



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 and colleagues,

It is with heavy hearts that we are following the news of the devastating flooding in Texas. While the area affected is far away from most of us, many may, as I do, know people who live in or were visiting that area, who have suffered devastating flood damage, who are currently missing or known to have perished.

Our Sub-Prelate, The Most Reverend Andy Doyle, as the Bishop of Texas, of course has both professional and personal contacts across this area. He is also our Priory's spiritual leader and has a vital role in helping us all during these times when we grapple with the pain, anxiety, and even anger endured when the unimaginable and incomprehensible hits us.

When disaster strikes, one of our first reactions is often to ask, "What can I do?"

When disaster strikes, one of our first reactions is often to ask, "What can I do?" In answer to this question Andy has said, "Keep the prayers coming." A wise reminder that it is through contemplative and thoughtful prayer that we often find answers. This disaster is in the diocese of Confrère and Houston Regional Co-chair, The Rev'd David Goldberg, where one student from his school perished and another is missing. Other Confrères have similarly shared stories of colleagues and loved ones lost or missing.

Through Johanniterorden contacts in the area, I understand that what is most needed right now are emergency responders trained in search and rescue, but they are not in need of further donation items at this time. So, if you are suitably trained through your local state Medical Reserve Corps or a similar organization, this maybe a way in which you can offer hands-on help. For most of us right now we help by offering our prayers for those who are still missing, and for those families who are grieving.

As Confrères who have committed to a lifetime of serving others, I know that for many of us there is a passionate desire to do something more tangible, in addition to offering prayer. The impact of this devastating destruction and sudden loss of life, especially of so many children, will be felt across many, many communities. Medical, emotional, spiritual, and structural recovery and healing will take a long time and spread out across the country, as each person affected

seeks different ways to take the next step. So, in addition to offering prayer, I encourage you to register, train, and serve in whatever way you can in your local community through food banks, shelters, and other support organizations. It is through organized and experienced support bodies that we as individuals can best be ready and willing to reach out our infamous Order of St John helping hand, in this and every emergency.

News of tragic events like the one in Texas can be a reminder of personal and painful memories of past emergencies and struggles. So, I keep all who have experienced disaster, whether now in Texas or in the past across the world, in my prayers. Please let us all, regardless of our faith tradition, lift up heartfelt thoughts of rescue, healing, and comfort to all in the flood area, ensuring none are forgotten, ignored, or abandoned.

In the previous edition of *Eyes on the Future* I wrote about my visit to a refugee camp in May and the hugely successful pediatric screening program funded by the U.S. Priory, with the expectation of treating over 100,000 children by the end of this year. Please see a short story from the St. John Eye Hospital Group below:

EARLY DETECTION SAVES SIGHT: A STORY FROM SHUA FAT CAMP

A 5-year-old girl from Jerusalem was screened during a kindergarten Child Screening Program at Shua Fat Camp in May 2025. The examination revealed reduced vision, particularly in the left eye (0.8). She was referred to the main hospital in Jerusalem for further evaluation.

At the Pediatric Clinic, she was diagnosed with a squint and a refractive error. Her family was advised to begin patching the stronger eye and to have her wear corrective glasses to prevent amblyopia (lazy eye). Regular follow-up visits were scheduled to monitor her progress.

This case highlights the importance of early detection and intervention in preventing permanent vision loss in children.

"Thanks to St. John for their great work that saved my daughter's vision," her mother said gratefully.

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YOUSEF'S STORY

Yousef Shourbaji, a retired man from the city of Tulkarem, had been struggling with his vision for years. He noticed increasing blurriness in both eyes which eventually became quite severe.

"I couldn't see the television clearly, and even walking around my own home felt unsafe," he said. "It was like looking through a constant fog."

Yousef was diagnosed with bilateral cataracts. He was referred to St John Eye Hospital Group's main hospital in Jerusalem, where he underwent cataract removal surgery (Phaco + IOL) for his right eye. The operation went smoothly, and his vision significantly improved.

At his follow-up appointment at SJEHG Nablus Hospital, Yousef shared, "I can see clearly again! I feel much more comfortable and confident in my daily life."

What brought him even more relief, however, was the location of his next treatment. "I am very relieved to have my follow-up appointments in Nablus, which is near to me in the northern West Bank," he said. "Soon I will be scheduled for my left eye surgery, which will take place in the new St John Eye Hospital in Nablus."

For Yousef, the new hospital in Nablus means much more than convenience. "I'm so grateful for this. It saves us the long travel and difficulties of reaching Jerusalem through checkpoints.



I believe this will help many other patients like me from the northern West Bank—people from nearby governorates—seek eye treatment and surgeries in a place that is experienced, trusted, and close to where we live." ❄️



Investiture registration has officially launched, and the Washington, DC and Richmond Planning Committee looks forward to welcoming you and your guests to the 2025 Service of Investiture and Rededication Weekend October 24-26, 2025, in Washington, DC, where we will renew our fellowship and rededicate ourselves to the principles of the Order of St John.

By now you should have received your official invitation by mail. Online registration and important Investiture information is regularly updated on the Investiture tab of the website. Of course, the highlight of the weekend will be the Service of Investiture and Rededication itself, which will take place at the Washington National Cathedral, followed by a spectacular Gala Benefit Dinner and Dancing at the Library of Congress. The deadline for registration is October 3rd, so there is still time to register for the exciting events that are planned!

Please contact the Priory's national office at Events@saintjohn.org or 202.510.9691 should you have any questions. We look forward to seeing you and your guests in October. ❄️

LEGACY GIVING THROUGH THE MURISTAN SOCIETY

As a member of the Muristan Society, you are providing an invaluable financial legacy gift assuring that the important and impressive work of the Order of St John will continue to be a lasting and indelible one.

The Muristan Society is the legacy giving program of the U.S. Priory of the Order of St John. Remembering the Order of St John in one's estate planning provides an important and vital way to carry out the U.S. Priory's mission to serve the sick and the poor in perpetuity. Today Muristan Society membership stands at 146, which is approximately 10% of the total membership in the U.S. Priory.

The purpose of the Muristan Society Committee is to educate and increase membership in the Muristan Society. To that end, the Committee instituted Muristan Society regional coordinators to further educate Confrères at the local level. There are currently five regional coordinators—in New England, Washington DC, North Carolina, Charleston, and Palm Beach. The goal of the Committee is to have Muristan Society regional coordinators in every region of the U.S. Priory by the end of the year.

Confrère and retired U.S. Navy Commander Richard Siemens, M.D., shared his reasons for becoming a member of the Muristan Society. "As a physician, I realized how short a time we have to share our gifts and talents. We see in the Muristan Society the opportunity to extend that care beyond the length of our own lives. I remember the assurance of St. John the Divine: "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on ... they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.'" (Revelation 14:13)

Rick, who is the Muristan Society coordinator for the New England Region, continued saying, "Currently, medicine and surgery are experiencing significant changes, with AI playing a substantial role in these developments. Our bequests will allow the St. John's Eye Hospital Group the flexibility to adopt those changes and improvements as they occur."

It is important to highlight that the Muristan Society Committee amended the Declaration of Intent, which is found under the Muristan Society tab on the U.S. Priory website,

making it non-binding and with no minimum gift requirement. Without these two previous requirements, the Committee's intention is to encourage increased participation in this important legacy giving program.

There is an African proverb which says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." For centuries, the storied heritage of the Order of St John has made a difference in countless lives and continues to remain a worldwide community bound together by a mission of service.



Kay Cox wearing her Muristan Society scarf

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If you would like to become a member of the Muristan Society, please visit the Muristan page on the Member Dashboard of the Priory website or contact the Priory national office for additional information. ✨

THE REV. CANON JOHN KILGORE, KSTJ, HELPS SERVE REFUGEES AS INTERIM PRIEST AT ROME'S HISTORIC ST. PAUL'S WITHIN THE WALLS

Editor's note: Portions of this article and the Presiding Bishop's photo were excerpted from an Episcopal News Service story by Lynette Wilson and were used with permission.

For decades, the Joel Nafuma Refugee Center at St. Paul's Within the Walls has provided a space for refugees and migrants arriving in Rome. Today, it is the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe's largest refugee assistance program, one that serves as a model for churches across the continent.

The center, housed in the crypt at St. Paul's, operates a day shelter and provides food, clothing, Italian- and English-language classes, legal and job assistance, and other services to an average of 150 refugees each weekday.

The Rev. Canon John Kilgore, MD, KStJ, currently serves as interim priest at St. Paul's Within the Walls. "I came to St. Paul's as interim priest 'for six months,' and I'm still here 14 months later, having witnessed firsthand the profound difference this place makes in people's lives," said Canon Kilgore. "We are doing God's work and caring for all of God's children in countless ways. The Refugee Center is just one of them—but a major one."



A former guest of the center, now stable and employed, returns to share his story of hope with those just beginning their journey.



Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe visits the Joel Nafuma Refugee Center at St. Paul's Within the Walls Episcopal Church in Rome, Italy. At his right is the Rev. Canon John W. Kilgore, and to his left is Giulia Bonoldi, the center's director.

In May, Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe visited the center and received a guided tour, during which he learned about the center's holistic approach, from providing sleeping bags to people who live on the streets to teaching them about their legal rights and helping them integrate into society.

Europe is a destination point for refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing violence and persecution, political instability, civil wars and territorial disputes that rage in some 24 African, Middle Eastern, and southern and central Asian countries and regions. The Italian peninsula is close to Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East and is point of first reception for asylum-seekers, many of whom arrive by boat. What started with some six projects has grown this year to 20 operating from Romania to Portugal to Cyprus.

"When I hear our guests' stories and see their faces, I am always deeply moved," Canon Kilgore said. Canon Kilgore practiced as an invasive cardiologist in St. Louis for more than 30 years and became an Episcopal priest more than two decades ago. He has been deeply involved with the Order of St John since 1990, serving multiple terms on the US Priory Chapter and as vice chancellor for community. Over the past 12 years, he has assisted numerous Episcopal and Church of England parishes across continental Europe, while also advancing ecumenical efforts in Rome. This includes his work with the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The prominent inclusion of Anglican clergy at the funeral of Pope Francis and the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV stands as a testament to the significance of this ongoing ecumenical work.

"Rarely do I walk through the center without getting a lump in my throat," Canon Kilgore said. "God's children are being cared for in a holy way, just as we are called to do, and it is making a real difference."

To learn more about the Joel Nafuma Refugee Center and its work in Rome, visit www.jnrc.it 

Since the beginning of the war in Gaza in Oct. 2023, the hospital building has sustained damage but is structurally intact.

Thirty-five U.S. Priory Confrères were recently in London where they were graciously hosted by our colleagues from the Priory of England and the Islands for a St John's Day celebration at St Paul's Cathedral. I hosted dinner that evening for our Confrères, with VIP guests Sir Andrew Cash, chair of the St. John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) and Lady Debora Cash. Good conversations ensued and Sir Andrew commented that \$75,000 is desperately needed to renovate an operating theater in Gaza to enable the team to undertake very much needed eye surgery after almost 20 months of disruption as a result of the war.

CEO Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali commented, "Since the beginning of the war in Gaza in Oct. 2023, the hospital building has sustained damage but is structurally intact. Local refugees sought shelter in our building and internal fixtures and fittings have been stripped to provide fuel and supplies.

"We have managed to rehabilitate the ground floor of our hospital and in April we were able to resume providing general and specialized eye care services. We need to rehabilitate the

surgery department and the day care to enable us to resume the ophthalmic surgeries to our patients."

"1. There are no ophthalmic surgeries being performed in Gaza hospitals except in the government hospital, which provides very few procedures and no Vitreoretinal (VR) surgeries.

2. We will resume providing VR surgeries, especially as we have the resources including manpower and the main equipment.

3. The waiting list of ophthalmic surgeries has increased dramatically during the war in Gaza.

4. A lot of our patients lost their vision since there is no available surgical intervention for cases who need prompt intervention."

Four very generous Confrères (two couples) made gifts of \$10,000 each, which has helped to kick-start this project. If you wish to support this important initiative, please donate online (indicate your donation is for the "Operating Theater") or contact our National office.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum.

Nigel G. Heath, KStJ
Prior

CLAIRE'S STORY

Not long after she lost her husband, Claire feared she might lose her sight. "I didn't really realize I had blurred vision until after my husband died. Maybe his death let me feel that I am getting older."

The mother of four lives in Bethlehem, her late husband's hometown. "We had a business, and I worked there as a cashier for a long time. Now I am staying at home with my daughter. She helps me with all my daily activities because my vision is so blurry. I am not even able to read anymore."

Claire was diagnosed with cataracts. She underwent cataract surgery at St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem.

After surgery, when the bandages were removed, Claire was thrilled to immediately see how much her vision had improved. She expressed her deep appreciation for everyone who helped make her surgery possible. "Now I can go home and read the books I love to read. Although I am getting older, my passion for reading has never stopped." ❄️





PRO FIDE

Prayer in times of disaster is therefore never an avoidance of the world's pain but the first act of loving solidarity.

In times of trouble, the Church is called back to the font. Floodwaters rise, the flimsy scaffolding of ordinary life is stripped away, and we remember who we are: a people baptized into Christ, who died and rose again. At our baptisms, the water stilled; now it is our turn to let nothing shake our peace, to live “dead to sin and alive to God,” and to “seek and serve Christ in every neighbor.” Prayer in times of disaster is therefore never an avoidance of the world’s pain but the first act of loving solidarity—an inner raising-up of the heart that steadies our hands for outward service.

I know something of fear born in storms. As a boy in Texas, I followed my father as he boarded and taped up windows and saved water in jugs in advance of Hurricane Carmen. That night, the wind moaned like a living creature and, flat on my back in bed, I willed myself to sleep and prayed that the roof would not give way and that morning would come. I have lived through many storms, much

worse; I have mucked out my mom’s house and feared for her life during Harvey; I have led the diocese to respond to these storms, and I have even gathered my family into the hallway to protect us from a tree blown through our window.

None of my experiences compares to Camp Mystic and Kerrville, Texas. Today, our diocese mourns because we have lost families, individuals, and several children. We are still looking for hundreds more, which will bring new connections and familial ties. In the Diocese of West Texas, the damage is terrible, and the need is great. Some of our children made it through the storm at Camp Mystic, which the flood in Kerr County will forever mark.

Storms etch themselves into the body’s memory and so, when a new disaster strikes—a hurricane or the floods in Texas—the childhood questions come again, unbidden: will my roof hold? Will I be safe? Will I see the morning? But along with the questions comes our baptismal determination: we who are in Christ can never be abandoned, and we will not abandon any neighbor.

Anglican tradition has always insisted on the unity of word and deed. The Five Marks of Anglican Mission tell us to proclaim Good News, to teach and nurture, to respond to human need, to transform unjust structures, and to safeguard creation. In times of disaster, the order of priorities often gets flipped: compassionate response takes the front seat, search-and-rescue, shelter, and medical care. The beautiful surprise is to discover that in these outward acts of mercy, we do proclaim Christ, as the Church lives its embodied, incarnational vocation. Holiness manifests itself in a dozen ways: in prayer-soaked efficiency, in volunteers who clear debris “as unto the Lord,” in chaplains who keep silence beside the unspeakable, in donors who give anonymously because the left hand need not know what the right hand is doing.

A shining example comes from our Order of St John. As Texans waded through rising waters, our Confrères in Jerusalem and Gaza confront a different deluge: the long, grinding flood of conflict that leaves eyes scarred and sight imperiled. In Jerusalem and Gaza, each cataract removed, each child screened, is a small resurrection, a splash of light in darkness. To renovate an operating theatre in Gaza is to say, in deeds if not in words, that no suffering human is outside the circle of God’s concern. The same love that compels a medic to enter a flooded valley compels a surgeon to restore vision, and both are answering the baptismal question “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people?” with a confident, “I will, with God’s help.”

We can learn from our forebears how such work is undergirded by patience and humility. Hugh Latimer’s writings include a striking passage on “Christian patience” that urges us not to resent adversities but instead to let them enlarge our hearts. Thomas Cranmer, in his collects for times of trouble, models prayers that teach us to “persevere with steadfast faith” precisely when circumstances are urging us to despair. Their counsel stands: stay close to the scriptures, keep the Daily Office, and let common prayer form a community that can absorb shock without losing hope.

So we pray, we give, we volunteer—and we do all of this with grateful hearts, because every act of mercy and every word of comfort participates in God’s mission of restoring creation to wholeness and love. May the Lord who stilled the storm grant us courage to work and wisdom to rebuild, and above all, a love that will not let the wounded be forgotten.

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