



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

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Confrères,

A special “thank you” to our Communications team. Over the past six years they have risen to the challenge of producing a national newsletter that not only keeps us all up to date on the work of our Priory but does so in the context of our

international Order and our fellow Confrères and volunteers around the world. The team, under the leadership of Dan Reany, strikes the right balance between Priory news as well as the long and rich history of our Order and its grounding in faith and selfless service to others. I always enjoy reading “Eyes on The Future,” but this edition is especially packed with interesting stories from around the St John world.

In a few weeks approximately 50 members of our Priory leadership from across the country will gather in Chicago for our annual Leadership Development retreat. Together we will review previous goals and results, work collaboratively on the evolving membership model, finances, and governance, and will hear from the Prior-designate about his vision for the next six years.

These off-site meetings began when I became Prior to develop the next tier of leaders. As I survey the talented women and men who have stepped forward to selflessly donate their Time, Talent, and Treasure to respond to the challenges of our ongoing development, I am amazed at just how much our Priory has achieved in recent years. Most importantly I can also see that we are well placed to achieve so much more. We have a depth of skills and professionalism that bodes well for the future of our Priory and our continued dedication to find even greater ways to continue to serve *our Lords the sick and the poor* in our neighborhoods across America, the Holy Land, and beyond.

As we approach the end of Q1, our finance team will determine the funds, of which our oblation is an essential part, that we will send to the St. John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG). Your oblation is a personal offering in response to the mission of the Order of St John and supports the life-changing work of the St. John Eye Hospital Group and is always so very needed, but right now the urgency of this need is even greater. As Confrères, we are committed to the support of the SJEHG as it offers unconditional love and hope to the most vulnerable each and every day. In these desperate times of war, the importance of your steadfast generosity is even greater.

Please see the article from Jerusalem in this issue, compiled by Dania Omari, SJEHG’s Pories Liaison Officer, which highlights

the U.S. Priory support for the SJEHG and the extraordinary success of the pediatric screening program, Kufor Aqab clinic, Nablus Hospital, and the Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) screening program. None of this would have been achieved without your support. Thank you.

SJEHG CEO Dr. Ahmad Ma’ali reports, “the ongoing war involving the USA, Israel, and Iran has affected the lives of everyone in the Holy Land. During the first week of the war, all outreach services were cancelled as travel to remote communities was considered unsafe. Despite these challenges, the hospital group has remained operational, and we are also on target to treat 250,000 patients by the end of the year. However, there has been a significant decline in patient attendance, with nearly 40% fewer patients attending both outpatient and surgical appointments. Many people have been discouraged from travelling unless it is absolutely necessary due to the war.

There have also been daily rocket sirens, particularly in Jerusalem. Although the frequency of these alerts has decreased over the past few days, both staff and patients are instructed to use the hospital shelter whenever sirens are sounded.

We are pleased to report that all outreach activities have now been reinstated to pre-war levels. Last week, our three outreach teams were able to reach the designated remote communities and provide much-needed eye care services.

At the Gaza hospital, our work has continued and we are currently treating approximately 1,000 patients each week. The basic renovation of the operating theatres and the day-care unit has now been completed. We have managed to secure essential medical supplies from local suppliers. If everything proceeds as planned, we expect to resume surgical operations within the next two weeks. This will be a major achievement after a long period of preparation, especially considering that around 4,500 patients have been waiting for surgery since the start of the war.

We are very pleased to report that all our staff and their families across the Group remain safe and unharmed during these troubled times.”

Thank you for all that you do to support the Priory’s mission to serve *our Lords the sick and the poor*.

*Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum.*

Nigel G. Heath, KStJ

Priory

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## ROZA'S STORY

Roza is a 74-year-old mother of six. She spent most of her life in the Tulkarem Refugee Camp north of the West Bank. She and her family were displaced by the war, and moved in with relatives in another part of Tulkarem city. A few months later, Roza noticed her vision was becoming increasingly blurry. Things that were once routine, like walking around the house, preparing meals, and taking care of her grandchildren became difficult, even unsafe.

She went to the St. John Eye Hospital Group clinic in the northern West Bank. After a full examination, she was diagnosed with age-related cataracts in both eyes. A Phaco surgery for her right eye was scheduled immediately. The procedure went smoothly, and after a successful follow-up, her second eye was operated on just a few months later.

SJEHG's long history and years of case studies have proven that families that pay small fees for surgery are considerably more consistent with their own aftercare and show much higher success rates. But some families simply are not able to pay those fees. With Roza's family displaced by the war, they've faced many financial difficulties, so a generous supporting organization of SJEHG paid their fees for them.

Roza and her family expressed their deep gratitude to the doctors, nurses, and all the staff and donors of SJEHG. Roza said her vision is much clearer now, and she gets around easily and confidently. Her son smiled, and added, "She sees better now than she did before she got cataracts!" ❄️



The San Francisco Planning Committee is looking forward to welcoming Confrères and their guests to the 2026 Service of Investiture and Rededication Weekend on October 2–4, 2026. The weekend will start with a welcome reception at San Francisco City Hall. As always, the highlight of the weekend will be the Investiture Service itself, which will take place at Grace Cathedral. The Saturday evening Gala will be held in the Fairmont Grand Ballroom and will include a cocktail reception, dinner, and dancing. The Committee has planned a full [schedule of events](#) that will allow Confrères and their guests the opportunity to explore the city and all that it has to offer. We are excited about using this wonderful occasion to renew our fellowship and rededicate ourselves to the principles upon which the Order of St John was founded 1,000 years ago.

Please review the schedule to see all the Planning Committee has in store. The schedule and tour information may be found on the Investiture tab of the Member Dashboard on the Priory website. Additional details, including the official invitation and event registration, will be sent under separate cover this summer. Please note that all guests are welcome at the Investiture Service at Grace Cathedral, but only immediate family members are invited to attend the Welcome Reception, Breakfasts, Membership Luncheon, and Gala.

Confrères may reserve hotel accommodations at Fairmont, San Francisco, 950 Mason Street, San Francisco, CA, starting at the rate of \$379 + tax per night. Reservations may be made by visiting the web site [here](#) or by calling 415-772-5000 and referencing "The Order of St John Service of Investiture and Rededication Weekend."

We look forward to seeing everyone in October!

Daniel E. Riley, KStJ, and Jane Mermelstein, CSTJ  
2026 Investiture Committee Co-Chairs

## FROM MEDIEVAL PRIORY TO ORDER MUSEUM

The Museum of the Order of St John in London presents the history of the Order, from eleventh century Jerusalem through to its modern role as a global care-giving charity. Our mission today is to share and interpret the historic buildings and collections in ways that are inclusive and relevant, engaging a wide public audience with St John's humanitarian legacy. We care for around 60,000 objects and rich archives, including the founding records of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital. Through displays, outreach and digitisation, we aim to make these collections and the stories they tell accessible and engaging for a worldwide audience.



Image credit: Anna Stathaki)

*St John's Gate today*

This article, the first in a series, introduces the medieval buildings in which the Museum is housed. Clerkenwell is situated just to the north of the City of London and was once an area dominated by monastic houses. The medieval Priory of the Knights Hospitaller was founded in 1144 on 10 acres of land granted by the Norman nobleman Jordan de Bricet and his wife Muriel de Munteni. It was the administrative headquarters of the Knights Hospitaller of the English branch

(or *langue*) and over the 400 years following its founding, a rich complex of buildings developed around its focal point, the Priory Church.

The site was organised into two distinct areas. The inner precinct housed the high-status buildings, including the Church with its large cloister, Prior's lodgings and the Great Hall in which royalty and nobles were entertained. The first church on the site was modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Its distinctive circular nave created a powerful visual and spiritual connection to the Order's roots in the holy city and its foundations are still partly visible today. The outer precinct was originally farmland where food was grown to support the community but over time the buildings here became increasingly lavish, including grand housing for members of the Order. The Priory was a gathering place for English Knights and their followers before they set off overseas and was also an important centre of hospitality, where royalty, nobles and diplomats were entertained.

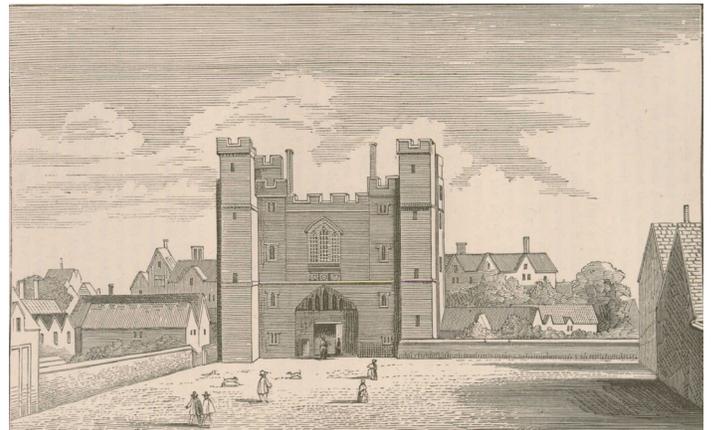


Image credit: Museum of the Order of St John, London, The Priory of England and the Islands

*Wenceslaus Hollar's engraving of St John's Gate, c.1661*

Until the Reformation and Henry VIII's break with Rome, the Priory was one of the most significant religious houses in London and this was reflected in the splendour of its palatial architecture. This included a new crenellated gatehouse, commissioned by Grand Prior Thomas Docwra in 1504 to mark the entrance to the inner precinct. In the chaos of the Dissolution and the upheaval that followed the majority of the Priory buildings were lost. The nave of the Church was one of the first casualties, demolished so the highly prized building materials could be used elsewhere. Other buildings were imaginatively repurposed and during the reign of Elizabeth I, housed the offices of the Master of the Revels, responsible for licensing many of Shakespeare's plays for performance.

By the 1800s, the principal buildings to remain—and the core of the historic site today—were the 12th century crypt of the Priory Church, the chancel above and the Tudor gatehouse built by Docwra. Whilst only a fragment of the original

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image credit: Karla Gowletts

*St John Ambulance Badgers exploring the Gate*

complex they are enormously significant survivals of medieval London, much of which was erased by the Great Fire of 1666. This is reflected in their Grade I listing indicating buildings of exceptional historic and architectural interest. The gatehouse has additional resonance as it is one of only a handful of surviving medieval structures that can provide a sense of London's lost City gateways.

After a long hiatus, in the 1870s the Gate was purchased by Sir Edmund Lechmere as the Order's new headquarters. A stellar cast of architects, including Richard Norman Shaw



Image credit: Museum of the Order of St John, London, The Priory of England and the Islands

*Council Chamber within St John's Gate, restored and remodelled by John Oldrid Scott*

and John Oldrid Scott, were employed to restore and extend the buildings. This was carried out sensitively, revealing and conserving original medieval fabric and demonstrating the pride that the Order felt in its heritage. The Victorian interiors, complete with their original furnishings, are of high significance in their own right.

These buildings were the backdrop against which members of the Order, inspired by the Hospitaller tradition of caring for the sick, decided to focus their charitable efforts on providing 'aid to the injured'. In the factories, mines and railways of industrialised Britain, accidents were common and medical help was expensive or simply unavailable. What began as initiative to teach the public lifesaving first aid soon developed into a volunteer-powered movement. Local groups, known as the Brigade, formed to practice their skills and serve their communities in times of war and peace. To supply this growing workforce, new equipment was developed, from early first aid kits (known as hampers), to stretchers, wheeled litters and even hospital trains. The supplies department that co-ordinated this vital work was based at the Gate which rapidly became a focal point for volunteers and a place where exceptional service was recognised and rewarded.

The Priory Church, like the Gate, has had a tumultuous history. As we've noted, the nave was demolished shortly after the Dissolution but the chancel survived and was used as a private chapel, Presbyterian meeting house, and later a parish church. In 1931 the Order formally assumed ownership. The Church

*continued on page 6*

Image credit: Harriet Langford



*Crypt of the Priory Church*

was very badly damaged by an incendiary bomb during the London Blitz but miraculously the twelfth-century crypt below was unscathed. It is a remarkable survival and a tangible connection to the Order's early medieval history. Today the Church is used for Order services, investitures and opened to the public for tours, events and community programmes.

The historic buildings are in many ways the jewel of the collection. They have survived against the odds and connect us back to our medieval roots. They require diligent and careful stewardship with all the challenges that come with caring for historic fabric, but they remain an enduring focal point for the charity and all the members of the global St John family.

In the next instalment, we will delve into the history of the collections and how the Museum came to be formed. Members are warmly encouraged to visit the Museum, and private tours can be arranged through the U.S. Priory office. ✨



## **SJEHG Highlights**

Our colleagues at the St. John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) have been busy preparing the fifth issue of **Highlights**, a newsletter customized for members of the U.S. Priory. It provides an excellent recap of the heroic accomplishments of the SJEHG team, and the support provided by members of the U.S. Priory in 2025.

Please also consider **registering** and planning to attend the briefing by Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali, CEO, SJEHG, on March 31st. Dr. Ma'ali will provide all the latest news from Jerusalem. ✨



Ambulances support St John Kenya's life-saving Highway Emergency Response Project, launched in 2025.



The heraldic arms of the Priory of Kenya, featuring a Maasai shield with two crossed spears, symbolizing independence and the defense of freedom.

## FROM DOLPHINS TO EMTS: ST JOHN KENYA AT WORK

St John's work in Kenya began in 1923 with straightforward aims: teach first aid and improve organized response to injury and illness. Over time, what began as instruction in basic lifesaving skills expanded into a nationwide operation. In 2013, the Kenya Association was granted full Priory status within the Order of St John, reflecting how far the organization had developed in scope and governance.

Today the Priory of Kenya oversees St John Ambulance

Kenya. Its ambulances respond to road traffic accidents, provide medical cover at public events, and transfer patients between facilities. During seasonal flooding in several counties, St John teams assist local authorities with evacuation and immediate care. At marathons and large civic gatherings, volunteers treat dehydration, fractures, and cardiac distress

on site, preventing situations from worsening in crowded conditions.

Training underpins much of this work. Schools, transport operators, private firms, churches, and security services request certified first aid and emergency response courses throughout the year. The sessions are practical and hands-on. Participants practice bleeding control, airway management, injury stabilization, and scene assessment, with the expectation that they can act competently until advanced care arrives.

The youngest members of the Volunteer Brigade are known as Dolphins. Children aged 6 to 12 enroll largely through primary schools and begin learning basic first aid, teamwork, and discipline. They take part in supervised drills, inspections, and selected public duties suited to their age. Many continue into the Cadet and Link levels and later serve as adult volunteers. In 2025, 89 Dolphins completed refresher first aid training, an indication of participation nationwide.

The Mother and Baby Project addresses preventable maternal and infant health risks through community-based education. Expectant mothers and families receive guidance on antenatal

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*St John House in Nairobi, headquarters of St John Ambulance Kenya.*

care, birth preparation, newborn health, nutrition, and warning signs that require prompt referral. In areas where facilities are distant or stretched thin, recognizing complications early can be decisive. During its 2025 pilot phase, the project reached more than 4,000 primary beneficiaries and delivered nearly 28,000 health education sessions. Ongata Rongai Sub-County Hospital recorded a 10 percent increase in antenatal care attendance during the same period, suggesting stronger links between community health promoters and clinical services.

In October 2025, St John Ambulance Kenya launched the Highway Emergency Response Project in partnership with the Government of Kenya and the National Transport and Safety Authority. The pilot program focuses on the high-risk Northern Corridor between Makueni and Nakuru counties. Fourteen First Aid Posts and two Trauma Centers now support response along that stretch, with trained first responders, EMTs, nurses, and paramedics positioned closer to accident sites. In December 2025 alone,



*Guiding the Priory's operations in Kenya is its Chief Executive Officer, Paul Ngugi.*

teams attended to 165 road traffic casualties. The project also trains boda boda (bicycle and motorcycle taxi) riders, traffic police, and community volunteers in basic life support, broadening the pool of immediate responders.



*'Turning action into impact' is a hallmark of the Priory in Kenya.*

"Saving lives is at the heart of our work," said Paul Ngugi, Chief Executive Officer of St John Ambulance Kenya. "Whether through safe motherhood initiatives, highway response, or youth training, the goal is to build practical capacity within communities."



*More than 500 Dolphin members of St John Ambulance Kenya, aged 6 to 13, gather for their annual Dolphins Day.*

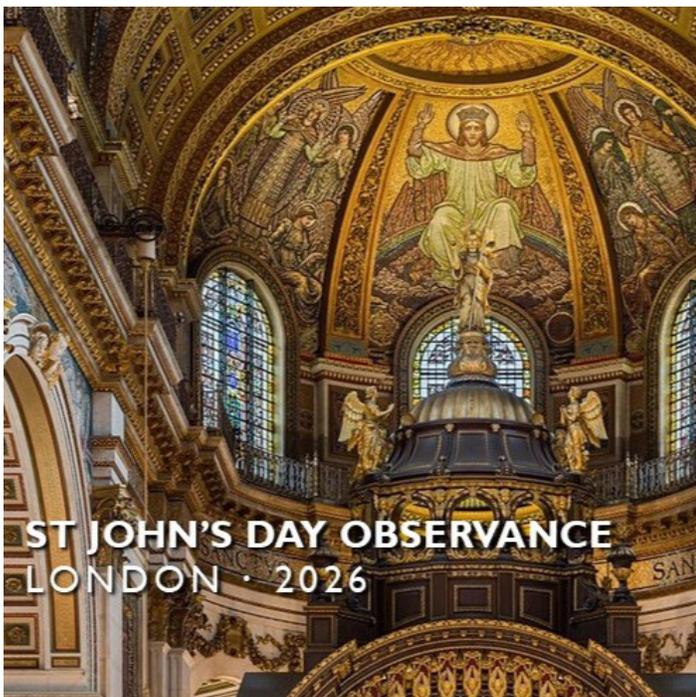
More than a century after its arrival in Kenya, St John's work remains practical and visible. Young Dolphins advance into EMT training. Community education strengthens hospital referral systems. Highway responders shorten the time between injury and care. As the Priory's structure in Kenya has grown, so has its capacity to serve. ✨

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026: ST JOHN DATES TO NOTE IN THE COMING YEAR

### St. John's Day, London

Saturday, June 20

Honoring the feast day of the Order's patron, St. John the Baptist, the Order's annual service of commemoration brings processions, hymns, lessons, and prayers to the magnificent baroque setting of St. Paul's Cathedral. The occasion blends the grandeur and pageantry of the Order's historical past with a focus that speaks to Members today. A day rich in ceremonial symbolism reaffirms the Order's guiding purpose to help those in need. **Additional information and registration details will be sent to Members in early 2026.**



### Investiture & Rededication Weekend, San Francisco

Thursday, October 2 to Saturday, October 4

The Priory in the USA will convene for its 2026 Investiture and Rededication Weekend beside California's fabled Golden Gate. The San Francisco Region again hosts the Priory's annual gathering, welcoming Confrères in fellowship, and culminating in the Investiture service in the gothic revival splendor of Grace Cathedral on Saturday morning, and the gala benefit dinner that evening. **Details and hotel registration information will be sent to Members in March with registration launching in early summer.** ❄️

## JUST A REMINDER

It's that time of year again! By now you should have received your annual Oblation statement, which either confirms that you are current with your Oblation(s), or serves as a gentle reminder that your annual commitment has not been received. These statements are sent to all active members of the U.S. Priory (please note that Emeritus General Class members do not receive this statement).

Included with this mailing was a **2026 Oblation Response Form** that provides several options for making your donation, whether by credit card, check, ACH, stock transfer, or Zelle. Please remember to include with your donation the year to which you would like your Oblation(s) allocated.

For your convenience, you may access your "Contributions" page at any time from the Priory website Dashboard. This page will allow you to review your donation history and print or download donation receipts for individual transactions. Linked for your convenience is a copy of the **instructions** for logging onto the Priory website.

In order for the Priory's contributions to the Hospital to be accurately forecasted for the coming year, remittance of your payment by **June 1, 2026**, is appreciated. Please contact the Priory office at **PrioryUSA@saintjohn.org** with any questions. ❄️



## PRO FIDE

### LENT: APPRENTICESHIP IN MERCY

I grew up Episcopalian in a clergyman's home. And when I was a child, Lent meant fasting, a spirituality of some austerity, food that was different, sacrifice, church, and then a meal when it was over. This was Lent in the 1960s.

It was not austerity for austerity's sake, or a joy-phobic spirituality. It was the Church teaching the body what the mind too easily forgets: love is a discipline, not merely an idea; conversion is a pattern, not merely a mood; and worship orders our lives not as private preference but as public apprenticeship in freedom.

Christians aren't the only ones who know this. Some of my brother and sister Confrères are Jewish or Muslim. Look closely, and we discover this grammar is present in all three of the

Abrahamic traditions. God's family has always known the body is not an obstacle to faith but its vehicle and that is why each tradition has its own sacred fasts. Lent is a bodily practice, we say, incarnational, while remaining irreducibly Christian in its practice and theology.

I fast. Not just on Fridays, but often with a discipline that changed the texture of the days themselves. We had meatless dinners and, as a result, our menus offered bodily catechesis on restraint. Fasting was not a health fad, but the acknowledgment that we are not self-contained, self-sufficient, completely independent creatures.

Our parish silenced bells from the afternoon of Holy Thursday until midnight on Easter Vigil, with wooden clappers striking the hours. It made the air we breathed feel expectant. The church did not merely proclaim that creation groans toward the coming of God's kingdom; she let us hear those groans.

And there were practices more homely and domestic: weekly Stations of the Cross on Fridays, blessed palms tucked into Bibles or woven into house fixtures, housecleaning in earnest in the first days of Holy Week. We cleaned our houses with special diligence, not because God rewards us with a celestial sanitization service award should our baseboards sparkle, but because bodily acts of purification teach us, through action, what our souls yearn to say: Create in me a clean heart. The

house becomes the parable of our hearts. Cleaning becomes prayer. The kitchen table becomes an altar: the surface of our fasting and the place of our communal meal.

Lent makes the Church keep time in special ways when we are journeying toward the cross. Which is why Lent matters for those of us who have taken our vows in the Order of St John. Our fasting and almsgiving and prayer cannot be directed solely toward private piety, if we actually believe what we confess about a savior who called himself the bread of life and identified with "the least of these"—the poor and the sick. If we enter into these ancient practices, our eyes and hearts should open wide to where God is already at work, vulnerable and hidden in the world around us.

Our Lenten disciplines ought to make us less religious, not more. We don't practice these rhythms just so we can be better people in the abstract. Consider an individual special weekly offering of what you have left over to the St John Eye Hospital, or make a special Holy Week gift (a tradition of the church for ages). Say the following prayer at meals or end of the day:

*Lord Jesus Christ, come closer to us in this Lenten time and let us enter more fully into the life of our Christian Order. Establish in us its age-old vow of mercy, wrought into being in the very first hospital in Jerusalem. Seal upon us the sign of redemption of humankind: grant us prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude; form in us the beatitudes; and may the purity of this Cross recall to us the purity of life demanded of all who bear witness to the faith and who devote their lives to serving the poor and suffering.*

*Give me grace to do all that I can to uphold the dignity, prosperity, and good works of our Order. I dedicate my life, according to my own ability, to its purposes, particularly to the care of the Lord's sick and poor so let me become a true person of honor. May I be steadfast in service, gentle in speech, true to my word, courageous in love, and quick in gratitude. Restore me when I fall; uphold me when I grow weary; and let my Lenten fast be woven into Christ's mercy through my heart, hands, and feet. Amen.*

Let us be bodily present with, serve, and give aid to the people whom God wants us to meet through our shared ministry: the least of these, *our Lords, the Sick and the Poor*. A blessed Lent to you all.

The Rt. Rev. C Andrew Doyle, D.D., OStJ  
Sub Prelate