for the whole day.

Sunday 3rd:

This was actually the best decision as we could then add more fine tuning to the edit for sound and image. We finally released it on Sunday morning, on what would have been the timing of the International Holy Mass in Lourdes.

A whole week of work, four days of lack of sleep, a lot of stress! But all was forgotten as it turned out to be the most beautiful international tribute to our Grand Master, united with Our Lady.

FIND OUT MORE

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lzg0L02KPj4&feature=emb_logo
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hVA0tCc1f0&feature=youtu.be
<http://orderofmaltalebanon.org/>



- £40 could provide regular hot meals for an elderly person in Cuba for a year
- £75 could help equip a new day care centre with high quality kitchen equipment
- £250 could fund the maintenance of a day care centre for four months

Mercedes' story

Before she joined the Order of Malta's day care centre, Mercedes lived a lonely life. Her five brothers and four sisters had passed away, leaving her without anybody to turn to. For Mercedes, the Order's day care centre is a place to find not only regular hot meals, but also to meet, exercise and socialise with friends. When we asked her what the centre meant to her, she told us: "When I leave the house and my neighbours ask me where I'm going, I say: 'to my second home!' I am so happy here."

To help us bring help and comfort to the elderly in Cuba please visit www.forgottenpeople.org/support-us. To donate by post, send a cheque to The Global Fund for Forgotten People, c/o De Rosee Sa, 87 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3JZ.

FIND OUT MORE...

The Global Fund for Forgotten People: Expanding and sustaining the Order's global works

The Global Fund for Forgotten People raises money to support Order of Malta projects that benefit the most disadvantaged in society. To date the Fund has made over 450 grants in support of forgotten people around the world. The Fund also promotes best practice and knowledge-sharing between Order of Malta projects, and supports existing projects to increase their scale and to access other sources of funding..

Caring for Cuba's forgotten elderly

Poppy McLean on the Global Fund's appeal for the fragile elderly

"In Cuba, the elderly are truly the forgotten people. Food is a great area of need, but their greatest need is to be treated with dignity. The focus of our centres is not simply to feed our guests, but to bring dignity to a person in a situation where it can be rare," explains Juan Tomás O'Naghten y Chacón, President of the Cuban Association.

Somewhere to call home

The Order of Malta provides meals for 5,000 needy elderly people each year across Cuba. Many, like Mercedes (below), have no surviving family and struggle to source food, facing poverty, isolation and ill health. The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened these needs.

The Global Fund for Forgotten People is partnering with the Order of Malta in Cuba to develop its network of soup kitchens across the country. It costs £6,000 to transform a soup kitchen into a day care

centre which can provide food, exercise classes, health care and recreational activities for 100 guests, offering that vital all-round companionship and support that the Order brings to its work wherever it can. The World Health Organization emphasises the importance of social connection in sustaining the health and wellbeing of older people, and creating those welcoming communities which also provide practical support is one of the Order's greatest strengths.

Cuba's elderly: lonely and in need

The elderly in Cuba are a silent, suffering group. Cuba has the oldest population in the Americas and state pensions can be as little as \$6 a month. Food shortages, lack of access to healthcare and social isolation leave thousands of elderly people isolated and struggling to survive. The Order of Malta has provided a vital lifeline to the elderly in Cuba for two decades through its network of 56 food halls and day centres.

A year with NEHEMIAH

Hindsight is 2020 – what’s different, what’s changed?

Joanna Whitaker reviews

Just a year ago, there was little indication as to what was in store for the world. In the face of such challenging and unusual times, The Nehemiah Project has valiantly and successfully continued its life-changing mission for the male residents in our houses – most of whom are ex-prisoners; all of whom have a history of addiction/substance misuse.

From the onset of Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown, the management and staff at Nehemiah responded swiftly and professionally in finding ways to continue to run the programme and support the residents towards a new life. Daily contact with the residents was maintained with the use of technology to provide one-to-one support as well as running group elements of the ‘New Future’ course online. With the proper use of PPE, testing for drug use continued which the men tend to regard as supportive in keeping a safe, sober and clean recovery environment. Many of the men observed that the conditions of lockdown were more or less what they were used to from prison. The difference is that at Nehemiah they are more like ‘house mates’ and are seeking to change their lives.

Two ‘first-stage’ houses went into lockdown in March and reopened in June when the staff also returned to ensure a partial personal service operating within strict social distancing rules. The provision of accommodation and support in Nehemiah’s second and third stage houses has been expanded, with the help of the Global Fund, with an additional property close by in Croydon which means that, although the original house in Streatham is being refurbished, the actual reduction in bed space is minimal. The average occupancy rate has remained steady at around 75% and, once the refurbishment is complete, Nehemiah can accommodate more than 30 men.



Residents learn new skills

The importance of graduating

‘Graduation’ is an important visible sign that marks a resident’s successful completion of the 3-month programme where his sense of achievement is shared with the staff, friends and family. These events continued to be held – although with greatly reduced numbers invited in person.

Apart from the established partnership with the Order of Malta, Nehemiah continues its fundraising activities with success although, once again, Covid-19 dealt a blow with the postponement or cancellation of both the Marathon and the Prudential-100 bike ride usually held in August. A noble few of the runners persevered and ran the distance over a course of their own choosing on 4th October, satisfying the pledges of their sponsors and doing their bit to raise money for – and the profile of – Nehemiah and its vision.



Volunteering help in 2021

Exactly a year ago, we were close to putting together ways in which our volunteers could become more involved with the Project. Amongst so much else, it is a hope that 2021 might see the reality of establishing ways in which this life-enhancing work of the Order, as part of its prison ministry, could engage the enthusiasm of our many volunteers.

FIND OUT MORE

www.tnp.org.uk



Inside St James's Spanish Place; the BrevMeum app

The Grand Priory, on and offline

Fra' Max Rumney, Procurator, appreciates all that can still be done

Traditionally, the Grand Priory of England organises Conventual Masses and Days of Recollection each month together with Masses for Memorials and Feasts of the Order (it may not surprise you that the Order does quite well for Feasts – there are about two dozen, depending on who you are, including from among our blessed, saints and patrons). There are also pilgrimages to such exotic locations as Ramsgate – where there is actually a beautiful shrine church to St Augustine which was designed by Pugin – and retreats for the Knights and Professed. It was particularly sad that we had to cancel the Knights' retreat in the North this year which was due to be held at the new venue of Minsteracres in County Durham.

Of course, all these activities stopped or were postponed because of the many and various COVID-19 regulations that have come and gone, and come again.

Rays of light

However, there have been some rays of light amongst all these cancellations. During the relaxation of the regulations in late summer and early autumn, the Professed were able to go on their annual retreat together at Farnborough Abbey. Poignantly, the Feast of our founder Blessed Gerard was celebrated at Spanish Place and we were able to invest new members of the Order; and, most recently, we could attend the Advent evening of recollection at Warwick Street which was given by Monsignor Armitage.

Vespers on zoom and BrevMeum

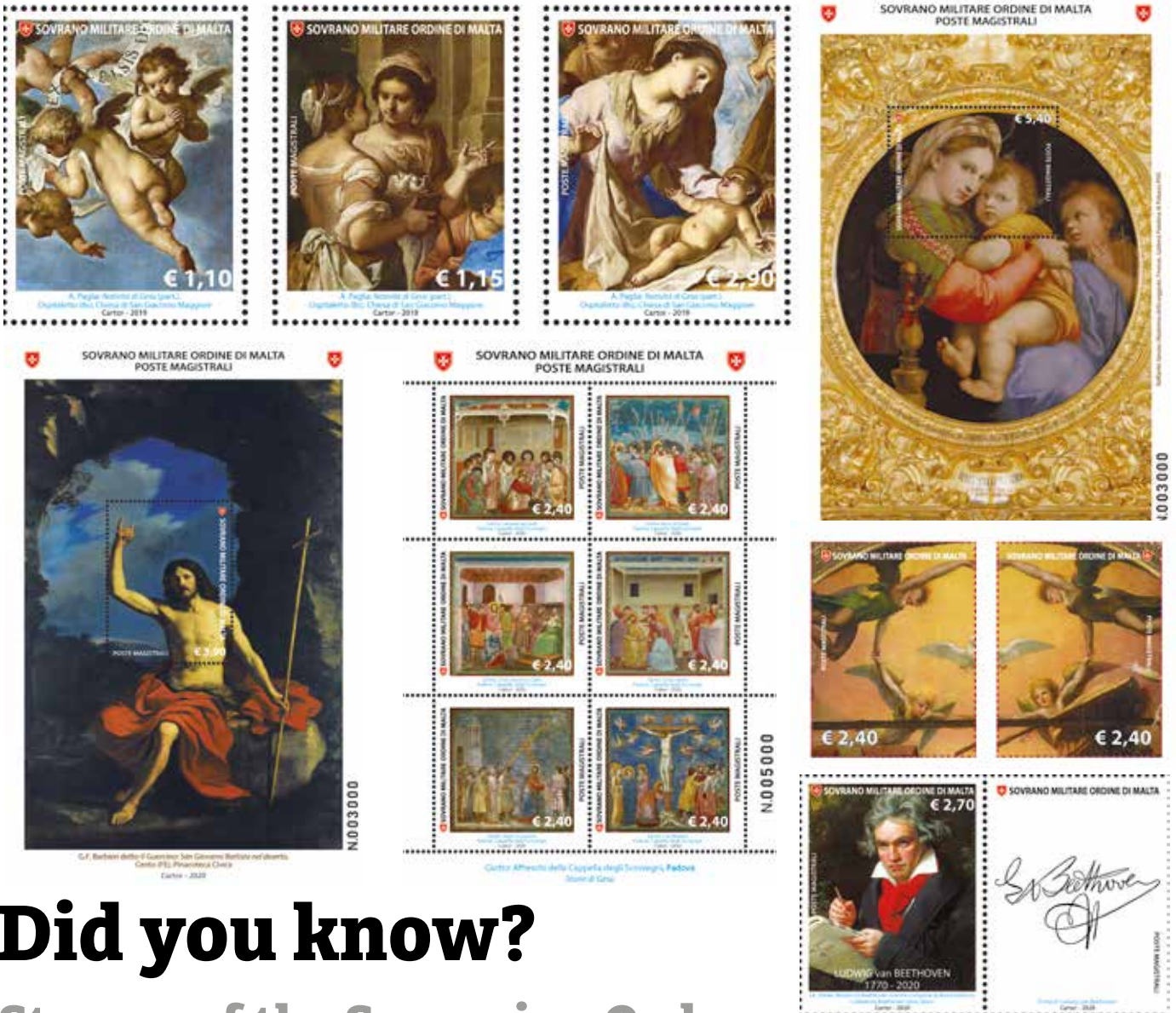
During the first lockdown, some members of the Grand Priory started to meet online via zoom for Vespers twice each week. Vespers works well on zoom because it is interactive and not passive like watching a streamed Mass. Vespers continues and anyone is welcome to join. Mondays are in Latin (if you want to

brush up your schoolboy or schoolgirl Latin studies) and Thursdays are in English. There is an app which you can get for your phone or iPad/tablet called BrevMeum which has all the offices for the day prepared for you in English and Latin – so no need to struggle with your breviary. Moreover, if you are ever looking for inspiration, BrevMeum also has prayers for all sorts of occasions. Best of all, the app is free!

Our gratitude to our chaplains

Masses for Feasts of the Order and Requiems for those of the Order who died during this last year did continue behind closed doors thanks to the Chaplains of the Order. The Chaplains have been very generous with their time. It is a true Grace that the Order gives us access to and the service of such devoted priests. For this reason, and because public Masses were not allowed, the Grand Priory distributed stipends to all the Chaplains during the two lockdowns. Catholic priests often depend upon their stipends to make ends meet – please be generous when you ask a priest to say a Mass for an intention.

Finally, please continue to send me names of those in need for the prayer list. Whilst it is sad to receive such petitions, it is always a great comfort when, once in a while, I am told to take a name off the list because their petition has been heard and the prayers are no longer needed.



Did you know?

Stamps of the Sovereign Order

The Sovereign Order's first emission of stamps was in November 1966. The Order's Magistral Post Office (*Poste Magistrali*), which is based in the Grand Magistry in Rome, began issuing the Order's own postage stamps by decree of the Grand Master, signed on 20 May of that year. The stamps were issued in the Order's currency of scudi, grani and tari (roughly equated to the currency of Malta before it joined the Eurozone) but since 2005, they have been issued in euro. The stamps are inscribed *Poste Magistrali* and bear one or more small Maltese crosses. Early issues were printed by De La Rue, but today a variety of Maltese and Italian printers are used.

The series now numbers over 450, most of them dedicated to the works of the Order of Malta, its medical and humanitarian activities, as well as its

artistic and religious patrimony. Each year, one stamp issue is devoted to St. John the Baptist, the Order's Patron Saint, and one for the celebration of Christmas. Notable events are also celebrated – for example, in 2020



Dott. Marcello Baldini

stamps were issued for the 250th anniversary of the birth of Beethoven; and for the Order, to commemorate the election of the Lieutenant of the Grand Master. The stamps, collected with fascination by experts all over the world, can also be used as legal tender in the 57 countries with which the Order has a postal agreement.

Head of the *Poste Magistrali* is Dott. Marcello Baldini, who mentions with pride his 53 years in the role. With an artistic background – father an antiquarian, mother a painter – Dr Baldini employs his own draughtsman skills when researching and creating each new series of emissions. He explains that the emphasis is on beauty and uplifting images, and he then identifies the detail on which to focus within the image, and which will reflect public interest.

STOP PRESS

GLOBAL



The challenge of covid : the Order's healthcare measures worldwide

Grand Chancellor Albrecht Boeselager: 'The Order of Malta's entities are supporting national health authorities in the management of hospitalised patients, transportation to and from hospitals, test administration and helplines, support given to the homeless and the marginalised. In Africa and Asia many other projects have been converted into health, sanitation, and virus prevention schemes to mitigate the spread of Covid-19.'



Internationally, a 'Doctor-to-Doctor' platform was launched to connect experts in infectious diseases, epidemiology, emergency medicine, together with policymakers from different countries to promote a better understanding of the virus and the treatment of patients, and to create a forum for discussion and exchange of experiences.

LATIN AMERICA



In Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, the 'Doctors in the network' project links the Order's medics to best measures for containing the virus and managing in their countries.

EUROPE



Support through Order organisations has been mobilised in many European countries – France, Germany Lithuania, Poland, Spain, to name but a few.

In Italy, the first country to suffer from covid in the west, volunteers from CISOM, the Military Corps and Order Delegations offer health screening services – at airports, in train stations (Milan, Rome), law courts, prisons (Naples), at hospitals (Bari, Milan, Rome), at a hospital ship (Genoa), as well as setting up a field hospital (Crema; Fiera di Milano). In addition, the needs of the poor, the lonely, the elderly, are cared for by Order members and volunteers all over the country.

MIDDLE EAST



In Palestine, at the Order's Holy Family Hospital, the recent 3-month shutdown of Bethlehem had a great economic impact on the Hospital. Most families could no longer contribute at all towards their care or deliveries, creating a large unplanned deficit of \$600,000 in the Hospital budget. In Lebanon, covid has meant further stress for the population. The Lebanese Association and Malteser International are on the ground with support – food, clothing, medicines.

ASIA PACIFIC



In Australia, the Order is active in assisting the homeless in Melbourne by distributing Coats for the Homeless and Covid-19 care packs. A new 'community care' van will support this activity by providing safe transport for members and volunteers and more coats, care packs and medical supplies can be transported to each outreach activity.

The Singapore Association has sponsored meals and mattresses for the rough sleepers who had moved from the streets into temporary shelters during the months of the circuit breaker.