



FOR THE FAITH AND  
IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY



**St John**

# Eyes on the Future

THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

PRIORY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Confrères,

I am writing this en route from Chicago after a great collegial leadership retreat, where new and existing friendships and connections were made and renewed, and a wonderful open sharing of thoughts and ideas took place over three days.

We kicked-off with a lovely centering—time to reflect with Evensong at St. James Cathedral. The superb children’s choir reminded me of my choirboy days, although not sure that my singing was ever categorized as superb, it was nonetheless as devotional.

Our Sub-Prelate The Rt. Rev Andy Doyle, Bishop of Texas, helped us focus on our roles in this transition year as “Trustees of Hope;” Maxey Roberts led us through the suggested bylaws updates (to be voted on by all at our Annual meeting on June 12th); Matt Leddicotte and Rev. David Goldberg led a fun regional workshop entitled “Connecting the Dots;” David Pyott and Dan Riley shared a “fireside chat” centered on a very successful development case study; we dove deep into the proposed membership evolution and the Prior-designate described his vision for the future.

Many have asked that I share my remarks and so I include them here.

“SIX years, how time flies when you are having fun with Time, Talent & Treasure.

In 2020 when I was appointed to succeed Palmer Hamilton as the fourth Prior of the U.S. Priory, little did we all know about COVID and the severe restrictions it would create on travel, social interactions, and gatherings of all kinds, nor the long-term changes in many aspects of our lives.

And it’s looking like my second term will end during another world changing event—the current war in the Middle East. I have impeccable timing!

While the “bookends” to my service as Prior mark major global challenges, just look at all the good we—everyone in this room and across our Priory—have accomplished globally over the past six years, despite these challenges!

We built our first ever strategic plan; expanded transparency and communication; created Governance, Pro Hominum (diversity), Young Members and Women’s Forum committees; enhanced our bylaws; set a target to double our giving to the St. John Eye



2026 Leadership Retreat (Chicago)

Hospital Group; appointed liaison officers for our partners at the Sovereign Order of Malta (SMOM) and the Johanniterorden to build a stronger St John; and established leadership retreats to share best practices, ensure delivery of our strategic plan goals, and prepare and encourage the next leaders for our Priory.

We have significantly expanded the St John Volunteer Corps (SJVC) to make it more accessible to all Members and to better serve the most vulnerable in our local communities around the United States. SJVC has grown over the past six years to hundreds of volunteers serving 62,000 hours at 165 organizations across the country. And we created the National Day of Service that grows from strength to strength, with Confrères discovering the camaraderie of coming together to serve as a team. Our call to service and unity of The Orders of St John expanded when a group of our young members joined with Johanniterorden and SMOM members in Ukraine to provide essential supplies to war victims. And we piloted First Aid in Schools in NYC.

Since 2020 we have assisted the St. John Eye Hospital Group in its service of 927,368 patients and have contributed a total of nearly \$18 million.

We funded and helped establish the Children’s Screening Program (with a generous grant from the Hilton Foundation to seed the program). This spectacularly successful program has, to date, screened 116,000 children.

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## MOHAMMAD'S STORY

During the Gaza War, Mohammad's home was destroyed, and his family relocated to Deir al-Balah. Mohammad dealt with developmental cataracts since birth, but because of the family's already low income and the added difficulty of the war, they couldn't find or pay for medical care.

Mohammad's family knew he had problems with his eyes. He is very farsighted and has severe astigmatism. His father explained Mohammad struggles with reading because he has trouble simply seeing the words on the page. His bad eyesight and the psychological impact of war have limited Mohammad's ability and desire to play or interact with other children.

Now living in Deir al-Balah, Mohammad's parents learned about the St John Eye Clinic in the city. They took Mohammad in, and he was examined by consultant ophthalmologist Dr. Fawzi Aby Jalhom. After a battery of tests, Mohammad's sight was fully assessed and his bilateral cataracts confirmed. Cataract removal surgery and lens replacement have been scheduled, and in the meantime, Mohammed was given a new pair of glasses that's helping him see better than he ever has before.



Mohammad's father expressed his gratitude to the entire medical team for their expert care and compassion, and said the free eyecare services provided by St John are incredibly important to the people of Gaza. ❄️



## SJEHG BRIEFING

On March 31st, over 50 members of the U.S. Priory joined our colleagues around the world to receive a briefing from St. John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) CEO Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali. During the briefing Ahmad focused on how SJEHG continues to provide critical eye care services during the ongoing conflict. If you would like to listen to the briefing, please follow this [link](#). Ahmad's presentation may be found [here](#).





**2026 NeuroOrbital Masterclass: Faculty and Speakers**  
 Hosted by St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group's *Ophthalmic Association*  
 Photography by Dr Mohsan Malik, Masterclass co-coordinator & digital lead



## 2026 NeuroOrbital Masterclass

On March 14, 2026, the Ophthalmic Association of St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SOA) held its third international Masterclass, and its second in NeuroOrbital disease.

The event was held in the Royal Society of Medicine in London, attended by 90 international delegates and speakers, and a further fifty online.

Contributions included our guest lecturer Professor Geoffrey Rose and experts from the UK, Europe, and North America, and the Associations Vice Patron Dr. Michael Dan.

Topics during the Masterclass included:

- The Orbit and beyond
- Orbit and skull base: Perennial challenge
- Orbital Apex: Tiger territory
- Cutting Edge Technology
- State of the Art: Sphenoid wing meningioma
- Brave new world: Orbital frontiers
- Introductory addresses included the origins and work of St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

If you are interested in learning more about the SOA in the United States, please contact [David Pyott](#) or [Dr. Charles Mosteller](#).



*Guest lecturer Professor Geoffrey Rose is presented with a special St John swift, sculpted by Mark Coreth*



## ST JOHN IN WALES: SERVICE AT A NATIONAL SCALE

Established in 1918 as one of the earlier national priories of the modern Order, the Priory for Wales continues to reflect that founding vision: a locally rooted yet internationally connected expression of St John.

Across Wales, St John Ambulance Cymru provides first aid training, event

medical support, and community response through a network of volunteers and healthcare professionals working in settings that range from village fêtes to major national gatherings. With approximately 2,400 members across Wales, the Priory sustains a national presence while remaining connected to the communities it serves. Each year, more than 30,000 people across Wales receive first aid training through its programs.

That immediacy is reinforced by the close alignment between the Priory and its operational work. In Wales, the charitable and chivalric dimensions of St John function as a single, integrated undertaking, with leadership, membership, and frontline activity closely aligned. Volunteers are supported

both as operational responders and as members of the Order, strengthening engagement and continuity.

The Priory's role within Welsh national life is both visible and embedded. St John Ambulance Cymru provides medical cover at major civic, cultural, and sporting events across the country, including the National Eisteddfod, stadium events, and community festivals. Its volunteers are not simply present at these occasions; they are part of them, sharing in the same cultural and community identity as those they serve.

Wales has served as a setting for practical innovation. Community First Responders operate across rural and hard-to-reach areas, helping to address gaps in emergency access. The Priory has been an early adopter of mental health first aid training, and its youth programs emphasize wellbeing and confidence alongside clinical skills. Training and services are delivered in both Welsh and English, reflecting the country's cultural and linguistic context. Strong youth pathways support progression into long-term volunteering and healthcare careers.

Looking ahead, the Priory's priorities include expanding community response capabilities, increasing access to life-

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*A procession of banners during the Priory for Wales Investiture.*



*Volunteers, including Cadet Leaders, support the Rhiwbina Christmas festival with on-site first aid coverage.*

saving training, strengthening youth development, and continuing to grow its work in mental health and wellbeing. Collaboration with the National Health Service and other partners remains a key focus, alongside a continued commitment to embedding Welsh identity in its public presence.

“Having regrouped following the economic and organizational consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic, we are now working hard to deliver our 2025 to 2030 strategy, Wales as a Community of Lifesavers,” said Richard Lee, MBE, CStJ, the Priory’s chief executive officer. Through that strategy, Lee said, the Priory aims to grow in capability and reach, including recruiting 1,000 additional active volunteers and



### THE SLEBECH SWORD

Dating from around 1450, this rare English two-handed sword, nearly two meters in length, is associated with the Knights of St John commandery at Slebech in Pembrokeshire and was reportedly discovered nearby. Still used today by the Priory for Wales in its investiture ceremonies, it offers a tangible link to the Order’s medieval presence in Wales and is held in the collections of Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales.

improving the experience of volunteering. “Making sure our St John people have the best training, leadership and resources to fulfil their role, and that communities across Wales trust St John as a partner, is my job,” he said.



*Coordinating medical support preparations at Principality Stadium, the national stadium of Wales.*

The Prior for Wales, Paul Griffiths, OBE, KStJ, DL, emphasized the Priory’s rootedness in the communities it serves. “We proudly embed ourselves within these communities, working on healthcare support, first aid training, supporting events and helping young people achieve their own goals,” he said, adding that this broad approach has ensured the organization remains a trusted charity and is widely regarded for the results it delivers.

The Priory for Wales does not present a different model of the Order so much as a particularly clear expression of it. Here, the familiar elements of St John’s life and work come into sharp focus: local service, shared identity, and a steady sense of purpose. It is a setting in which, as the Welsh motto *Y ddraig goch ddyry cychwyn* suggests, the red dragon leads the way. ✪



## PRO FIDE

### A DISCIPLINE OF HOPE

The Order of St. John hospital in Gaza has been open for over a century. The St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group has seen occupations, wars, blockades, bombardments, and the kind of sustained pressure that exposes, without mercy, whether an institution's deepest commitments are real or merely rhetorical. The staff have remained faithful to this work over that century.

The patients have come. The work has continued. That fact is not a footnote. It is a theological statement, and the Order of St. John, whose motto has always been *Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum*, for the faith, in the service of humanity, is the community most equipped to read what it means.

Yet, reading it requires a particular

kind of seeing. It requires what I want to call hope as a discipline, because hope, in the sense that sustains work like this, is nothing like the feeling most people mean when they use the word.

For many of us, when we say we hope, means that we expect things to improve. We feel the forward lean of optimism, the reasonable confidence that effort will be rewarded, that the situation will respond to our care. This is a real and valuable thing when the evidence supports it. It is also a kind of hope that is easy to lose.

Such a hope is a luxury in Gaza. It is not the kind of hope that has much truck with an eye hospital treating those whose sight is threatened by the conditions post-siege. The evidence, held honestly, does not support optimism. And if hope were the same thing as optimism, the people who have stayed at their posts in those institutions would have no ground to stand on.

What we see, through the historical lens of a century in the making, is that these people have ground to stand on. But it is a different kind of ground, offering a different kind of hope. One that each of us in the American priory could do with right now.

The tradition the Order inherits reaches back to the eleventh century, to a hospice in Jerusalem where Benedictine monks cared for sick pilgrims of every faith, treating Christian, Muslim, and Jew alike, because they understood the person in front of them to represent the person of Christ. We know the story, but it is believing the story's core that becomes the cornerstone for our own hope.

That founding instinct was not optimism. Jerusalem in the eleventh century was not a place that rewarded optimism; far

be it. It was a place of crusade, siege, and plague. What kept the hospice open was not the confidence that things were improving. It was the conviction that the person in front of them, whatever their condition and whatever the surrounding circumstances, bore a dignity that the surrounding circumstances could not revoke. The work was grounded in who that person was, founded in the person of Christ, not in what the situation promised.

This is hope as a discipline. It is the practiced orientation of our whole self toward a ground of human worth that exceeds the evidence currently on offer. It is the decision, made repeatedly and against the grain of what the situation is presenting, to act from the conviction that the person in front of you matters unconditionally, that their flourishing is worth your effort regardless of what your effort will or will not produce, and that the God in whose image they are made has not said the last word about what is possible in their lives. That is a hope we can hold together.

This kind of hope is a discipline because it must be practiced in order to be held. It does not arrive as a feeling and stay. It is cultivated, sustained, stewarded, and renewed through prayer, through community, through the repeated return to the practices that remind you what you are doing and why.

The wealthy donor who writes a check from a position of security needs it as much as the surgeon operating in a tent in a refugee camp funded by that check. Without this tenacious practice of hope, the check becomes philanthropy driven by self-image, which clouds quickly into the impatience of the disappointed benefactor who expected gratitude and results.

The poor person receiving care needs it as much as the leader setting institutional strategy, because without it the receiving becomes passive resignation and the strategy becomes managerialism disconnected from the human person it is meant to serve.

Hope as a discipline is not the property of any particular rank or station. It is the common inheritance of everyone who is reading this, available to all, and required of all. The discipline has three practices, and the Order already knows them, because they are encoded in its history.

The first is **seeing the particular**. The discipline of hope begins in the refusal of abstraction. The situation in Gaza is not a geopolitical problem. It is this child, this surgeon, this supply chain that is or is not getting through, this family whose breadwinner has lost their sight and whose capacity for human flourishing depends on a procedure that the Eye Hospital can or cannot perform today. Hope as a discipline insists on the specific, because it is in the specific, in the face of this particular person, that the ground of human dignity becomes real rather than theoretical. The founding hospitaliers

***This kind of hope is a discipline because it must be practiced in order to be held.***

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did not care for pilgrims in general. They cared for the exhausted human being who arrived in front of them today.

The second practice is **giving without requiring anything in return**. The logic of hope as a discipline is the logic of gift rather than investment. An investment expects a return. A gift is grounded in the worth of the recipient, not in the performance the gift will produce. When the Order supports the Eye Hospital Group, it does so because the work those ministries do embodies what the Order exists to embody, not because the situation in Gaza is trending in an encouraging direction. This is a demanding discipline for people who are accustomed to measuring impact, to tracking outcomes, to the accountability structures that make large-scale philanthropy legible. Those structures are not wrong. But they must be held within the deeper logic of gift and stewardship, or they become the mechanism by which the disappointed philanthropist withdraws from the people who needed them most precisely when the situation became least tractable.

The third practice is **returning to the source**. Hope as a discipline cannot be self-generated. It must be renewed from a source that exceeds what the practitioner can produce from their own reserves of goodwill and moral energy. This is what the Order's founding instinct understood when it built a chapel at the center of the hospice. The work and the worship were not alternatives. The worship was the condition of the work, the repeated return to the ground of human dignity, the renewal of the conviction that the person in front of you is worth your best care, not because the situation warrants optimism but because the One who made them has not stopped loving them and has asked you to be the instrument of that love today.

There is a baby named Bilal, born prematurely and with severely underdeveloped eyes, who came to the St. John Eye Hospital Group because there was nowhere else with the capacity to help him. There is a nurse named Ahmed who trained at that hospital because there was no other institution in Palestine with its level of training. There is a six-year-old named Luma whose severe squint was caught early enough to avoid surgery because a weekly pediatric clinic existed that could see her.

Bilal, Ahmed, and Luma are the argument for hope as a discipline. Their existence, their sight, their futures, are the evidence that the work grounded in the eleventh-century hospice's founding conviction has continued to produce the thing it was always meant to produce: the flourishing of particular human beings who bear the image of a God who has not stopped caring about them.

We remain people of hope, not optimism. We do this not by finding reasons to believe the situation will improve, though we should receive those reasons gratefully when they come. We remain people of hope by practicing the orientation that hope as a discipline requires: returning, repeatedly, to the conviction that the person in front of us carries a worth that the surrounding circumstances cannot revoke, and then doing the next right thing in front of us.

*Pro Fide. Pro Utilitate Hominum.* For the faith. In the service of humanity. These are not decorative words. They are a practice. They are the discipline of Hope on the ground in Gaza, and in Jerusalem, and wherever the Eye Hospital and the people of this Order are present.

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

We greatly expanded our support of the Nurse and Doctor Initiative, creating endowments to secure key staff positions in perpetuity. Our total endowment now is around \$10 million, depending on the day. It was \$3.1 million when I took office in June 2020.

We funded the Kufor Aqab Clinic which has been so successful that it has recently been expanded, doubling its capacity and services.

We provided much-needed Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) equipment to allow early screening of newborns and funded a new outreach van to expand these critical services to 280 remote villages.

We funded the “Cataract Surgery Blast,” which reduced the wait list for patients in Gaza from 18 months to three.

And last but certainly not least, we helped fund the Nablus Hospital, a state-of-the-art facility serving a population of 2,000,000.

Mindful of our foundation of *Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum*, we created the first National Day of Prayer and appointed a UN observer position with the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. The value and importance of working with SMOM was highlighted when 69 Gaza orphans were evacuated to Bethlehem and we were there working with them to provide ophthalmic screening and SMOM provided daily water and food for our Gaza staff to survive during the recent war.

We invested 557 new members and promoted 420 Confrères at Investitures in Boston, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington DC, and were graced by HRH The Duke of Gloucester, the Grand Prior, in 2022 and 2025, when he again expressed his gratitude for the important work we are doing at home and in the Holy Land. We implemented the Order Service Medal which has been awarded to 55 Confrères so far and 14 with additional bars; initiated new member “onboarding” and continuing member education, together with a library of reference material and heritage records for those who want to know more.

Confrères enjoyed pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Malta, and we joined the St. John Eye Hospital team to celebrate the 140th year of the Hospital.

We created the process and framework to establish new geographical regions in the U.S. and welcomed Chicago and Western Carolinas as new Provinces.

We have moved from individual regional representation to regional leadership teams led by co-chairs and committees focused on creating deeper benches for engagement in membership, development, communications, and SJVC. Our national and regional newsletters, together with a much-expanded website and the recently launched Priory mobile app have greatly enhanced communication and connectivity for all our Confrères. A portal was created to easily log Priory and SJVC service hours for all Confrères.

As we celebrate the 30th year of our Priory and the 168th year Americans have been members of the Order, we are very well-positioned for the next stage of growth and support of our Lords the sick and the poor. I thank you all for your commitment, dedication, and support of our Priory and the Order.”

I concluded with this brief personal reflective statement:

“These past six years have not only been life-changing to hundreds of thousands of the vulnerable here in the U.S. and in the Holy Land, but also for me personally.

I have been overwhelmed by the power of both collective and individual service to others. The ripple effects of even one person giving one small gift of time, talent, or treasure and the exponential effect when these come together are nothing short of miraculous to the lives they touch.

The witnessing of both tragic suffering and the joy of life-changing hope have been humbling and greatly deepened my faith and my belief in the power of doing the right thing even when it’s hard.”

And I add my deepest gratitude to you all for taking this journey with me and being part of Team U.S. Priory. Your chivalrous generosity of time, talent, and treasure in service to *our Lords the sick and the poor*, through times of both celebration and challenges, has been amazing. Long may it continue.”

*Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum.*

Nigel G. Heath, KStJ

Prior