



FOR THE FAITH AND
IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY



St John

Eyes on the Future

THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

PRIORY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

This Advent we prepare for a Christmas unlike any that we in the United States have ever known. Yet despite all the changes, adaptations and uncertainties, we have much to be thankful for, and much remains the same. We again wait with reflection, anticipation and preparation for the

arrival of a new light, and we are still honored to be Members of The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem.

There are many ways that we, as Confrères of this order of chivalry, can ensure that we maintain our commitment to our Lords the sick and the poor this Advent and Christmas Season.

With opportunities to participate in our usual St John Volunteer Corps activities largely curtailed, we can still take time to reach out to the vulnerable in our communities in other ways. Places of worship and local charities, as well as the Veterans Administration, are good sources of information on just what is needed, when and by whom. Often simple things are needed that can make such a huge difference to the lives of the isolated, the sick and the dispossessed—a Christmas card, a phone call, an item of warm clothing or a bag lunch.

A very generous Confrère offered a \$100,000 dollar-for-dollar matching grant

Last week you received my Advent letter to you announcing that, unexpectedly, a very generous Confrère offered a **\$100,000 dollar-for-dollar matching grant** in which every dollar given between now and the end of the year, (over and above one's Oblation requirement) will be matched up to a total of \$100,000. If you are able and would like to contribute to this matching grant, please contact the Priory office before December 31, 2020. Every dollar will go to the Hospital to bring hope to those for whom blindness threatens to destroy not only sight, but also quality of life through unemployment, poverty, and isolation.

Following our recent Priory virtual Brunch on chivalry, held remotely ([see link in "In Case You Missed It"](#)) I remind you that chivalry is about recognizing one's privilege and following a principled code of conduct that ensures that others are not ignored, exploited or made vulnerable. While historically this might have meant the way in which a lord treated his tenant farmers, today these principles continue to guide our behavior as Confrères and how we reach out to others.

During this Christmas season, let us all do our part to bring the gift of hope, health and happiness to all.

Wishing you a Blessed Advent and Christmas.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum,
Nigel G. Heath, KStJ
Prior



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YAZAN'S STORY

Yazan is an 8-year-old Palestinian boy, who lives in the Hebron Governorate, an administrative district of Palestine and part of the southern West Bank. The District is home to nearly a million Palestinians and consists of 1,060 square kilometers—400 square miles—roughly the size of New York City.

Yazan lives with his parents, two brothers and a sister. His father, Majed, is a construction worker and his mother, Sharihan, is a stay-at-home mom.

His two favorite pastimes are reading and “football.” (For those who aren’t sports fanatics, soccer is known as “football” everywhere but in the U.S.)

When he grows up, he hopes to play for his favorite team, the West Bank Premier League, one of two teams in the Palestinian Football Federation.

In April, Sharihan noticed her son had a swelling in his right upper eyelid. When the swelling grew worse and he began to lose his eyesight, she took him to see Dr. Bashar Jaber, an oculoplasty specialist at St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. An examination and biopsy revealed he had a rare and deadly type of malignant tumor called Rhabdomyosarcoma.



After chemotherapy and radiation, Yazan lost his hair, but not his smile. He has a little more chemotherapy and radiation ahead, but his doctors expect him to recover quickly.



The rapid swelling of Yazan's eyelid was caused by a rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare tumor that threatened his eyesight and his life.

Fortunately, the tumor was discovered early enough his doctors believe his prognosis is good. Two rounds of chemotherapy and radiation at Augusta Victoria Hospital have effectively reduced the tumor and restored much of his vision.

During a follow-up visit at St John Eye Hospital in October, an MRI revealed a residual mass remains in his eye. Fortunately, no metastasis was found, so his doctors are confident he will respond well to additional chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

When his doctors give him the thumbs up, Yazan says he can't wait to return to the soccer field. They say there's no reason to believe someday he won't be able to play ball and face off as a mid fielder against the Gaza Strip Premier League, his team's rival! ✨

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

In case you missed it, or would like to re-watch or share one of the U.S. Priory's recent virtual events...

INVESTITURE

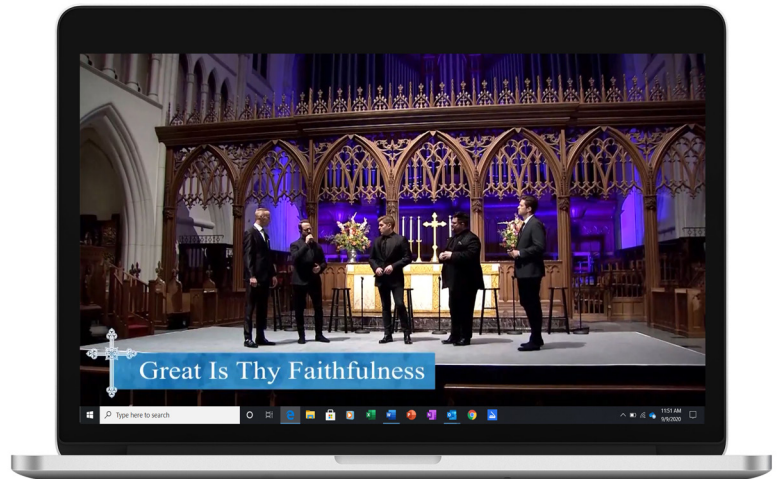
The U.S. Priory's 58th Welcome and Dedication Service was streamed Saturday, November 7 from locations around the world. While held virtually with participants watching from their homes or elsewhere, the 2020 ceremonies held all the splendor of an in-person, live event. [Watch here.](#)

CHIVALRY

What is typically the Chivalry "Brunch" of Investiture weekend was held online Sunday, November 8, with a presentation and Q&A with Dr. Gillian Willmore, Chancellor of The Order of St John. [Watch here.](#)

HERALDRY

The Rev'd Canon Dr. Joseph John Morrow, KStJ, CBE, QC, FRSE, The Right Honourable Lord Lyon King of Arms, chief herald of Scotland and for Scots worldwide, presented *The Thistle and the Saltire and other symbols of Scottish Heraldry, including The Eight-pointed Cross: The Heraldry of the Orders of St John in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland*. To learn more about the Lord Lyon, [click here](#). To watch the presentation and discussion [click here](#).



2020's virtual Welcome and Dedication Service.

SOA

The St John Ophthalmic Association held its first-ever online webinar on Saturday, November 21. U.S. Priory Hospitaller David Pyott opened the event and introduced speakers, including David Verity, worldwide Order Hospitaller, who presented "Ancient Traditions; Modern Order." [Watch here.](#) ✱

ORDER TREASURES ONLINE

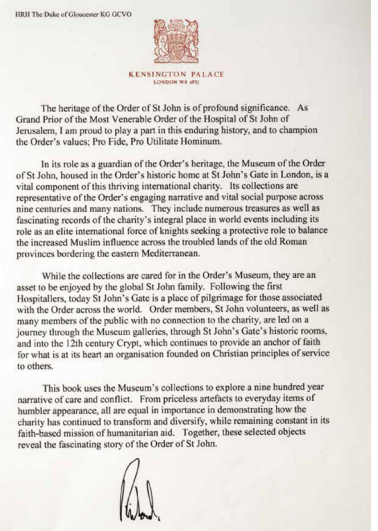
His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, Grand Prior of the Order of St John, provides the foreword to *Treasures*, the book "which uses the Museum's collections to explore a nine hundred year narrative of care and conflict."

The Museum of the Order of St John remains closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, but *Treasures* is now available for purchase [here](#), through the U.S. Priory's online giftshop. While you're there browse through the shirts and hats, glasses, coasters and other items to find great Christmas gifts or something for yourself! ✱

HRH The Duke of Gloucester in the Chapter Hall of St John's Gate in London. Behind him hangs a portrait of HRH The Duke of Connaught, Queen Victoria's son, who served as Grand Prior between 1910 and 1939. The Duke of Gloucester has served as Grand Prior since 1974.



HRH The Duke of Gloucester's foreword to Treasures



U.S. PRIORY SUPPORTS HOSPITAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Medical exchange programs open the eyes and the spirit of ophthalmologists coming from low resource countries. In 2014, the U.S. Priory budgeted funds to bring one ophthalmologist from the St John Eye Hospital to the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) meeting each year. The AAO is the world's premiere ophthalmology meeting attracting 25,000-30,000 delegates and offering continuing education courses, hands-on wet labs, and exposure to hundreds of technology manufacturers.

Since 2014, seven ophthalmologists from the Hospital have come to the U.S. arriving a week early to visit Confrères and US ophthalmology centers, and to get over jet lag before the "big meeting." Dr. Jeanne Garth, the Hospital's medical director at the time, was the first and the AAO was held in Chicago. Dr. James McCulley, KStJ, Director of UT Southwestern Medical Center's Ophthalmology Department in Dallas, hosted her the week before to lecture to the faculty and residents who were fascinated by the types of cases our Hospital treats, many of which are rarely seen in the U.S. Joe Dealey, KStJ, held a reception for the Dallas Chapter enabling Confrères to hear from Dr. Jeanne about the amazing work they support.

In 2015, Deputy Medical Director Dr. Humam Rishmawi, head of the Pediatric Ophthalmology Department at the Hospital, came with his wife Samar, first to Washington, DC, where they were hosted by myself and my husband Howard Pyle, CSTJ. They visited the National Eye Institute and National Library of Medicine at NIH in Bethesda, MD, with its extensive collection of medical texts, including an antique section with texts from the Middle East going back some 2,000 years. The U.S. Priory office held a luncheon for DC Confrères to hear first-hand about the children being treated and the newly built eye hospital in Gaza. Then off to Las Vegas where Dr. Humam took AAO continuing education courses specifically on neuro-ophthalmology, and pediatric eye care and surgery. After the trip, he wrote, "I'm back in Jerusalem and want to thank everyone for the great opportunity given to me to attend the American Academy meeting. Thank you so much for allowing me to join the sub-specialty days which was a great success. This has widened my experience and knowledge and I'm sure this will help me at home to improve my skills and our teaching program at St John Eye Hospital. It was a successful meeting and a great experience."

In 2017, Dr. Ala'a AlTalbish and Dr. Yahya AlSweity, both retina specialists, were selected. They had recently established the Hospital's new Research Lab and are building a strong research capacity at the Hospital. They arrived first for the Washington, DC, experience and then to the AAO in New Orleans. The Hospital's CEO at the time, Brig. Tom Ogilvie-Graham, encouraged them to submit an abstract about the Hospital's research work. It was accepted by the AAO in a very competitive process. To their surprise, they won "Best Poster" in the retina section. Our non-ophthalmologist readers may not appreciate the magnitude of this achievement but



Dr. AlTalbish and Victoria Sheffield, with Dr. AlTalbish's and Dr. Yahya AlSweity's AAO 2017 Best Poster winning entry.

think of it, two young ophthalmologists from our Hospital in Jerusalem came to the AAO for the first time, got their first abstract accepted and then won "Best Poster", something even seasoned ophthalmologists never achieve. It's a testimony to the quality of care provided by everyone at the Hospital to tens of thousands of patients each year who are at risk of losing their sight.

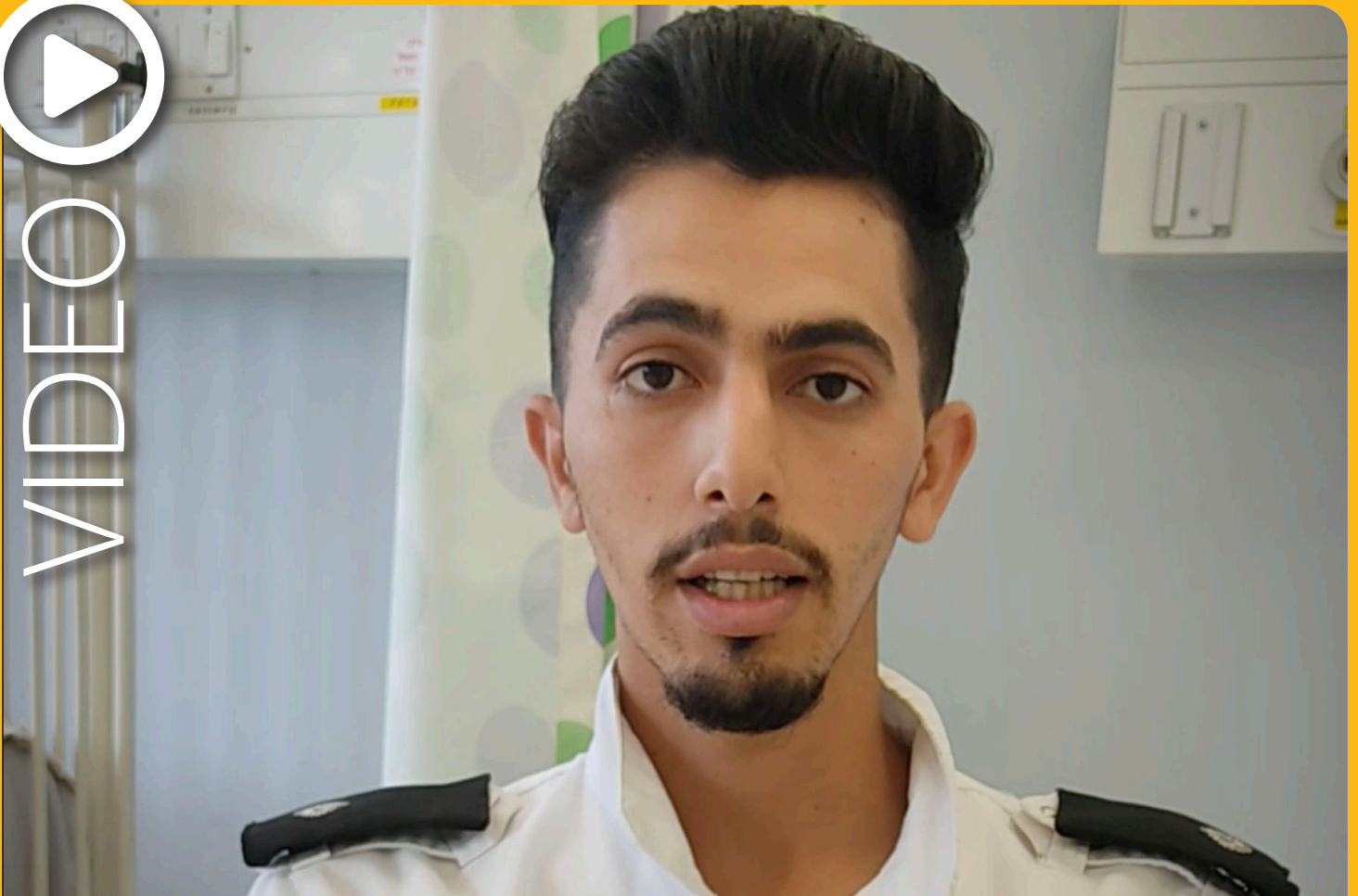
In 2018, Dr. Ghassan Madieh left his family in Hebron, Palestine, and traveled first to Dallas for the UT Southwestern and Dallas Chapter experience before heading to the AAO in Chicago. As a retina specialist, Dr. Ghassan took courses focusing on macular degeneration and diabetic eye disease, a huge problem in Palestine. In 2019, Dr. Iyad Habil and his wife Dr. Haifa Habil came to the AAO in San Francisco. His specialty is cataract and refractive surgery and he was impressed by the latest techniques and technology. Dr. Iyad and his wife were hosted by the Houston Chapter, including Dr. Bita Esmaeli, MSTJ, who took him on a tour of her Ophthalmology Department at the MD Anderson Cancer Center, Dr. Bob Butner, MSTJ, who showed him his retina practice, and Ruth Ann Skaff, MSTJ, who organized a reception for Houston Confrères.

The coronavirus forced the 2020 AAO meeting in November to be held virtually and no-one is traveling. We look forward to resuming this important exchange program supported by U.S. Confrères to strengthen ties between Hospital ophthalmologists, US ophthalmologists, and our Confrères in the U.S. Priory.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum,
Victoria M. Sheffield, DSTJ



VIDEO



Nurse Munther Abu Baker talks about the impact of COVID-19 at St John Eye Hospital.

Plans for Pilgrimage

While COVID-19 prevented us from hosting the Pilgrimage this year and next year, plans are underway to resume the journey in 2022. This coincides with the 140th Anniversary of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, where special events are being arranged to take place throughout the year. Watch for additional information as it becomes available.

2022



The Priory Gift Shop has reopened.

If you are looking for gift ideas for those on your Christmas list, visit the shop at www.saintjohn.org for all your shopping needs!

SAN FRANCISCO ENDOWMENT GROWS FROM GIFT IN MEMORY OF PETER J. MUSTO, KSTJ

The Priory in the USA received a significant anonymous gift in memory of Peter Johnson Musto, KStJ, of San Francisco. Peter, an active member of The Most Venerable Order since 1993, served on the San Francisco Regional Committee for many years. He died on September 5, 2020. Those who served with Peter on the Regional Committee fondly remember his commitment to the mission of the Order and his active support of regional activities and Investitures, especially those hosted by San Francisco.

A fifth generation San Franciscan, Peter graduated from Middlesex School in Concord, MA, and received a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Stanford University, after which he enjoyed a career in commercial real estate with Coldwell Banker and the Joseph Musto Estate company, serving as director and president of his family's real estate holdings. He was a devoted son of California and served as a board director of The Society of California Pioneers and was involved in the California Historical Society.

Peter was strong on quiet common sense, short on long meetings and his humor was always in great supply.

Peter was a fixture in San Francisco society and was a longtime member of the Bohemian Club (54 years, with 25 years as Chairman of the Art Collections Committee and member of Medicine Lodge Camp), the Pacific Union Club, the Burlingame Country Club, Villa Taverna and the San Francisco Cotillion. He loved music and was an avid supporter of The San Francisco Opera, Symphony and Ballet, as well as the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut.

Peter was strong on quiet common sense, short on long meetings and his humor was always in great supply. As one of the longest-serving members of the San Francisco Regional Committee, he brought perspective and a strong knowledge of the local philanthropic community and the Diocese of California. He served as a board director of The Episcopal Sanctuary and The Bishop's Ranch, as well as the vestry of his own parish, St. Mary the Virgin. Peter shared his enthusiasm with others who followed his example of service to some of these same ministries of the Diocese of California. It was Peter who first introduced our current Prior, Nigel Heath, to the Order of St John while both were serving as board directors of The Bishop's Ranch. In 2004, Peter and I sponsored Nigel's membership into the Order.



Peter Musto; John Drexel IV; HRH Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester; and The Rev'd Canon John Kilgore at the 2006 St. Louis Investiture.

Peter was well-loved and respected by his family, friends and colleagues. On a personal note, he was a friend of 32 years and the godfather of my son, Will Martin, who performed "The Holy City" at our 2018 Investiture in San Francisco. I fondly remember joining Peter for performances of the San Francisco Ballet and the customary intermission dash from his orchestra seats to the mezzanine bar, as well as gala opening parties of the San Francisco Fall Antique Show, family picnics of the Society of California Pioneers, and quiet lunches at the Pacific Union Club following our Regional Committee meetings at Grace Cathedral.

It is fitting that this very generous gift be marked in Peter's honor by adding his name to the San Francisco Endowment (Magowan, McBean, Wintersteen, Musto) which was created to fund in perpetuity a medical position at the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital. We express our deepest gratitude to the wonderful benefactors of the gift and we assure them of our fraternal affection and good wishes.

Please remember Peter Musto in your prayers. May he rest in peace and may the Father of mercies welcome Peter to paradise and embrace him saying, "Well done, my good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness." (Matthew 25:21).

Pro Fide,
Paul Martin, OStJ



PRO FIDE

"What we teach, preach, and believe is True. All true."

Nancy Hanna is an Episcopal priest who lives in the Northeast. We have never met, though we connected virtually with regard to Church

business over the years. I still recall a few years back, over the phone, Nancy shared that her husband Alistair, was battling cancer.

Shortly after that, he succumbed to cancer and died. I wrote Nancy and expressed my prayers in her time of grief. She quickly emailed me back letting me know that she appreciated the prayers and concern, that she was trying to adjust to life without her husband, and then she wrote, "...the best balm is the Peace of God that passes all understanding. *It is real.... What we teach, preach, and believe is True....All true.*" Reading the words brought tears to my eyes, *"True...All True."*

Over the next few weeks, you and I will hear lots of people say "Merry Christmas!" But how many of those people "believe" in what they are saying ... "Merry Christ-mas...?" Some don't believe, some would have us "not" believe.

The English columnist, Charles Moore wrote a solid article a few years ago, entitled, "The sad business of trying to disprove God." He references Nick Spencer's book, *Atheists: The Origin of the Species*, wherein Spencer unpacks those who claim to be atheist, who devote themselves to the "...wearisome and surprisingly difficult business of trying to prove a negative."

Should we take offense at all of these attacks on what you and I believe to be "true?" No, Spencer believes the new Atheism is nothing more than an expression of anger at the curious phenomenon that all over the world, except it seems increasingly among Western cultures, God is back.

Well, what does all of this have to do with Advent and Christmas? In a world at present filled with angst—besieged by, at the very least, fears of the ongoing impact of a global *Pandemic* and its fall out in the economy, our relationships, it might very easily tempt one to throw up their hands and simply say, *"It's all a load of bunk."*

But, over the next several weeks, we will "hear" it all again, *"This is how the birth of Jesus came about: His mother Mary*

was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 1:18). It is the beginning of the most powerful love story ever told—the love of God for His children.

This was the conclusion C.S. Lewis came to, in part after a long conversation with J.R.R. Tolkien one evening. Writing to a friend after all of his own internal wrestling, Lewis said, "Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that *it really happened*: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God's myth where the others are men's myths; i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things.' Therefore it is *true,....*"

I suppose, that is why, in the end—I can be brought to tears by a woman I have never met, who in the wake of the death of her husband, while still journeying through the valley of the shadow of death, is given something only God can give, faith to remind me, "the best balm is the Peace of God that passes all understanding. *It is real....What we teach, preach, and believe is True....All true.*" Indeed, only Love can believe in the Resurrection. I suspect the same is true for the Incarnation—and everything in between.

For these reasons, and many more, my brothers and sisters of the Priory, of our beloved, Order—we proclaim, unapologetically, *Pro Fide*; and we put "flesh on that," ***incarnate that***, if you will, with our pledge *Pro Utilitate Hominum....* Living into that motto; unveils the deep truth—God's love for us compels our love for God and for one another... is there anything more important?

You know, I think Nancy is right. No, I know she is. Merry Christmas. Say it. Believe it. Thanks be to God, It's true... all true.

Faithfully,
The Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr., MStJ
Sub-Prelate