

JERUSALEM



Millennium
1023 - 2023



St John *Millennial Ethos of Care*

And the enduring history of the Eye Hospital of St John of Jerusalem

Lyndon da Cruz OStJ, Matthew Glozier OStJ, David H. Verity KStJ

Editors

On behalf of the Ophthalmic Association of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

St John

Millennial Ethos of Care



A Historical Perspective

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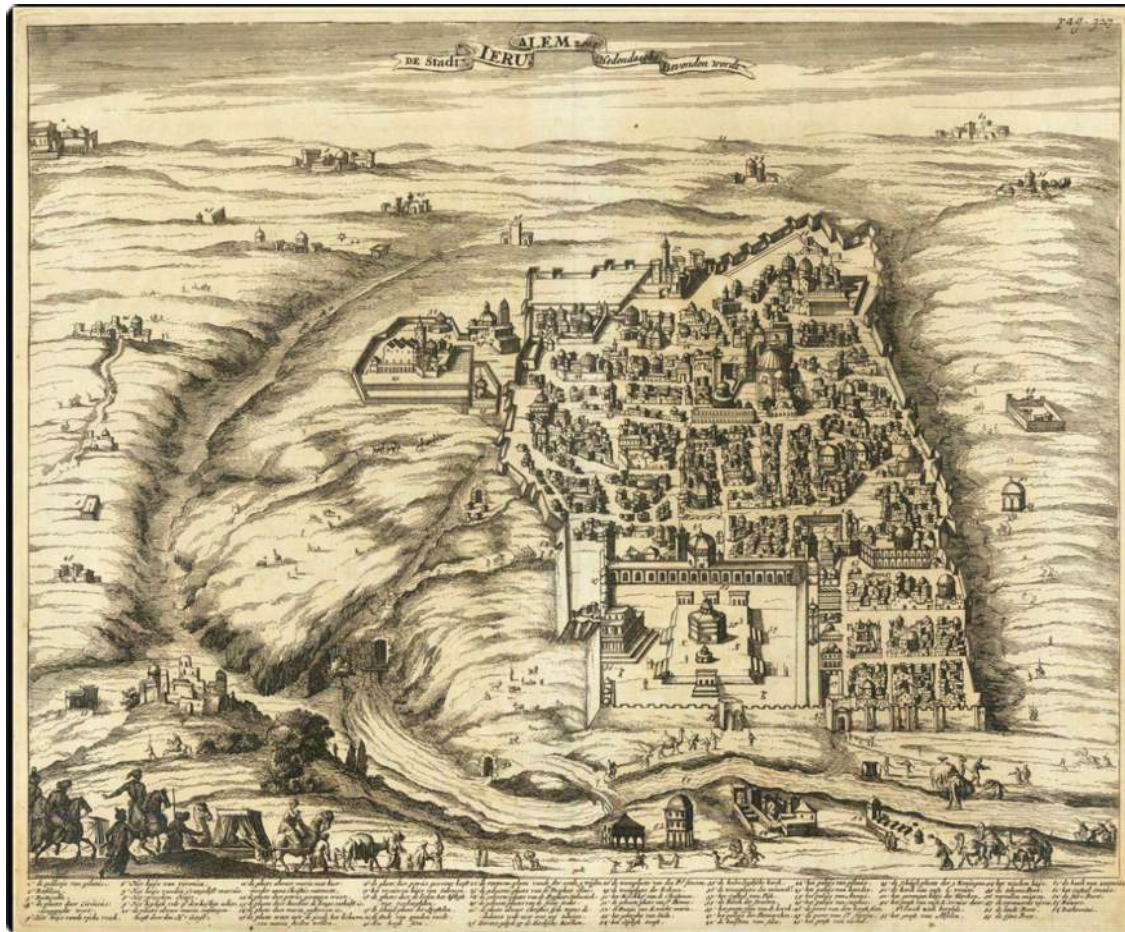
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In 1023 AD Amalfitan traders assumed responsibility for an ancient hospice within the walls of the City of Jerusalem.

A thousand years later, their legacy is one of service and compassion to countless people across the world.

This is a story of hope at difficult times, and an ethos of care which lies at the very heart of the five Johannine Orders today.



PRO FIDE, PRO UTILITATE HOMINUM

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‘View and Description of Jerusalem as it is Today with the Tombs of its Ancient Kings, & some other Curious Antiquities which are found in the Surroundings of this City’

Chatelain, Henri Abraham. 1719

Preface

A Thousand Years of Service in Jerusalem

In 600 AD Pope Gregory I commissioned a hospice and shelter in Jerusalem to treat and care for Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. In about 800 AD, the Roman Emperor Charlemagne extended the hospice significantly. It was operated as a Benedictine Hospital until it was destroyed in 1005 by Caliph A Hakim bi-Amr Allah, along with a great many other buildings.

In 1023 Italian, Spanish, and Greek merchants from the Republic of Amalfi obtained permission from the Egyptian Caliph Ali az-Zahir to rebuild a hospice, monastery and chapel on the site of the



Venice, Genoa,
Amalfi & Pisa

monastery of St. John the Baptist, close to the Holy Sepulchre. It is here that they founded a church called *Sta. Maria ad Latinos*, distinguishing it from churches in which *Greek*, and not *Latin*, ritual prevailed. Two hospitals were also built, one for women and another for men, and dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen and St. John Eleemon (or the *Almoner*), respectively. Later, at an uncertain date, the dedication was changed from St. John the *Almoner* to St. John the *Baptist*.

Over time, the guest house of *Sta. Maria ad Latinos* became more a hospital and hotel than a church, becoming known as 'The Hospital of Jerusalem'. It attended to sick and orphaned children, fed the starving, clothed the needy, and also cared for discharged prisoners.

By 1099 Brother Gerard Tum had made the hospital the centre of its own religious order, and in 1113 a Papal Bull was issued, formally recognising a Hospitaller Order and releasing it of obligation to all temporal powers except to the Holy See.

In 2024 we celebrate this 1000-year ethos of service. Although the Order of St John was not recognised until after 1113 AD (and with the *Venerable Order* being founded in 1888), the principle of serving the poor irrespective of class, race, religion, or the ability to pay lay at the heart of the ancient Persian Bimeristans (Hospitals). The Amalfitan traders, with the Benedictine monks, carried this torch, and it is their work that laid the foundations for the Hospitaller Order of St John in the 12th century. This ethos flourishes throughout the Johannine Orders today, bringing hope, care, and compassion to countless millions of people across the world.

Dr. David H Verity, KStJ MD MA FRCOphth
Order Hospitaller

Sir Andrew Cash, KStJ OBE
Chair SJEHG

Jerusalem 1000: Millennial Ethos of Service

A message from the Lord Prior

The contemporary, highly skilled, and excellent care provided by the Order of St John across 44 countries is inspired by an ethos of care that stretches back over one thousand years.

Benedictine monks who established the first hospice in Jerusalem in the name of St John, and under the now-familiar badge of the eight-pointed white cross, did so to care for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land. Their work grew into a powerful force for good in developing healthcare services in so many different contexts across the world.

The monks' commitment to healthcare, followed by that of the Hospitaller Knights, saw technology at the cutting edge of medicine. Even the magnificent Sacra Infermeria in Valetta, Malta, boasted the longest hospital ward in Europe, where patients dined off silver plates, long before the antibiotic qualities of silver were understood. Between each numbered bed was an *"en suite"* – a place for a chamber pot and wash basin. In the mid 1600's a School of Anatomy and Surgery was established at this hospital.

Today, as one of the five Johannine Orders, St John is a leader in first aid and medical responses in communities across the world. Being 'cutting-edge' in the science of first aid and related areas, and in healthcare delivery in pre-hospital and hospital environments, is fundamental to the Order both today and for our future.

The evolution, and indeed revolution, in emerging areas in medicine, including digital healthcare and artificial intelligence, increasingly gives St John opportunities to better serve "our lords the sick and the poor". This motivation, and the devotion to those we serve, reflects that of the Benedictine monks who established the first St John hospital 1000 years ago. Structures, people, technologies, and healthcare-challenges have all changed dramatically since then. What hasn't changed is a millennial ethos of caring in the safest way and to the highest standard for all those who come to us for help.



Professor Mark Compton, AM GCStJ
Lord Prior, Order of St John

St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

Introduction by the Chair of St John Eye Hospital Group

The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) has a two-part vision: To prevent avoidable blindness, and to be the pre-eminent provider of high-quality eye care to the population of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.

Our work in advancing vision screening for children at a much faster pace starts to bring the first part of the vision within our grasp. Recently winning the coveted Champalimaud Award, one of the largest eye care awards in the world, demonstrates that we are also delivering on the second part of our vision.

Underpinning our work are five long term aims. Firstly, to provide the highest quality service to the patients we serve, regardless of their background. Secondly, to build durable long-term partnerships with all the people and organisations we work together with. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, to value our staff, ensuring they are motivated, developed, kind and caring and can realise their individual potential working in our organisation. Fourthly to make sure that SJEHG is well governed and financially stable. Finally, to ensure that SJEHG is an innovative, research and development led organisation, with high standards of education and training.

I would like to thank you all for supporting us in our vision and our aims - it is much appreciated particularly at this most challenging of times.



Sir Andrew Cash, KStJ OBE
Chair, SJEHG

St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

Introduction by the Chief Executive Officer

For more than 140 years, St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group has provided high-quality charitable care to the most impoverished people living in East Jerusalem, West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Over the past 10 years the Hospital Group performed more than 60,000 major and sight saving eye operations and conducted more than one million three hundred thousand outpatients' examinations. Blindness and visual impairment are highly prevalent, with cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and refractive errors being the leading causes of blindness and visual impairment amongst the population we serve.

In addition to the Hospital-based eye care services, the Group has undertaken several community-based preventative initiatives to combat blindness and visual impairment. These include our vision-screening programme to detect visual issues in children. Thus far, we have screened over 30,000 children, with more than 3,000 referred to the Group for further investigations and treatment.

Screening for retinopathy of prematurity in neonates, and for diabetic retinopathy in adults, is also integral to our community-based work. From the research perspective, our clinical teams lead ophthalmic clinical and genetics research in the country, collaborating and publishing with regional and international partners.

Finally, in recognition of the Group's clinical impact on the lives of the people it serves, the Hospital Group was awarded the CHAMPALIMAUD VISION AWARD in 2023.

Despite the perennial and complex challenges the Hospital faces, it remains steadfastly committed to its mission to provide quality eye care to all - *regardless of race, religion, social class, and the ability to pay.*



Dr Ahmad Ma'ali, KStJ PhD
CEO, SJEHG

Chapter 1

A Call to Alms

Patrick Burgess, OBE DL GCStJ KSG KGCHS

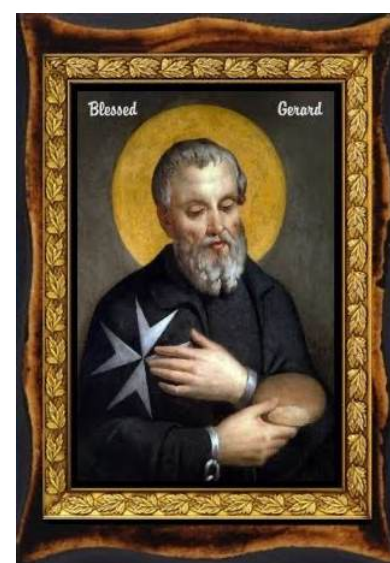


What is the spirit that moves everyone who works in the Johannine Orders and impels them forward? I believe our marching orders as St John people are captured in the words of our founder, tending the sick in Jerusalem in the eleventh century, Blessed Gerard. They speak of compassion, perseverance and practicality and it is these three qualities which distinguish the work of all five Johannine Orders, even today.

Blessed Gerard wrote;

'Our brotherhood will be everlasting because the soil in which our plant is rooted is the misery of the world, and because, God willing, there will always be people who wish to work towards the easing of this sorrow, making the misery more bearable.'

This spirit evoked by Blessed Gerard is, of course, especially embodied in the professed senior knights in the Sovereign Military Order of Malta - the Knights of Justice - who remain celibate, having made vows of poverty chastity and obedience, and whose lives are dedicated to the Order's work among the poor and the sick. But it is a spirit which animates all St John People in all of the five Johannine Orders.



Bishop Tim Stevens, of the Most Venerable Order of St John, points out that for St John people this means traversing the world's contours with our hearts and eyes fastened on three things to preoccupy us – first, the transcendent: the divine power that rules and guides us; secondly, the human lives (so often, so vulnerable) that surround us: and particularly our special concern for their needs; and, thirdly, our personal efforts to become better people: living in this world as if we were already in a heavenly city, but with the mettle of soldiers.



Yet each of us as a single individual cannot generally achieve what a set of people brought together by the same purpose and the same values can achieve. And so, in acknowledging our need to inspire each other and to reflect how we supplement our individual energies and talents, members of St John call each other 'brother' or 'sister': ours is a fraternal bond. And we

draw strength from each other and support each other because, as the Grand Prior of the Most Venerable Order is accustomed to say to new investees at every Investiture Ceremony of the Order, the continuing existence of St John and our given task is not just history but a 'present reality' - a reality imbued with a life force and with attitudes intrinsically linked to the protection of the disadvantaged.

This, surely, is the spirit which carries us - and which we, too, carry - to all those whom we encounter, and treat, and heal.

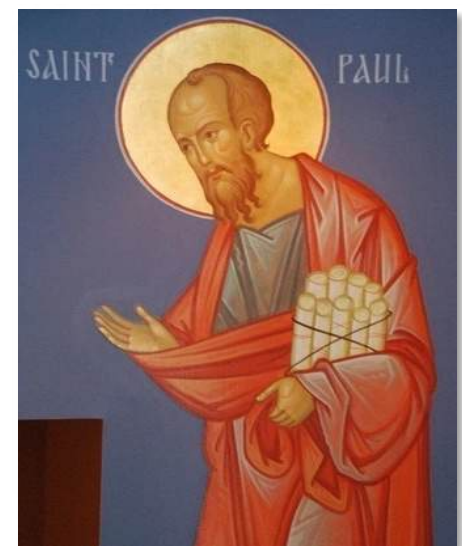


And this bespeaks - as it glaringly did in the Middle Ages - a radical approach to caring. It speaks of the world order to which we are accustomed being turned upside down.

Our mottoes grew up in the Middle Ages when the image in everyone's mind of how the world fitted together was a very structured one - as it still is, though rather differently. And our catchphrase, which singles out the poor as 'our Lords and Masters' was, and still is, revolutionary. Professor Brackenheim, of the Swedish Order of St John, in a searching study of the biblical and medieval sources of our traditions suggests that, in thinking about the modern application of the original Latin motto, '*tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum*' and trying to express it with contemporary relevance, we might sum it up as 'faithful loyalty to the poor and the sick' (deploying the word "faithful" in all its shades of meaning and resonances).

But, surely, the approach to our work which we take - all of us who work in St John - needs to be characterised by a more visceral word than 'task' (though, of course, every order of chivalry is originally founded on the basis that it has a task to perform). So in recent years - and, at first, independently of each other - all the Johannine Orders have been exploring and contemplating why we feel it is appropriate to call what we do - what we are about - the Johannine 'vocation'.

What does this imply? The very existence of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem is a tangible working out of what pursuing a vocation means. It involves both the way we instinctively (and, I hope, generously) behave and our practical approach to our work. In his Epistle to the Galatians, St Paul spells out the nine fruits that spring from living a life prompted by the Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All of these should be intrinsic to the way we behave - indeed, they should be the impulses that well up in us as we journey through our life - but there is another characteristic which is central to the accomplishment of tasks we feel impelled to undertake and raises the quality of what we do: that is 'dedication'.



So, moulded by history and by experience, the Orders of St John are dedicated to the promotion of physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being of our fellow human beings – we all need it!



And in sharing the physical manifestations of our vocation – the Eye Hospital, for one, but also the ambulance services, care homes, refugee camps, food parcels, and so on - we continually seek to build an enduring community in which all St John members can find purpose and enjoyment and to spread this everywhere.

In practical terms, this approach leads us to single out some values as crucial to the realisation of our participation in the Orders of St John, and the Priory of England and the Islands has suggested that these can be best expressed in contemporary English for practical application as respect, unselfishness, excellence, openness and transparency, devotion, togetherness, inclusive diversity, and faithfulness.

These values and attitudes shape both how we do our work in St John, from our young cadets to our older knights, and the quality of what we have to give to others. But, in turn, the holding to these values, and the way in which we actually do our work, shapes us to live our lives in the way encapsulated in the motto of the Most Venerable Order, that is, (and there is no full stop between its two halves): 'For the Faith and in the service of humanity' - 'Pro fide Pro utilitate hominum'.

A Call to Alms

Rendering Service to All Humanity



Chapter 2

1023 AD: Origin and Development of the Johannine Orders' Ethos of Care

Matthew Glozier, OStJ (Order Deputy Librarian), and David Verity, KStJ (Order Hospitaller)

The Origins of St John



Blessed Gerard Tum

1023 is the earliest cited date when a group of merchants from the Italian maritime republic of Amalfi founded a hospital in Jerusalem, subsequently becoming the centre of activity of the Blessed Gerard Tum and his followers. In 1113 the organization received papal recognition as an Order of the Church, and in time developed into a military-religious Order.

Originally known as the Knights Hospitaller, with a complex history across Europe, it continues to this day as one of the oldest and most prestigious orders of chivalry, The Sovereign Military Order of Malta.



Flag of Duchy of Amalfi

Despite this rich 1000-year history, the exact date of the founding of the hospital remains obscure, with the years 1048, 1063 and 1070 often quoted. Favouring an earlier date, Count Melchior de Vogüé, a distinguished French archaeologist, narrowed the foundation of the hospital to between 1014 and 1023.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre

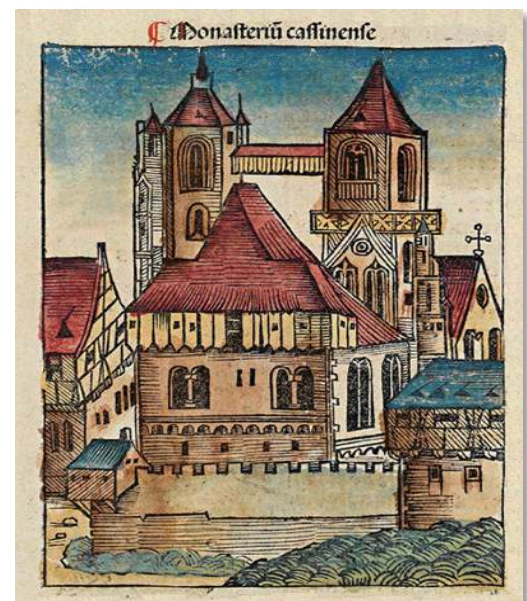
The year 1014 marked the end of the persecution of Christians and destruction of religious sites, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In 1020, Sitt al-Mulk, sister of the late tyrant Hakim, assumed the position of regent of the Fatimid caliphate, and from 1020 onwards Nicephorus I, patriarch of Jerusalem, directed the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre and other Christian edifices. The year 1023 is considered to be when Caliph Zahir granted formal protection to Frankish religious in Jerusalem via a *firman*, an Islamic royal mandate.



Thus, in 1023, merchants from the Amalfitan colony in Constantinople began to develop land in the Muristan sector of the Old City of Jerusalem, close to the Holy Sepulchre. This area took its name from the *bimaristan* that once stood there, an ancient Persian hospital whose foundations dated back over 500 years (Persian *bīmār* “sick”, *-stān* denoting place). The Amalfitans built a church dedicated to St Mary called “of the Latins” to reflect their European origin and revived the famous *bimaristan*.

Such Byzantine charitable institutions, or *xenodochium* (place of charity), date from the fifth century; the Amalfi foundation in 1023 was, therefore, effectively a renewal of a pre-existing tradition of worship and hospitality on the Muristan site.

Amatus Casinensis, a Benedictine monk from the Abbey of Montecassino, wrote in his *History of the Normans* an account of a rich man from Amalfi who financed the foundation of hospitals in Jerusalem and Antioch. Around 1023 there was a colony of Amalfitan merchants living in Constantinople headed by Mauro, a nobleman from a line of wealthy Amalfi patricians, and of whom there is a detailed overview in The *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* of Vitolo. Mauro is thought to be the benefactor and endower of the new hospital in Jerusalem in 1023. This is plausible as in his biography, it is written that: *In May 1023, together with his mother and sister Regale, Mauro proceeded to the division of Mount Norule ... with the monastery of Ss. Quirico and Giulitta di Atrani, which was entitled to four fifths.*



Abbey of Montecassino

William of Tyre based his account of the hospital's foundation on the *firman* of 1023, issued by Caliph Zahir. Raised in Jerusalem, William served as archbishop of Tyre from 1175 to 1186. His chronicle is titled *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* (*History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*) or *Historia Ierosolimitana* (*History of Jerusalem*). Writing in 1169-73, William of Tyre notes of the hospital: “One has in the city a church of those from Amalfi ... this church still has the name Saint Mary of the Latins; and there we have a pauper’s hospital with a chapel dedicated to Saint John the Almoner. This is the St John who was Patriarch of Alexandria”. William’s description is supported by an earlier account, the anonymous *Historia belli sacri*, which chronicles the First Crusade and the early years of the Crusader states, the Latin Kingdom. Written by a monk from Montecassino, it is sometimes referred to as the “Monte Cassino Chronicle”.



William of Tyre

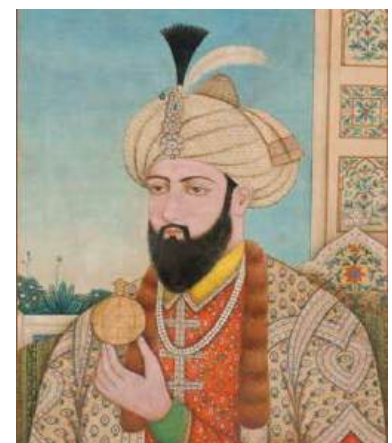
This early foundation date is also supported in a brief, anonymous medieval account of the life of John, Archbishop of Amalfi (c.1070–c.1082), which records his pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to the hospital: *“Here he went to Palestine for the sake of visiting the holy places, where with the highest he was received with honour by the Amalfitans; who had been in Jerusalem a few years before they had built hospitals to receive men and women, in which they were fed, and the sick were cared for, defending them from the Saracens, and to make it easier they had almost instituted a religious life.”*



Jacques de Vitry

Jacques de Vitry confirms that *“St John’s Hospital had its beginning in the times of the Syrians and Greeks, when the Holy City was still held in bondage under the dominion of the Saracens”*. Another early account, written by Ekkehard of Aura, confirms the hospital existed long before the First Crusade of 1099, and stating that assistance to pilgrims never ceased. His *Hierosolymita and World Chronicle (On the Crusades)* records that *“the hospital ... had never deserted Jerusalem”*. This narrative is further supported by that of Albert of Aachen who noted that, during the chaos of the siege in 1099, the Turks and Saracens spared from attack only the Holy Sepulchre and the structures in the Muristan, from which they instead exacted tribute.

Nasir-i-Khusrau, the Persian poet, traveller, and civil administrator, described the city of Jerusalem in 1047: *“The Holy City itself possesses an excellent bimaristan (or hospital), which is provided for by considerable sums that were given for this purpose. Great numbers of [sick poor] people are here served with potions and lotions; for there are physicians who receive a fixed stipend and attend at the bimaristan.”*



Nasir-i-Khusrau



Joseph Delaville Le Roulx

Joseph Delaville Le Roulx, the nineteenth-century French historian of the medieval Knights Hospitaller, analysed the date for the hospital’s foundation in detail. He concluded: *“We know, by distinct and concordant testimonies, that merchants of Amalfi, struck by the precarious situation of the Christians of the Holy Land, obtained [from the] Fatimid caliphs of Egypt, masters of Syria, with whom they were in frequent commercial relations, permission for the Latins to establish a church and a hospice in Jerusalem”*.

Chapter 3

The two St Johns - St John the Almoner and St John the Baptist

Lyndon da Cruz, OStJ

In 1023 the citizens of Amalfi had been granted land in Jerusalem and the permission to re-establish a hospice, which had recently been destroyed, for the reception of pilgrims. The site was close to the church of *St. John the Almoner* and the hospice become known as the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, referring to the Almoner. Later a magnificent church was erected to St. John the Baptist on the traditional site of his parents' abode, very close to the site of the hospice.



Church of John the Baptist and its Crypt, in the Muristan area of the Old City, Jerusalem

Blessed Gerard, who took the title of Guardian and Provost of the order, died in 1118, and was succeeded by Raymond du Puy. To their former duty of hospitality and attendance upon the sick, the latter added that of knighthood, in opposition to infidels. This soon became the principal object of the order which, under its new organization, was named after St. John the Baptist, and the title of *Guardian* was exchanged for that of *Master*.

St. John the Almoner



St John (also known as St John the Almsgiver, John the Merciful, John V of Alexandria, John Eleymon, and Johannes Eleemon), was the Chalcedonian Patriarch of Alexandria in the early 7th century AD (from 606 to 616). He is the patron saint of Casarano, Italy and of Limassol, Cyprus, the country of his birth. He was born at Amathus in Cyprus about 550, the son of Epiphanius, governor of Cyprus, and of noble descent. In his early life he was married and had children, but they and his wife soon died, whereupon he entered the religious life.

He was a reformer who attacked simony and fought heresy by means of improvements in religious education. He also reorganized the system of weights and measures for the sake of the poor and put a stop to corruption among the officials. He increased the number of churches in Alexandria from seven to seventy. He was best associated with charity and attendance to the poor with many anecdotes about his almsgiving surrounding his life. John is said to have devoted the entire revenues of his *see* to the alleviation of those in need.

The ministry of Vitalis of Gaza, a monk who worked among the prostitutes of the city, was a noteworthy episode of John's reign. The patriarch was considered to have behaved with wisdom for not punishing this monk who was notorious for visiting the seedy part of town, and his judgment was vindicated only after the death of Vitalis when the story of the monk's mission of mercy became known.

When the Sassanids sacked Jerusalem in 614, John sent large supplies of food, wine, and money to the fleeing Christians. But eventually the Persians occupied Alexandria, and John himself, in his old age, was forced to flee to his native country of Cyprus where he died between 616 and 620.



From Cyprus his body was moved to Constantinople, then in 1249 to Venice, where there is a church dedicated to him, the Chiesa di San Giovanni Elemosinario, although his relics are preserved in another church, San Giovanni in Bragora, in a separate chapel.

Another relic of him was sent by Sultan Bayezid II in 1489 to King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary. It was placed in the private Royal Chapel in Buda Castle, which was dedicated to him. His body now lies in the *St. John the Merciful Chapel* in St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava, Slovakia.

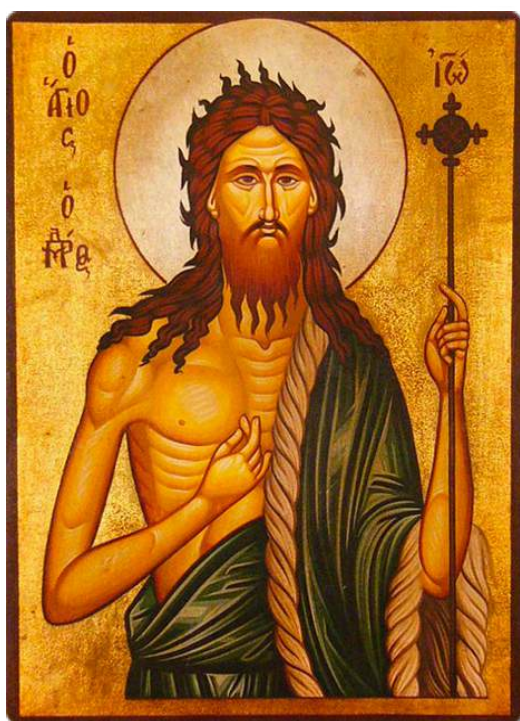
A biography was written by his contemporary Leontios of Neapolis. His feast day is celebrated on the 23d of January in the Roman church and the 11th of November in the Greek church.

St John the Baptist

"Behold I will send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me..." "Malachi 4:5-6

"The voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the desert a path for him'" Isaiah 40:3

"Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist. For Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him." Flavius Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews, 18.5.2



St John the Baptist (d. c. 30 CE) was a 1st-century itinerant preacher in Judea. His life and person are known from the New Testament and from the writing of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37-100 CE) who wrote a history of the Jews. This non-Christian source is seen as a powerful verifier of John and aspects of his life.

Although the Gospel of Mark implies that the arrival of John the Baptist is the fulfilment of a prophecy from the Book of Isaiah, the words quoted - "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way – a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him'", are actually a composite of texts from Isaiah, Malachi and the Book of Exodus. Matthew and Luke drop the first part of the reference.

The Gospel of Luke adds the only account of John's infancy, introducing him as the miraculous son of Zechariah, an old priest, and his wife Elizabeth, who was past menopause and therefore unable to bear children - "nothing is impossible for god". According to this account, the birth of John was foretold by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah while he was performing his functions as a priest in the temple of Jerusalem. Since he is described as a priest of the house of Abijah and Elizabeth as one of

the daughters of Aaron, this would make John a descendant of Aaron on both his father's and mother's side. It is written in the New Testament, that Zechariah became mute from the time the Angel visited him until the time John was named. Elizabeth is described as a "relative" of Mary the mother of Jesus, in Luke 1:36. There is no mention of a family relationship between John and Jesus in the other Gospels, and therefore various scholars have described it as "of dubious historicity" while others as "artificial and undoubtedly Luke's creation".

Of his childhood and adolescence only "the child grew, and was strengthened in spirit; and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel" appears in [Luke 2:80](#).



The Gospels note that John had led a desert-life and that at the approximate age of 30 he comes forth to deliver his message. *"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. . .the word of the Lord was made unto John, the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching"* (Luke 3:1-3), clothed in garments "of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins"; and "his meat" ... " was locusts and wild honey" (Matthew 3:4). "Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the country about Jordan" (Matthew 3:5), drawn by his strong and winning personality, went out to him; the austerity of his life added immensely to the weight of his words; for the

simple folk, he was truly a prophet (Matthew 11:9). "Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2), such was the burden of his teaching that men of all conditions flocked round him.



The two seminal events of John's ministry were the recognition and declaration of Jesus as the Messiah, proclaiming "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sin of the world" ([John 1:29](#)). The second is the Baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan at Bethany. Some scholars maintain that John belonged to the Essenes, a semi-ascetic Jewish sect which lived in the community at Qumran, expected a messiah, and practised ritual baptism. John used baptism as the central symbol or sacrament of his pre-messianic movement. Most biblical scholars agree that John baptized Jesus, and several New Testament accounts report that some of Jesus's early followers had previously been followers of John.

Flavius Josephus writes in *Jewish Antiquities* (18.118) “Now many people came in crowds to him, for they were greatly moved by his words. Herod, who feared that the great influence John had over the masses might put them into his power and enable him to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best to put him to death. In this way, he might prevent any mischief John might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late”.



According to the New Testament and Flavius Josephus, John was sentenced to death and subsequently beheaded by Herod Antipas around AD 30 at the Herodian fortress of Machaerus (Mukawir in modern Jordan). John had rebuked him for divorcing his wife Phasaelis and then unlawfully wedding Herodias, the wife of his brother Herod Philip I. Josephus also mentions John in the *Antiquities of the Jews* and states that he was executed by order of Herod Antipas in the fortress at Machaerus “Accordingly John was sent as a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Machaerus, the castle I already mentioned, and was put to death”.

Legacy of St John

Followers of John existed well into the 2nd century AD, and some proclaimed him to be the messiah. In modern times, the followers of John the Baptist are the Mandaeans, an ancient ethno-religious group who believe that he is their greatest and final prophet.

Two Catholic churches and one mosque claim to have the head of John the Baptist: the Umayyad Mosque, in Damascus (Syria); the church of San Silvestro in Capite, in Rome; and Amiens Cathedral, in France (the French king would have had it brought from the Holy Land after the Fourth Crusade). A fourth claim is made by the Residenz Museum in Munich, Germany, which keeps a reliquary containing what the Wittelsbach rulers of Bavaria believed to be the head of Saint John.

Iconography of St John

When and How John the Baptist is depicted, including his symbols.



Representations normally show St. John the Baptist clad in camel's skin. The camel skin is important not only because it is specified in the gospels but because, along with the leather belt that is also pictured in some cases, it refers to John's status as the promised return of Elijah, who was similarly dressed. Further important attributes are the lamb, often lying or standing on a book, and a cross held like a military standard, sometimes with a banner attached (the lamb and the flag). St John is often pointing either to a lamb or Christ but implying that he has led the way to Christ. Finally, his severed head itself may be used as an attribute, often with some reference to the dance of Salome that precedes it.

Classical scenes depicting John

The Nativity



The Golden Legend has an entry for the birth of the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25). It points out that the medieval church year celebrated the nativities of only two persons, Jesus and John the Baptist. John's image is pictured in the first and third panels of the Salimbenis' remarkable fresco cycle in Urbino. The panels faithfully depict Luke except in placing the Virgin Mary at the birth. She is placed there in the Golden Legend (she "did the office and service to receive St. John Baptist when he was born") and more explicitly in the *Historia Scholastica* ("the Blessed Virgin Mary was the first to lift him up").

Childhood and Youth

This is the one area in which the art relies on traditions rather than scripture, which states only that "the child grew, and was strengthened in spirit; and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel" (Luke 2:80). Most familiar are the Madonna and Child images with John the Baptist, sometimes accompanied by adults such as his mother Elizabeth.



Mary and Elizabeth with Jesus
and John the Baptist
Friedrich Overbeck

Preaching

Most images of his preaching focus on the moment when he declared, "*Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). As such, many early churches depicted John pointing to a lamb that symbolized Christ. Later images had John pointing directly to Christ. The Salimbenis fresco has a panel of John preaching against Herod, albeit a rare depiction of the saint.



Scenes from the life of John the Baptist
c.1416, Fresco Oratory of San Giovanni Battista, Urbino

The Baptism of Christ



"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.' Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"
Matthew 3:13-17

The Dance of Salome, The Beheading and Death of John

According to the gospels, Herod's stepdaughter Salome performed a dance that delighted him. For her reward her mother asked her to request John's head on a platter (Matthew 14:3-12).



Source material:

McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopedia Author and Publisher - Catholic Online
Printable Catholic Saints Additional Content Provided by Wikipedia

Chapter 4



The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem

(With thanks to the Priory of St John in the USA for providing this article from their Investiture brochure)

A thousand years ago, before the first crusade, the Abbey of St. Mary in Jerusalem established a hospice to care for sick pilgrims and their companions. It was attached to a small church nearby in the Muristan district of the city, dedicated to St John and run by monks led by a certain Brother Gerard.



When Godfrey de Bouillon, leader of the Christian Kingdom founded in Jerusalem in 1099, learned of the service of these monks for the sick - irrespective of creed, origin or means - he gave Gerard and his brethren resources and a building to establish a larger, independent Hospital. These "Brothers Hospitaller" so excelled at this mission that in 1113 Pope Paschal recognized them as the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, granting it independence from all secular and religious authority other than the papacy. "Hospitallers," as both Brothers and Sisters were called, took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and dedicated themselves to serve "our Lords the poor and the sick."

Some who travelled to the Holy Land gave time and talent to religious institutions there before returning home. The Order of St John used these volunteers to protect the people they cared for in Hospitaller properties, and to set pilgrims safely on their way. Offered the chance to become monks in the Order without surrendering their vocations as knights or roles as sergeants, many accepted.

By the middle of the 12th century, the Order of St John had become a military-religious order, now called the Knights Hospitaller, whose members vowed to care for the sick as well as to defend Christianity. The Order flourished across the Crusader states and Europe, with the devout and many others who had been to Jerusalem giving money and property to the Order to carry out God's work. The Order's leaders wove these gifted estates into a supply chain supporting its operations in Jerusalem and the hospices and hospitals it operated wherever it went.

The Order of St John began to be granted property in Britain and Ireland in the 1140's, and from 1185 the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish estates were run from its Priory at Clerkenwell, London. In 1540 King Henry VIII, who had broken with papal authority and dissolved other religious orders in England, did the same to the Order, confiscating the lands given it. This spelled the end of the medieval English Priory.



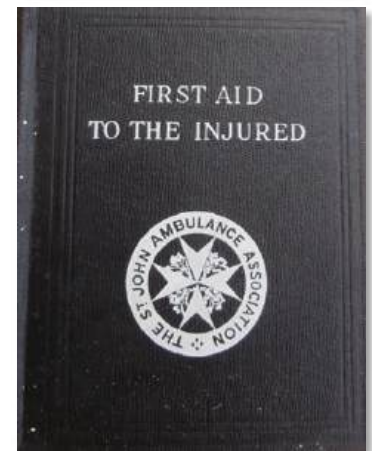
The Order of St John continued in western and central Europe, constantly facing other challenges, including the expulsion by the Ottoman Turks from its sovereign domain of Rhodes in 1522, the Great Siege of its new headquarters in Malta in 1565, and its most difficult period after the loss to Napoleon of Malta in 1798 when its members were scattered.



In the wake of the Order's losses, the strongest contingent of members who were in France after the Napoleonic Wars sought to revive the British branch. These members were determined that the Hospitaller tradition of caring for the sick should return to England, and from there return to the Levant. Out of this grew the St John Ambulance Association, founded in part to cope with the large number of workplace and transport accidents an Industrial nation produced. The Association trained ordinary people to give assistance on the spot, published manuals, ran First Aid classes and formalized examinations for First Aid



certificates. Proving immensely popular, the Association spread from factories to villages to more affluent suburbs. Thousands were certified and banded together as "Ambulance Corps" (in 1877) and the "St John Ambulance Brigade" (in 1887). These two foundations of the Order would later merge as "St John Ambulance." Often working with the Red Cross, St John trained volunteers and reserves in times of conflict and set up an extensive network of medical and welfare services in times of peace.



In 1882, the British Order acquired land and set up an Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem to treat the high incidence of eye disease in the region. Flourishing today, the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital serves the many in need of treatment through its hospitals, clinics, and mobile outreach units.

In 1888, in recognition of its work, Queen Victoria made the British Order of St John a Royal Order of Chivalry with the title "The Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem." King George V, an enthusiastic supporter, added "Most" to the formal title in 1926 to permanently recognize the immense sacrifice St John personnel made in World War I. The English Monarch is always the Order's Sovereign Head; the Sovereign Head is His Majesty King Charles III, and the Grand Prior is HRH Richard, Duke of Gloucester KG, GCVO.



In the 20th century, separate Priories of the Order were established in Scotland, Wales, South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia. They were joined by the United States in 1996. In October 1999, as part of major constitutional changes in the Order, the Priory of England and the Islands was created. In this century, Kenya, Singapore, and Hong Kong became Priories. The leaders of the eleven Priories, along with the five Great Officers and the Chairman of St John Eye Hospital Group, form the ruling body of the Order, the Grand Council. Additionally, there are 27 St John Associations around the world.

The Order's International Office, founded in October 1999, supports the Grand Council, acting as a link between the Priories, St John Associations and St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group. It also has programs that support St John Associations, many of which are in developing countries. The International Office is situated near St John's Gate which dates from the early 16th Century



Priory of England at Clerkenwell, and which houses the Order's Museum and Library. Visitors are always welcome, whether they are members of the Order or not. Across the road, the 12th Century Crypt Chapel of the Priory Church, having survived the dissolution of 1540, is used to this day for the Order's religious services. Following World War II, the Parish Church of St John, located above the historic crypt chapel, was acquired by the Order, rebuilt, and is now used for the Priory of England Investitures.

Over the years, Florence Nightingale, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and the late King Hussein of Jordan have all been active in the Order. The Order has become a major international charity, accredited to the U.N. and open to persons of all faiths who can support the Christian principles of the Order's work. Its membership numbers some 21,000 worldwide, with over 250,000 volunteers and professional staff in over 30 countries who provide vital services such as First Aid,



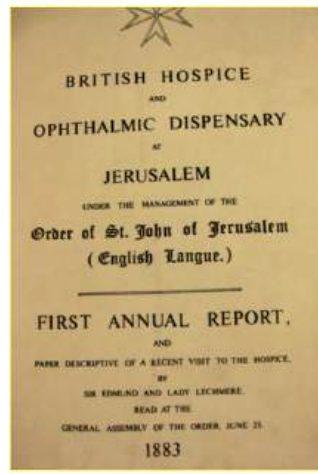
ambulance and rescue services, disaster response, home-based care, and care homes for the elderly. True to its medieval roots, the Order's mission continues to be to prevent and relieve sickness and injury and to act to enhance the health and well-being of people all over the world regardless of race, creed, or ability to pay. We are today one of five Orders of St. John headed by a member of a Royal family.

Chapter 5

The St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

(With thanks to the American Priory for providing this article from their Investiture brochure)

Built by Queen Victoria in 1882, the first Eye Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem opened on the road



to Bethlehem, immediately outside the ancient walls of Jerusalem, fulfilling the Order's desire to return to the Holy Land to exercise charity. To this day it retains its reputation as a humanitarian center of excellence for high quality eye care and education in the Middle East. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hospital Group was the sole eye care provider to have remained open in the Palestinian territories.

Early in Hospital history, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Rafil Meir Panisel Haham Bashi, issued his blessing in a manuscript dated 2nd Hesvan 5646 (October 11, 1886). The spirit of common purpose remains alive today in shared academics and collegial professorships with the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem and other humanitarian organizations.

The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group is a heavily subsidized, fee-based establishment of the Order of St John. It is the only charitable provider of eye care in the region. About 75% of its income is derived from donations and grants, and it provides diagnosis and treatment to thousands of people most in need without regard to race, religion, national origin, gender, age, creed, or ability to pay. The main facility is in East Jerusalem, with additional hospitals in Hebron and Gaza City, permanent clinics in Anabta and Kufor Aquab and mobile outreach vans providing screening and treatment to remote areas of the West Bank and Gaza. In 2017 an additional



clinic was opened in the Muristan, the original site of the Hospital foundation by the Blessed Gerard. Training local doctors and nurses to become ophthalmic specialist and conducting research are the other primary objectives of the Hospital's ethos. In this fashion the Hospital Group invests in the region by steadily enhancing resources and knowledge. In April 2008, the Eye Hospital became the first Palestinian hospital to be awarded the three-year Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation. JCI is a US-based organization that has established safety and quality service standards for health facilities worldwide.

More than 3.5 million Palestinians live in the region, with 2 million in Gaza. The incidence of irreversible blindness there is 10 times higher than in the West, yet 80% is preventable. Diabetes, corneal opacity, glaucoma, cataracts, and severe allergic eye disease are rampant. In particular, children under 10 years of age suffer from developmental eye conditions, representing 25% of the Hospital's patients in the West Bank and 50% in Gaza. The Hospital treats men, women and children of all ages and nurtures health care prevention programs for families that can change the lives of a generation, affecting their personal and financial future, and the region's peaceful development.



Over 143,000 pediatric and adult outpatients were treated in 2022 for eye disease, and 6,900 sight-saving operations were performed. The patient volume continues to climb year after year. The Outreach Program, established in 1982, takes first-class ophthalmic care through mobile clinics to underprivileged populations in remote villages of the West Bank and Gaza, many of whom have no access to any other primary medical care. In 2022, the mobile Outreach team treated 13,200 patients and educated over 7,500 through its outreach program. The Hospital in Gaza treated over 39,700 patients and performed over 2,980 major operations for those unable to travel to Jerusalem. The work of the Hospital Group can be seen to encourage peace and cohesion between communities in the Holy Land since it provides a vital service to everyone, irrespective of where they are from or their religious identity.



In common with its medieval precursor, the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group remains a force for good in the Holy Land, serving “our lords, the sick and the poor.” Its work echoes and puts into practice the great principles of the Order of St John: Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum (For the Faith and in the Service of Humanity).

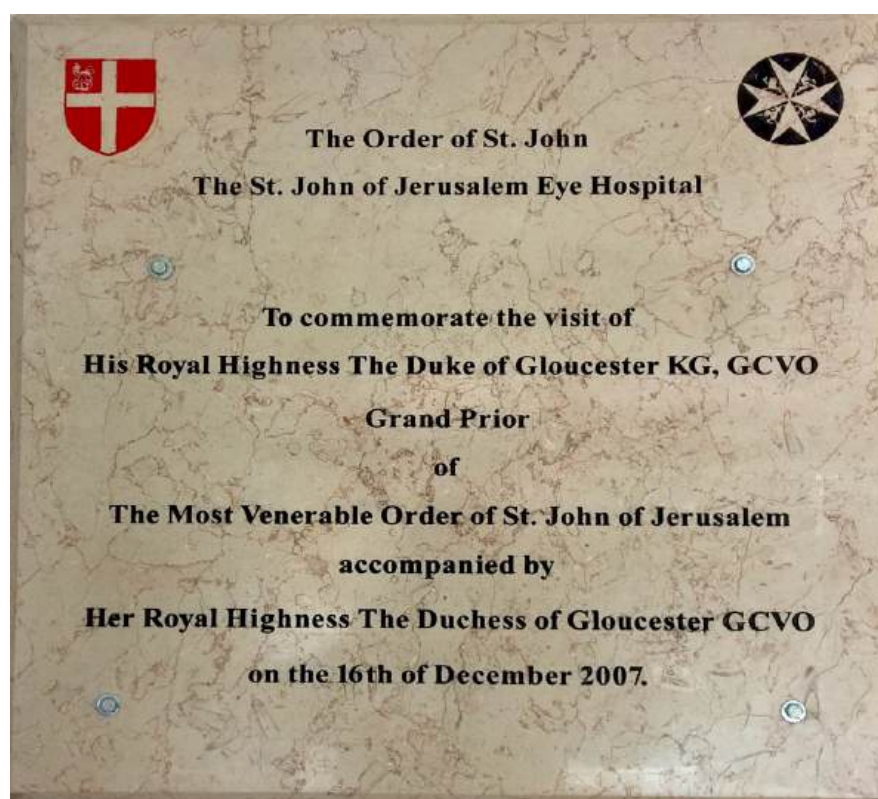
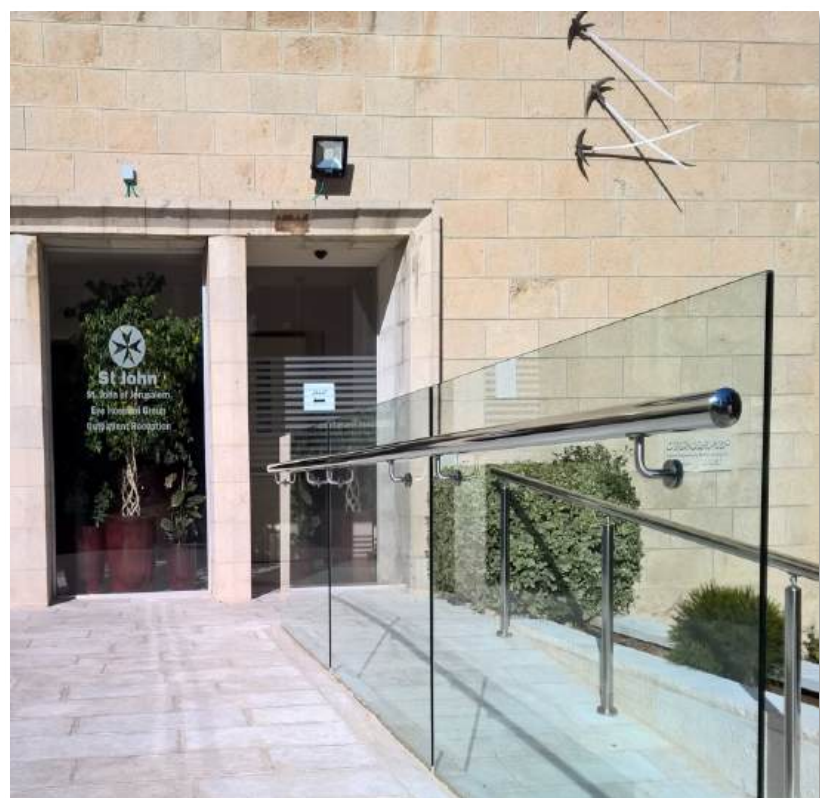
For more information, visit the Hospital's website at:

www.stjohnneyehospital.org

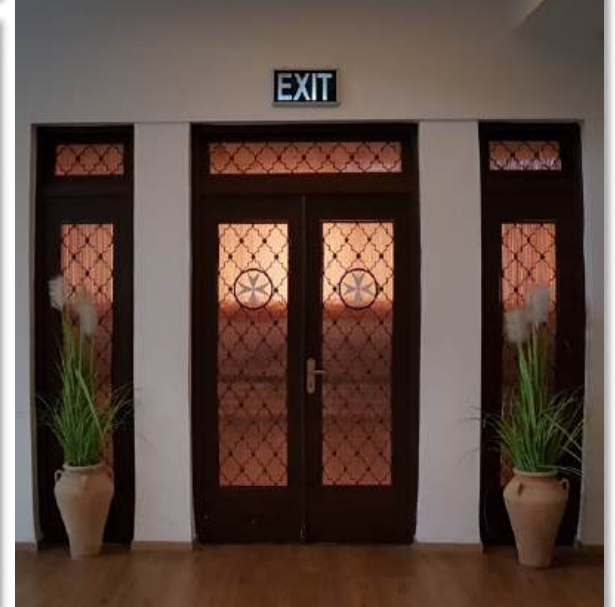
Views of the Hospital of St John in Jerusalem



Views of the Hospital of St John in Jerusalem



Views of the Hospital of St John in Jerusalem



Chapter 6

The Ancient Bimaristans: *Origins of St John Reborn*

David H Verity, KStJ



Legend tells of a hospital in Jerusalem stretching as far back as the Maccabean era in 100 BC, with more definitive records dating from the sacking of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Roman emperor Titus. Over half a century later, during the reign of King Antiochus V in 603AD, Pope Gregory I commissioned a hospital in the Christian Quarter of the Old City to care for pilgrims.

However, it was the Persians, not Pope Gregory, who developed the hospital movement in the Middle East. *Bimaristan* is a Persian word (بیمارستان *bīmārestān*) meaning "hospital", with *Bimar-* from Middle Persian (Pahlavi) *vīmār* or *vemār*, meaning "sick" plus *-stan* as location suffix (as in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, etc). In the medieval Islamic world, the word 'Bimaristan' was used to indicate a hospital where the ill were welcomed and cared for by qualified staff. Thus, Bimaristan: *The place of the sick*.

One of the first reported Bimaristans comes from the time of Muhammad, when, at the Battle of the Trench in 627 AD, he ordered a tent be assembled to provide medical care for wounded soldiers. Later, the first Muslim hospital service was built in the courtyard of the Prophet's mosque in the city of Madinah. 150 years later, in 707 AD, the first formally-recognised Bimaristan was founded in Damascus by al-Waleed bin Abdel Malek, not far from the shrine of St. John in the grand Umayyad Mosque.



Battle of the Trench

Over time, Caliphs and rulers expanded the Bimaristans to include salaried doctors and pharmacists. Of interest, the Bimaristans across the Islamic world were secular, and served people regardless of race, religion, citizenship, gender, or the ability to pay. No one was turned away, nor there was no limit to the duration of their stay.



The Bimaristan in Granada

If not impressive enough, there were separate male and female wards, equally equipped, with same-gender nurses. These wards were further divided into areas for mental disease, contagion (such as leprosy), non-contagious disease, surgery, medicine, and eye disease. The latter would have involved the management of patients with trachoma (also known as the 'Mesopotamian Scourge' and subsequently the 'Egyptian Ophthalmia'), a blinding disease which also led to the founding of John Eye Hospital over a thousand years later in 1882.

Bimaristans also served as medical schools, and as such might be considered the forebears of modern medical practice. Indeed, Middle Eastern medicine preserved, systematized and developed the medical knowledge of classical antiquity, including Hippocrates, Galen and Dioscorides. Furthermore, meticulous patient records were maintained, forming a valuable resource for managing future patients -- Islamic hospitals were the first to keep such written records. Hospital facilities included modern lecture facilities, a kitchen, pharmacy, library, mosque, and a chapel. Open wounds were sterilised with leaches and dressed with honey. Food was served on platters of silver due to its antibacterial properties, and musicians employed to cheer up patients. Was there no end to their ingenuity and understanding of the human condition?

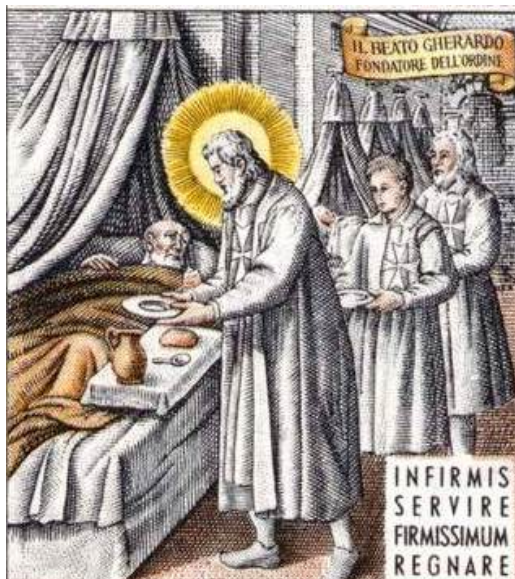


If medical regulation had an origin, it was surely in 931 AD, when Caliph Al-Muqtadir learned of the death of one of his subjects due to a clinical error. Doubtless the unfortunate physician met an ignominious end, but the event led to the first medical licensing Board, and a Caliphate ministry of Inspection was established.

Amalfitan traders took charge of the ancient Hospice in Jerusalem in 1023, and in 1113 Pope Paschal II approved a Hospitaller Order which governed the establishment until their departure for Acre in 1244. As the Hospitallers travelled ever westward, they founded Hospitals across the Mediterranean basin, the most famous of all being that in Malta, justly earning the nickname 'Nurse of the Mediterranean', and operational without interruption from 1574 until 1798.

Remarkably, the Hospitaller complex in Jerusalem continued to house pilgrims until the 16th century, when the Sultan quarried the buildings to rebuild the city walls. However, and perhaps more even more surprisingly, and against all the odds, St John Eye Hospital Group now has a clinic on the site of the ancient Hospice.

In the 1880's the newly formed Order of St John took possession of a plot in the 'Muristan' area of the Old City of Jerusalem on the junction of Muristan street and David street, close to the Lutheran



Church of the Redeemer. The plot was largely overlooked for centuries, guarded only by a lone monument to St John's ancient past. But in 2015 the site was developed, and on 13th October 2016 (International World Sight Day), St John once again opened its doors to patients in the Old City. It is now home to an eye clinic, a peace garden, a museum, a covered seated area for visitors, and a terrace over the souk on David street, with commanding views of the Dome of the Rock and the Mount of Olives. All this was achieved in collaboration with Taawon ('Welfare Association'), a leading Palestinian non-profit organization (as part of their *Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Program*), and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

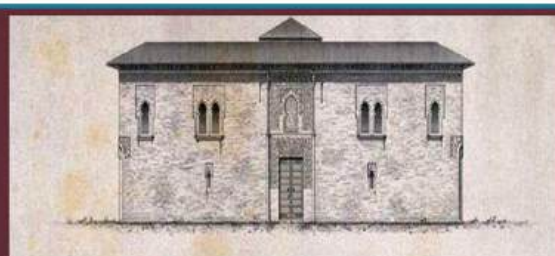
The Ancient Bimaristans: Origins of St John Reborn

An Illustrative Summary

Bimaristan

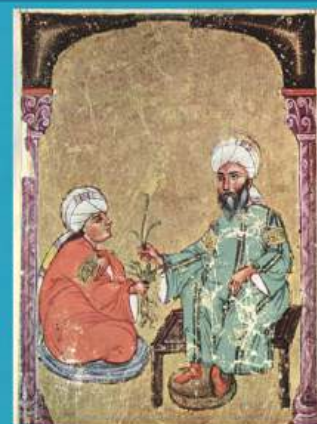
Medicine in the Medieval World

- The Hospice was built in the area of the Muristan
- In the medieval Islamic world the word "Bimaristan" was used for a hospital where the ill were cared for by qualified staff
- A word derived from 'Bimaristan
- Persian (بيمارستان *bīmārestān*) meaning "hospital"
- *Bimar*- from Middle Persian (Pahlavi) of *vīmār* or *vemār*, meaning "sick"
- *Stan* as location and place suffix
- Umayyad Caliph Al-Walid ibn Abd built the 1st bimaristan in Damascus in 707 AD.



The Bimaristan in Granada

Middle Eastern medicine preserved, systematized and developed the medical knowledge of classical antiquity, including that of Hippocrates, Galen and Dioscorides



Origins of the Hospital of St John



- Historical records describe a hostel built within Jerusalem's city walls by Pope Gregory the Great in 600 AD.
- The hospice was destroyed, and rebuilt, by the Persians soon after its founding.
- Rebuilt again in 629AD after the Roman invasion
- And for a third time in 1009 following the destruction by the Fatimid Caliphate.



Gregory is one of the Latin Fathers and a Doctor of the Church



The Fatimid Caliphate (Arabic: الخلافة الفاطمية) was an Ismaili Shia caliphate of the 10th to the 12th centuries AD

The Ancient Bimeristans: Origins of St John Reborn

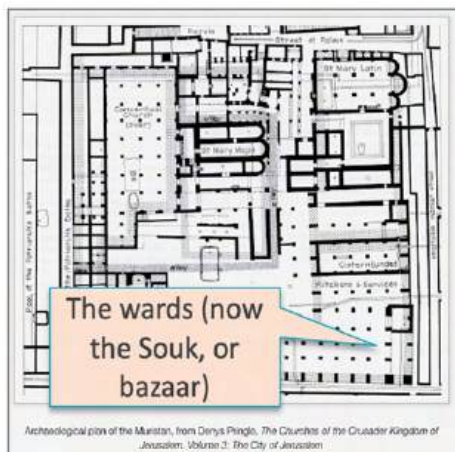
An Illustrative Summary



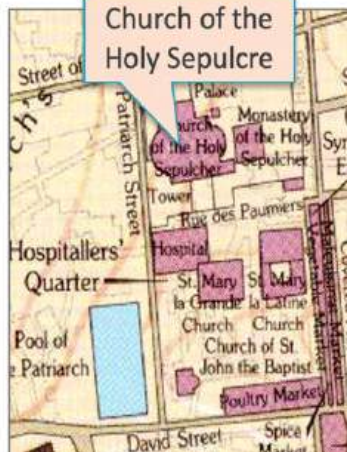
The Knights Hospitaller Complex in the Muristan



- The Knight's complex was large enough to house over 1000 in-patients, with separate male and female wards.
- In times of emergency it could accommodate as many as **2000**.



The Knights referred to the patients 'Our Lords, the sick'



Hospitallers attending to patients, wearing a hair shirt to remind them of their calling to serve!



A Papal Bull - Pie Posulatio Voluntatis

February 15th 1113



- Run by Amalfan traders from 1023
- Taken on by the Knights of St John in 1070
- Provost: Blessed Gerard Tum (aka Thom, Tenque)
- 1113: Pope Paschal II approved a hospitaller religious order
- >>> **'The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta.'**
- Independent from all temporal power, save the Holy See.



- Provost of Hospice in Jerusalem
- Tum recruited Order's first members, secured papal approval.



Papal bull founding the Order



Church of St John the Baptist in the Muristan:
Site of the Hospice of Italian merchants from Amalfi and Salerno in 1023

Views of the Muristan



מתחם מוריסטאן ساحة الموريسستان Muristan Complex

In the past a Crusader complex that included a church and hospital for pilgrims. The name is a distortion of the Persian-Turkish word "Bimaristan", meaning hospital

كانت في الماضي موقعا صليبيًا اشتمل على كنيسة ومستشفى للحجاج. يعود مصدر الاسم إلى تحريف في الكلمة الفارسية-التركية "بیمارستان" التي تعني المستشفى.

בעבר מתחם צלבני שכלל כנסייה ובית חולים לעולי רגל. מקור השם בשיבוש של המילה הפרסית-תורכית "בימריסטאן" שפירושה בית חולים.

The Old City of Jerusalem and The Muristan

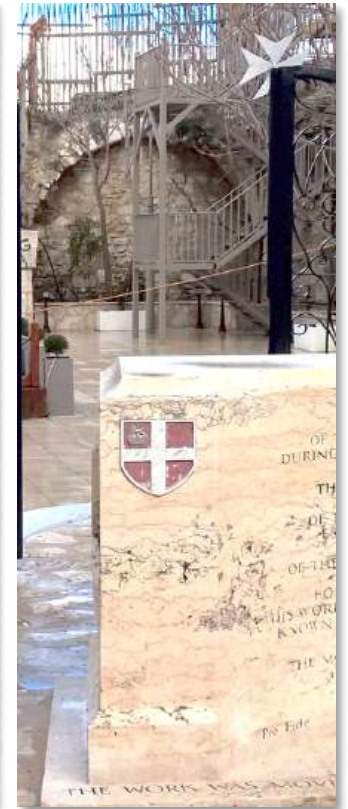
Church of St John the Baptist

The Muristan area of the Christian quarter of Jerusalem
Excavations 1990 – 2000

transverse ridge rib
longitudinal ridge rib
panel
rib vault

Dating of structures identifying Norman architecture based on the analysis of the building techniques & architectural elements:
Norman double barrel vault or cross vault: Produced by the intersection at right angles of two barrel or ribbed vaults

Views of the Muristan

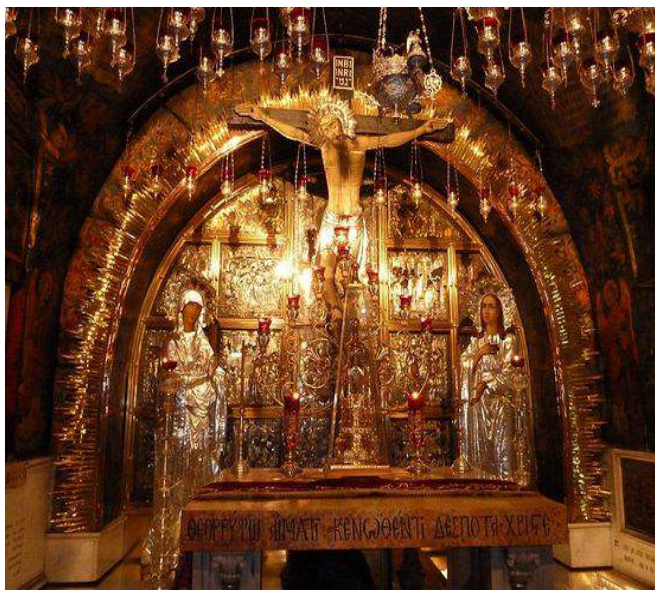


The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Jonathan Britto, KCHS

In current times, we are reminded of the centrality of Jerusalem and the Middle East in general to many faiths, and particular the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Deep in the Christian quarter of the old city of Jerusalem is situated the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the Church of the Resurrection), which is amongst the holiest of locations for Christians throughout the world. To them, it is the location of the site of the crucifixion of Jesus, and the place of his entombment and resurrection. In the story of the journey of Jesus' Passion (his path to crucifixion), Christianity marks the "Stations of the Cross" - the last four episodes of which take place within the Church.

Calvary in the time of Pontius Pilate had been outside the city, but the extended plan of Jerusalem rebuilt in AD135 brought the site of the crucifixion within the city walls. The establishment of the church, the verification of the location, and its sanctity are all attributed to the Emperor Constantine, who had united the Eastern and Western Roman Empire in 313AD. These was followed by a period of stability which led to significant civic investment and an extraordinary period of church building.



Constantine had identified a temple and statue to Jupiter, erected by Hadrian at the site of Calvary in an apparently deliberate attempt to erase its Christian connections, and a temple to Venus at the site of the tomb of Jesus. In his own Christian zeal, Constantine instructed the destruction of Hadrian's building and set about building a church modelled on great Christian Cathedrals in Rome, but which set to include the hill of Calvary and also the cave at its foot where Jesus had been entombed (a distance of about 35 m). The excavation was entrusted to the office of the Bishop of Jerusalem, and the engineering for the site is considered to have taken 50 years to prepare.

The shape of the building was governed by the topography of Calvary and the tomb, but also in acknowledgement of the public nature of the celebration of the Liturgy. The latter, a celebration of the Last Supper, was itself heavily influenced by the pattern of synagogue services during the life of Jesus. A celebration of the Liturgy would last through the night, with the final Liturgy of the Sacrament celebrated at dawn.

Constantine provided for two separate covered spaces within the Church, one for each part of the Liturgy. Given the historical and religious significance of its location, the practice of the celebration of



Model of The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

the liturgy at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre thereby began to exert an influence throughout the Christian church internationally.

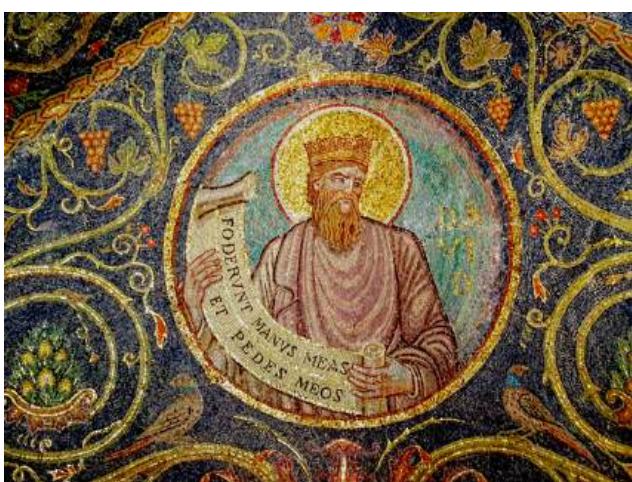
Inevitably as culture and warfare washed backwards and forwards across Jerusalem, the ravages of time and tide changed the nature of the buildings. The Persian ascendancy destroyed Constantine's buildings in 614AD, and an Islamic Army led by Omar the Just held sway from 635AD, during which time the Temple Mount was re-established as a sacred site for Islam, but the Church of the Holy Sepulchre fell into disrepair.



Attention to the holy sites of the Passion of Jesus, including the Church of The Holy Sepulchre, came under renewed focus when the Church was rebuilt early in the 11th century. Its then Gothic style subsequently influenced the architecture of the Templar churches around Britain and Europe. Indeed, such re-invention, resurrection of buildings, and re-dedication by faith groups has been a pattern of the history of the holy sites in Jerusalem.

In acknowledgement of its sanctity, every renovation and reworking of the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulchre throughout Christian history has preserved and incorporated elements of the historical edifice. The line of Islamic rulers included the fanatical Hakim (Fatimid caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah) in 996, and in 1009 the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was completely destroyed.

The Church's current orientation and layout dates from around 1119 at the time of the Crusades, and the Church was reconsecrated in 1149. The retaking of Jerusalem was a primary papal goal from 1095, and the Knights of the first crusade regained the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1099.



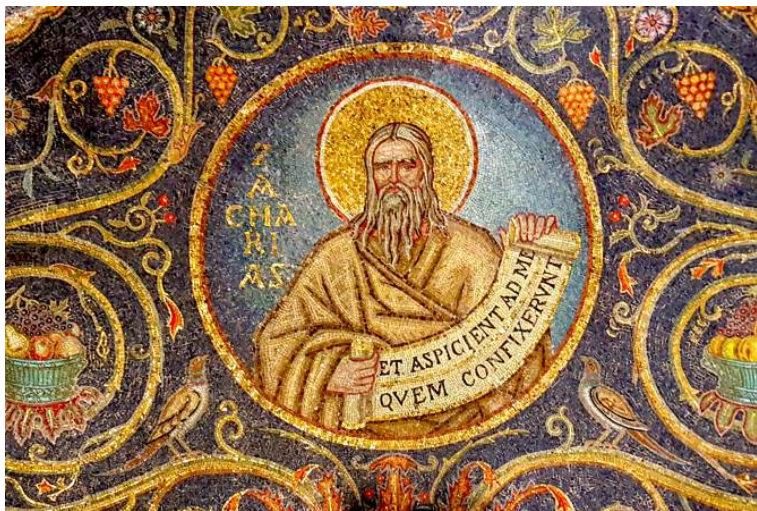
No crusader could consider his journey complete unless he had prayed as a pilgrim at the site of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Crusader Godfrey of Bouillon, founder of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, became the first Latin ruler of Jerusalem, declaring himself *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri* - 'Protector of the Holy Sepulchre'.



At the time of Saladin, who took the city in 1187, the custody of the buildings was given to the Greek Orthodox Church, and Christian accessibility was eventually negotiated in perpetuity in the Treaty of Jaffa between Richard Lionheart and Saladin. Subsequent military and religious back-and-forth continued, with Jerusalem frequently changing hands. During this time the Franciscans were nominally in authority, and currently remain in residence. The 'Custos' is the Franciscan Superior and holder of the office of Custodian of the Holy Land, established by Pope Clement VI in 1342 when he entrusted the care of all

Holy Land sites to the Order of Saint Francis. The last crusade of Louis XI ceded power to Islam, a 'Status Quo' which was retained (under the Ottoman Empire) until the First World War.

The Ottoman regime resulted in a complex arrangement of occupancy and authority over different portions of the buildings even as they are today. The control of the Church lies between several Christian denominations including the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches of Greece, Armenia, and Ethiopia, as well as the Coptic Christian church of the Middle East. Nonetheless, even to this day, custody of the Church still falls to a descendant of Ubadeh Ibn al-Samit, a disciple of Mohammed who was appointed by Omar the Just as a judge in Jerusalem. One branch of the Muslim family is the keeper of the key, and another branch has rights to open and lock the Church; such is the tapestry of history woven through this remarkable holy site.



It is impossible to know exactly which parts of the contemporary building are attributable to exactly which era of history, authority, or faith. There are mediaeval replicas, and a model from the 18th century is in the museum of the venerable order of Saint John, at St Johns Gate, Clerkenwell.

Chapter 8

A brief History of Gaza - Crossroad of Civilisations

Jonathan Than

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And as for the Avvites who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorites coming out from Caphtor destroyed them and settled in their place.

Deuteronomy 2:23

Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison.

Judges 16:21

I will send fire on the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses.

Amos 1:7

*Gaza will be abandoned, and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted. **Zephaniah 2:4***



View of Gaza city 1850-1851

Lithograph by Charles William Meredith van de Velde (1818-1898)

The ancient city of Gaza has been a focus of history and civilisation for more than 5000 years. At the time of writing, Gaza City is home to over 590000 inhabitants, for whom the St John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) is a main provider of ophthalmic care. Its location, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, is in a region that represents the junction of Europe, Africa and Asia. It is unsurprising, therefore, that it has been a point of conflict between civilisations for almost all of its history. Although impossible to retell its rich story in a single article, a brief history follows.



The area encompassing modern Gaza has archaeological evidence suggesting human settlements in the region from as early as the 15th century BCE. Military records of Pharaoh Thutmose III from this era are the oldest to record the name 'Gaza', meaning fierce or strong in the Semitic languages. Connecting Egypt in the south and the Levant (modern-day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel) in the north, it became a stop on the Syrian-Egyptian caravan route, and later served as Egypt's administrative capital in Canaan.

Around the 12th century BCE, the region of Gaza became part of the territory known as Philistia, and the city played a prominent role as one of the Pentapolis of Philistine city-states, alongside Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. According to the Book of Judges, it was in Gaza during this period that Samson was imprisoned by the Philistines, blinded, and met his death.

During the reign of Ramses II (1279-1213 BCE) in the New Kingdom Period, the Egyptian empire attempted to expand its control over the Levant. Gaza was one of the key cities targeted in these military campaigns, and there were frequent clashes between the Egyptians and the Philistines for control of the region.



In the 8th century BCE, the powerful Neo-Assyrian Empire, under the leadership of Tiglath-Pileser III, conquered Gaza, bringing the city under Assyrian control. Subsequently, the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar II, captured Gaza in the 6th century BCE during their campaign to conquer the southern Levant. The Babylonians incorporated the region, including Gaza, into their empire.

After the fall of the Babylonian Empire, Gaza came under Persian rule in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. The Persian Empire, under Cyrus the Great and later Darius I, allowed local rulers to govern autonomously as long as they paid tribute to the Persian crown. This period saw a relative level of stability and prosperity in the region, with Gaza becoming a vital centre for commerce and cultural exchange.

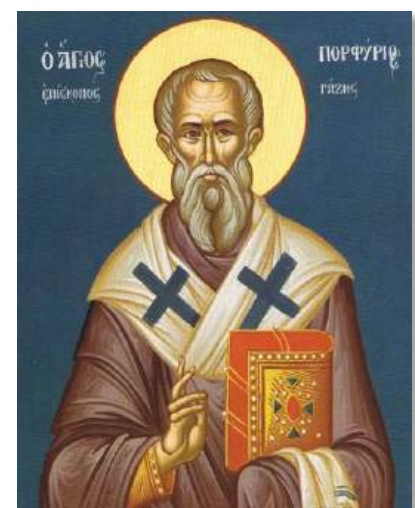
In 332 BCE, Alexander the Great captured Gaza during his military campaigns to conquer the Persian Empire after a five-month siege. Inhabitants were reportedly killed or sold into slavery and the city walls destroyed.

Gaza eventually rebounded under Hellenistic influence, becoming part of the Seleucid Empire and later the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt after the division of Alexander's empire. Under this influence, the city saw the construction of various temples and theatres in the Greek architectural style.



Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus ordered the siege of Gaza in 96 BCE, resulting in a brief period of Hasmonean rule before General Pompey annexed the region of Judea to the Roman Republic in 63 BCE. During the Roman period, Gaza prospered economically due to its strategic location on the trade route between the eastern and western parts of the Eastern Roman Empire. The city represented a melting pot of cultures at this point in its history, with Greek, Roman, Phoenician, Jewish, Egyptian, Persian and Bedouin residents. Its wealth and status were enhanced by its agricultural production, especially the cultivation of wine and olive oil. Numerous Roman emperors visited Gaza, and it is believed that during his visit in 130 CE, Emperor Hadrian personally inaugurated wrestling, boxing, and oratorical competitions in a new Gazan stadium.

Gaza witnessed the early spread of Christianity during the Roman era. Notable Christian figures, such as Saint Hilarion and Saint Porphyrius, were associated with the city. During the Byzantine period after the division of the Roman Empire, it became the seat of a bishopric and an influential religious centre in the eastern Roman Empire. The region surrounding Gaza saw the rise of Christian monasticism, and several monastic communities were established. Notably, the Monastery of St. Sabas, located southeast of Gaza, became one of the most prominent monastic establishments of its time. The influence of monasticism extended beyond Gaza, shaping the broader Christian landscape in the region.



During the 6th century CE, the region experienced conflict and invasions due to the Roman-Parthian Wars. The Persian Sassanian Empire launched military campaigns into the Byzantine territories, leading to temporary disruptions and challenges for Gaza and its inhabitants.



The Islamic conquest of Gaza occurred during the early Islamic period, in the mid-7th century CE. At this time, the Rashidun Caliphate, the first caliphate established after the death of Prophet Muhammad, was expanding its territories beyond the Arabian Peninsula. In 635 CE, the Arab Muslim general Amr ibn al-As led an army to invade the region of Palestine. The Islamic forces faced significant resistance from the Byzantine garrison in Gaza for several months. In early 636 CE, the city eventually surrendered to the Muslims, marking the end of Byzantine rule in Gaza. Believed to be the burial site of the Prophet Muhammad's great-grandfather Hashim ibn Abd Manaf, the city was not razed, and its

inhabitants spared by its conquerors. Churches were transformed into mosques, including the present-day Great Mosque of Gaza. Arabic became the official language.

The conquest of Gaza was part of a larger campaign to expand the Islamic Caliphate's borders into the Levant. Following the conquest, Gaza became a significant administrative centre in the newly established Islamic nation, under the Umayyad and later Abbasid caliphates. It played a crucial role in the administration of the region, contributing to its economic and cultural development.



1100 brought the conquest of Gaza by the Crusaders, and King Baldwin III of Jerusalem built a castle within the city for the Knights Templar in 1149 and converted the Great Mosque into the Cathedral of St John. Sultan Saladin of the Ayyubids recaptured Gaza in 1187. Richard the Lionheart briefly retook and refortified the city in 1192, but this spell was short-lived as the Treaty of Jaffa resulted in the dismantling of these fortifications and continued Ayyubid control. The Mongols, under Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, brought an end to Ayyubid rule, destroying Gaza in 1260.



Following the Mongol destruction, the Mamluks, slave-soldiers based in Egypt, began to administer the region. The city prospered under their rule, with numerous mosques, Islamic colleges, hospitals, caravansaries and public baths built during this period, many of which still remain today. It was during this period that gazzatum, a fine silk, was first imported to Europe from Gaza. The weave employed, the structure of which consisted of weft yarns arranged in pairs, crossed before and after each warp yarn, is the same weave that is found in surgical gauze. Thus, Gaza has contributed to the world both its textile heritage and name to this life-saving product found in every hospital worldwide today.



After centuries of various Islamic dynasties ruling over the region, the Ottoman Empire took control of Gaza in the early 16th century. Its conquest occurred in 1516 when Sultan Selim I defeated the Mamluk Sultanate, thereby incorporating Palestine, including Gaza, into the Ottoman Empire. A system of local governance was established, with Gaza becoming the capital of the Gaza Sanjak within the Damascus Eyalet.

Under the rule of the Ridwan family, Gaza experienced its most recent 'golden age', serving as the virtual capital of Palestine. The Great Mosque was restored, and other mosques and Turkish baths constructed. The end of Ridwan rule brought the steady decline of the importance and condition of Gaza, particularly as Ottoman power waned. Its port was eclipsed by those in Jaffa and Haifa, and the bubonic plague ravaged its population. Conflict between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire further contributed to its decay. The end of Ottoman rule during the final stages of World War I marked a significant turning point in the history of Gaza and Palestine, paving the way for the establishment of modern states in the region and the subsequent developments that shape its present situation.



Today, the Gaza Strip is home to approximately 2,375,000 citizens, 590,000 of whom live in Gaza City.

St John Eye Hospital Group has, since 1992, been the only provider of charitable ophthalmic care in the region, at a cost of US \$168,300 per annum. In 2022, 38,500 patients were treated in the SJEHG Gaza Hospital, and 2,900 operations performed.

A mobile outreach service reaches those who cannot travel to the hospital. Donations remain vitally important to ensure the continued delivery of care – a recent generous donation of over \$200,000 from the US Priory in 2022 has funded 532 cataract operations, helping to significantly reduce the waiting times, previously up to 19 months, for this essential surgery in the region.



Views of Gaza, and the Eye Hospital of St John



The Five Johannine Orders



SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA



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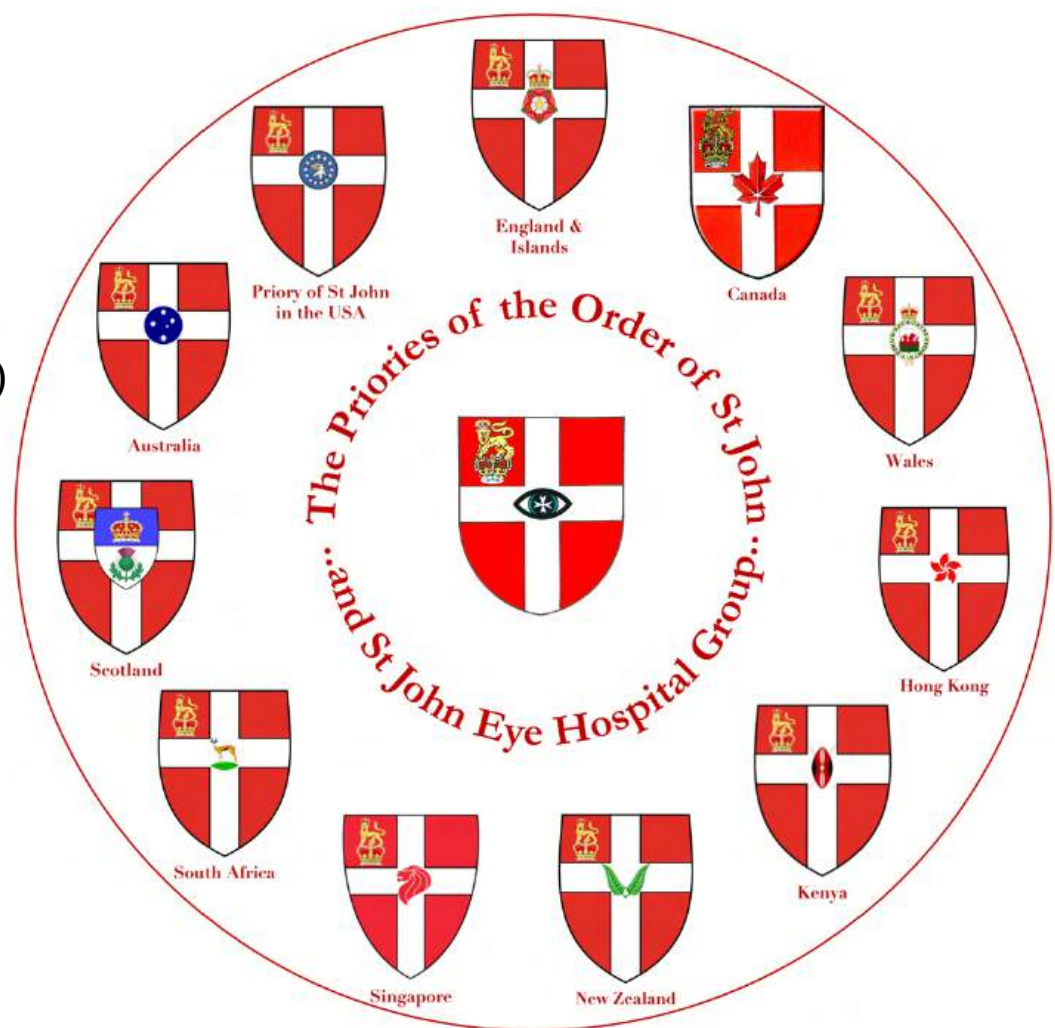


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Order of St John
(Most Venerable Order)



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