



ADDRESS BY THE MOST EMINENT AND SUPREME GRAND MASTER

Brother Knights, from this vantage point, this vision of a sea of red, black and white is an inspiring sight and I do welcome you most heartily to this Chapter of Great Priory. I hope that your journeys have been as trouble-free as possible, and that you are enjoying the day and the company of your Brother Knights. I begin on an optimistic note, by telling you that the consolidated position for all our Companion Orders shows that we remain very close to reporting a net growth in headcount and memberships compared with a year ago, but it is likely that the turn of the year will be the first real chance of recording such progress. KT headcount was up by 0.65%, so what a golden opportunity for us to try and make a real difference. We should never lose sight of the fact that we recruit our membership from Royal Arch Chapters. Just imagine if each one of us could find a dedicated Royal Arch Companion, who professes the Christian Trinitarian faith, and shows an interest in becoming a Knight Templar – that would be a result! We now have a Communications and Digital Marketing Manager at the Chancery, Mrs Vimee Patel, and we are confident that her work in enhancing our on-line presence and developing our website will pay dividends in increasing our numbers. You don't need me to remind you of the situation in the Middle East, but I can tell you that all hospitals in Gaza have been ordered to evacuate. Many remain operational but have sustained considerable damage, but to the best of our knowledge there has been no further damage to the Eye Hospital facility there. All Gaza staff are now in Rafah and other southern districts. The eye hospitals in Jerusalem, Hebron, Anabta and the Outreach continue to function as best they can. I'm sure you will be delighted to learn that the Grand Master's Council has suggested we pledge a further gift of £100,000 as a contribution towards the funding of key support staff for the paediatric department at Jerusalem. Patients as young as a few days old and up to twelve years of age are treated by a team of thirteen, made up of doctors, nurses and assistants, providing comprehensive eye care to children suffering from serious and blinding diseases. By supporting us in this way you will be enabling the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group to continue its vital work for children in the Palestinian territories who will inevitably require our help in the coming year. Under the provisions of Statute 13, I now call on the Great Vice-Chancellor for a proposition. [The Great Vice-Chancellor proposed that the sum of £100,000 be taken from the funds of Great Priory and paid to the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group to support paediatric care. The Great Prior of Malta seconded the proposition and it was carried by the Brother Knights.]

We are very fortunate in this Order in having two investitures during the year and today is predominantly about honouring and rewarding our members for their dedication and service. It has been a real pleasure to invest so many Brother Knights with their new Great Priory of Malta ranks and I do offer each of you my personal congratulations and thank you for all the hard work you undertake in your various Priories which has resulted in your preferment today. With your new ranks comes additional responsibilities, and I know I can rely on you to lead your Brother Knights by example in your Provinces, Preceptories and Priories. I'm sure we would all like to offer our especial good wishes to the new Great Sub-Prior of Malta, V.E.Kt. Alan Thomas Howls. I know he is looking forward to visiting the Provinces and carrying on the good work undertaken over the past ten years by his predecessor, V.E.Kt. Stephen Warwick, to whom I'm sure we also offer our best wishes in his new role.

The honour and dignity of Knight Commander of the United Orders was introduced under the auspices of the newly formed Convent General in 1873 and remains as one of the few surviving practices from that difficult era. It is the exclusive prerogative of the Grand Master for the time being and strictly limited in numbers. It has been my pleasure to confer this rank today on R.E.Kt. John Prizeman in recognition of his outstanding service to Great Priory and the Order in general. John was first appointed P.Dep.Gt.Swd.B. in 2001 when he was Provincial Vice-Chancellor of Hampshire and Isle of Wight, then served as 2nd Gt.Con. in 2008 and 1st Gt.Con. in 2017. We wish him well in his new office and thank him for his continued dedication to Great Priory.

One of the highlights of this meeting, for me, is the opportunity to witness our Malta Degree, as we affectionately know it, performed to the very highest standard, and today has been no exception. Our ceremonies were originally worked in Craft Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters and it is comforting to note that very few changes have taken place since the first official ritual was approved in 1866. So, thank you, Great Prior, and all your Officers for another splendid ceremony. I'm sure that your illustrious predecessors would be well pleased that their ritual is still as meaningful and powerful now as it must have been all those years ago. We are so fortunate to be custodians of such a Rite, which is not only dramatic and colourful but expresses many Christian truths in a most impressive manner. I trust that the Knight John Boyington, CBE, has enjoyed the experience today as much as we have. I hope that many of you have had the chance to see and be impressed by the new banner for the King Edward VII Preceptory of Improvement that is standing outside the door to Great Priory today. They do a wonderful job in maintaining the high standards of our ritual, and the Provincial Priors and I received a presentation yesterday on how greater access to their expertise could be made available in the Provinces – more of that to follow next May.

We are so fortunate in this Order having the support and friendship of the Heads of our companion Masonic Orders and I would now like to welcome them all, and then go on to greeting our guests from sister Great Priories and our own Brother Knights from Provinces Overseas. In the interests of time, perhaps we could restrain our natural desire to applaud until I have completed the list.

From the Red Cross of Constantine, the Grand Sovereign, R.E.Kt. Graham Flight, G.C.M.; from the Order of Royal and Select Masters, the Grand Master, R.E.Kt. Kessick Jones, K.C.M.; from the Order of the Secret Monitor, the Grand Supreme Ruler, R.E.Kt. Andrew Sweeney, K.C.M.; from the Grand College of Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests and Order of Holy Wisdom, the Grand High Priest, R.E.Kt. Christopher Maiden, K.C.M.; from the Order of the Knights Beneficent of the Holy City, the Grand Master, R.E.Kt. Dr Vivian Thomas, JP, K.C.M.; from the Order of Mark Master Masons, the Pro Grand Master, R.E.Kt. John Prizeman, K.C.M.; from the United Grand Lodge of England, the Assistant Grand Master, V.E.Kt. Steven Varley – new Gt. 1st.Lt.; from the Order of the Ancient and Accepted Rite, the Sovereign Grand Commander, Kt. John Boyington, CBE, and the Grand Prior, E.Kt. Revd Dr Simon Thorn, DL, Great Hospitaller; and from the Order of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, the Supreme Magus, E.Kt. Anthony Llewellyn, P.Gt.2nd Lt. From the Great Priory of Spain, the Great Prior of Malta, R.E.Kt. Keith Alcock; and from the Great Priory of The Netherlands, the Grand Master, M.E. & S.Kt. Frank Poot, accompanied by the Great Seneschal, V.H. & R.E.Kt. Herman Ray Lioe-A-Tjam. And now to our Brother Knights of our own Constitution from overseas: From the Province of South East Asia, E.Kt. John Graham Bones, P.Gt.Adm.; E.Kt. Capt Dr Julian Brown, P.Gt.B.; E.Kt. David John Oakley, P.Gt.Turc. – a recipient today; E.Kt. Russell Stuart; Kt. Dr Wai Keng Lum; Kt. Saha Deva Arunasalam; and E.Kt. Christopher Hartley Moore; and from the Province of Sri Lanka, E.Kt. Dr Ian Phillip Ellston. Please join me in showing our gratitude to these Brother Knights for joining with us today.

Before closing I want to thank the Great Mareschal, and through him, his Deputies, those who assist, and of course the members of the Grand Master's Body Guard for producing such a splendid ceremony for us. My thanks also to the Great Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Great Vice-Chancellor and the team in Masonic Support for all their administration, not forgetting E.Kt. John Vazquez and his assistants here at Freemasons' Hall for all their help and support. As we approach the conclusion of Great Priory, let us give thanks in the singing of a great Hymn of Praise, which will inevitably take our thoughts back to the Coronation of King Charles III, and hopefully make us mindful of the privileges we sometimes take for granted. Let us remember especially our colleagues in the Middle East and pray that a solution will be forthcoming to end their plight. I always think of us as a family of Great Priory. Just before the meeting today, I made a telephone call to one of our elders, R.E.Kt. John Stuart Hay, K.C.M., P.Prov.Prior for Hertfordshire, and took the liberty of passing the congratulations and good wishes from this gathering to him on his 100th birthday. With that in mind, I wish you and yours every blessing for the Festive Season and let us pray that our Great Emanuel may guide and direct us into a happy, peaceful and healthy New Year. Thank you, Brother Knights.