



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 6, NUMBER 9

DECEMBER 2025



Jumana's Story

PAGE 3

HIGHLIGHTS

"A Simple Act"

PAGE 4

'Tis the Season

PAGE 5



MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

As we reflect on another distressing year in the Holy Land, we marvel at the 70,000 patients that our Gaza staff somehow were still able to treat this year, and the phenomenal success of the pediatric screening program that will have treated more than **100,000** children by the end of this year. Both of these programs and the work in the

Holy Land is the direct result of the dedication and personal sacrifices made by St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) staff and the generosity of our U.S. Priory Confrères. Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali, SJEHG CEO, sends this message:

Sight-saving, lifesaving support indeed, but sadly the need is ever-increasing. I can still feel the gratitude expressed during my visit to the clinic this spring, as a quiet five-year-old girl shyly squeezed my hand when the staff told her that thanks to many friends in a faraway country, her sight could and would be saved.

It only costs \$10 to screen a child. During this Advent and the holiday season, a very generous donor has pledged \$250,000 if we match this exceptional generosity by year-end.

Will you join Jane and me as we anticipate the miracles and wonders of the season by pledging to continue this life-saving work? Every contribution, whether enough to enable the screening of one or one thousand children, will help fund the program for another year and forever change the lives of not only the children it helps, but also their families.

To donate, go to the Member Dashboard of the Priory website and make an online contribution indicating that it is for the "2025 Advent Appeal" or complete this [form](#) and return it to the Priory office before December 31, 2025.

This holiday season, please also keep the patients, families, and staff of the St. John Eye Hospital Group in your thoughts and prayers. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

The selection process for my successor as Prior is progressing as outlined in the previously published "Prior Search" materials. Candidates have been interviewed by the selection committee, shared their vision for the next six years, and will be interviewed by the Lord Prior this week. As indicated in the materials, it is expected that the committee will make a recommendation to Chapter for its consideration and vote during its January meeting. The final, approved, recommendation by Chapter will then be sent to the Grand Prior for his approval and appointment no later than March 1, 2026. The new Prior will take office on June 24, 2026, St. John's Day.

Thank you to each of you for all that you do to support the Priory's mission *to serve our Lords the sick and the poor*. I wish you and your family a joyous holiday season, and a happy and healthy new year.

Pro Fide,

Nigel G. Heath, KStJ
Prior

CHILD VISION SCREENING PROGRAMME



Message from the Chief Executive Officer of SJEHG

Thanks to the very generous support of the U.S. St John Priory, we have been able to undertake a large-scale child vision screening initiative. Over the past two years, we have screened nearly 100,000 children, identifying 12,320 with visual problems requiring further investigation, prescription glasses, treatment, or even surgery.

Child vision screening is essential to ensuring healthy visual development and supporting a child's overall growth, learning, and well-being. Early detection of vision problems prevents long-term complications and allows timely, sight-saving intervention. This project has become a vital pillar in our fight against blindness in the Holy Land.

We very much hope that, with your continued kindness and generous support, we will be able to carry this work forward into 2026 and screen and treat more than 50,000 children, many of whom are among the most disadvantaged.

On behalf of our patients and communities, thank you to all U.S. St John members for your unwavering commitment and partnership in combating blindness in the Holy Land.

Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali, KStJ

PRIORY STAFF

Michele Blair
Executive Director
Carey Hollensteiner
Member Services and Events Director

OFFICE INFORMATION

1850 M Street, NW, Suite 1070
Washington DC 20036-5856
Tel: 202-510-9691
ID#: 13-6161455
E-mail: prioryUSA@saintjohn.org

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Daniel P. Reany, OSTJ, Chairman
Bita Esmaeli, M.D., OSTJ **Steve Leland, OSTJ**
Carol Hunter, OSTJ **Charles Mosteller, M.D., KStJ**

JUMANA'S STORY

Jumana's story is a beautiful reminder of how early screening and timely treatment can make all the difference for babies born far too early.

Jumana was born in May 2025, more than 14 weeks early. Medically, she was considered "extremely preterm." She weighed just 1.9 lbs. (860 grams). She was born at Makassed Hospital, and immediately placed in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for respiratory support, nutritional stabilization, and continuous monitoring of growth and development.

As part of routine screening for preterm infants, she underwent retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) screening, in collaboration with St John Eye Hospital, using a 3nethra Neo ROP camera. Ophthalmic examination revealed bilateral ROP, stage 3. Both of her eyes showed a

serious stage of prematurity-related disease of the retinas. Stage 3 ROP needs treatment to prevent severe vision loss and possibly blindness. She needed intravitreal anti-VEGF therapy— injections to help stop abnormal blood vessel growth.

The procedure was done with great care, using the same delicate precautions staff take with all medically fragile preemies. After her treatment, little Jumana began to show encouraging signs of improvement right away. The dangerous new blood vessels in her eyes slowly faded, and her retinas began developing the way they were meant to.

Over the weeks that followed, Jumana remained stable and continued to return to SJEH for additional ROP screening and examinations. Each visit showed steady progress as her retinas matured normally. Development of her vision has stayed on the right track.

Jumana's story is a beautiful reminder of how early screening and timely treatment can make all the difference for babies born far too early. It also reflects the incredible teamwork of the doctors, nurses, and neonatal specialists who surround these vulnerable infants with expert, compassionate care. Because of



that care, and through your ongoing support, this tiny girl did not go blind, and has a much brighter future ahead. ✨

SUPPORTING THE MISSION: YEAR-END OBLATION REMINDER

As 2025 draws to a close, please take a moment to complete your annual Oblation if you have not already done so. More than just an obligation; it is a way of renewing our commitment to the work of our Order and to the people we care for around the world.

For many Members, the oblation becomes a moment to pause and reflect.

Oblations help sustain the mission we share. They support outreach that lifts vulnerable communities, medical programs that bring relief in difficult places, and the ongoing work of our hospitals and volunteer teams. They help St John stay steady and responsive wherever our presence is needed.

In a spiritual sense, making an Oblation is a prayer of self-offering. The Book of Common Prayer

describes oblation as “an offering of ourselves, our lives and labors, in union with Christ, for the purposes of God” (BCP, p. 857), and names the action as one of the principal kinds of prayer. For many Members, the Oblation becomes a moment to pause and reflect, to honor the traditions we have inherited, and to support the work that continues in our name.

“Our Members make the mission real,” said Ellen LeCompte, DStJ, Chancellor of the U.S. Priory. “The Oblation is a simple act, but it is a quiet expression of belonging. It shows a desire to walk with others in the work we are called to do.”



An interior of a hospital of the Order of St John. Detail from a line engraving by Rasmäsler, 1828, after Rarnberg.

If you have not yet completed your Oblation for 2025, or are not sure, visit the [Member dashboard](#) on the Priory website and check your status under contribution history. As always, thank you for supporting the work of the Order of St John. ✱

TAX LAW CHANGES IN 2026

Priory Treasurer John Mackasill thought it might be helpful to highlight some recent changes to the donation tax rules which will come into effect in 2026. This summary is not meant to provide tax advice, as these issues can be complicated and fact-specific, but the example below is meant to be instructive. Confrères should consult with their tax advisors regarding their own personal circumstances.

Starting in 2026 the new “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” sets a floor on charitable income tax deductions, allowing itemizers to only claim a charitable income tax deduction on contributions that exceed 0.5% of their adjusted gross income (AGI). At the time, an overall cap on the itemized deductions will effectively reduce the maximum tax benefit for top earners to 35% per dollar donated.

Here is an example:

Patricia earns \$2 million annually and directs \$100,000 of her annual income to charity. Currently the full \$100,000 gift is deductible against her 37% federal income tax rate for a tax benefit of \$37,000.

Under the new law Patricia’s tax benefit will drop—she will only be able to deduct \$90,000 with a reduced tax rate of 35%. As a result, in 2026 her tax savings from a \$100,000 donation will decline from \$37,000 to just \$31,500. This would suggest accelerating some charitable donations into the 2025 tax year.

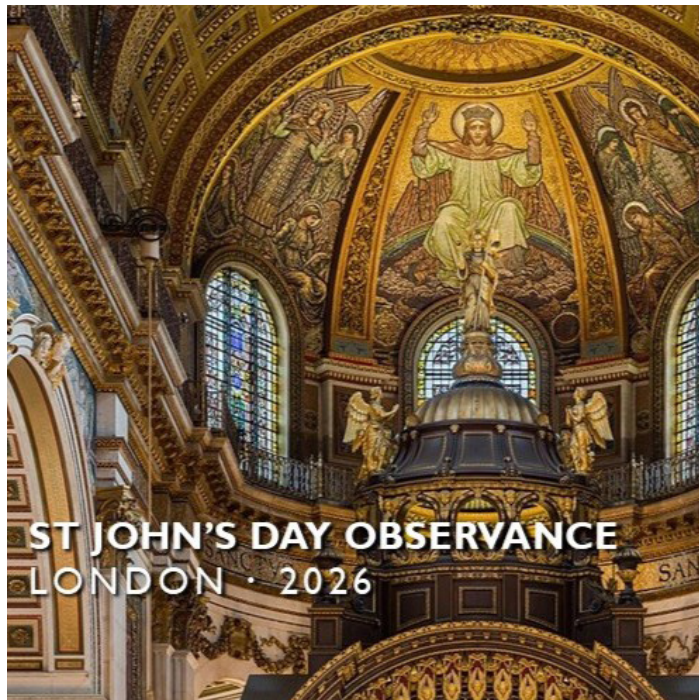
The treasurer would also like to remind Confrères that the donation of stock, which has unrealized gains associated with the stock, is a very efficient way to make a charitable donation. The donor receives a deduction for the full market value of the stock at the date of donation without having to pay any capital gains tax (CGT). Once in the hands of a 501(c)(3) registered charity, the stock donation can be liquidated for cash and no CGT is payable. ✱

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

St. John's Day, London

Saturday, June 20

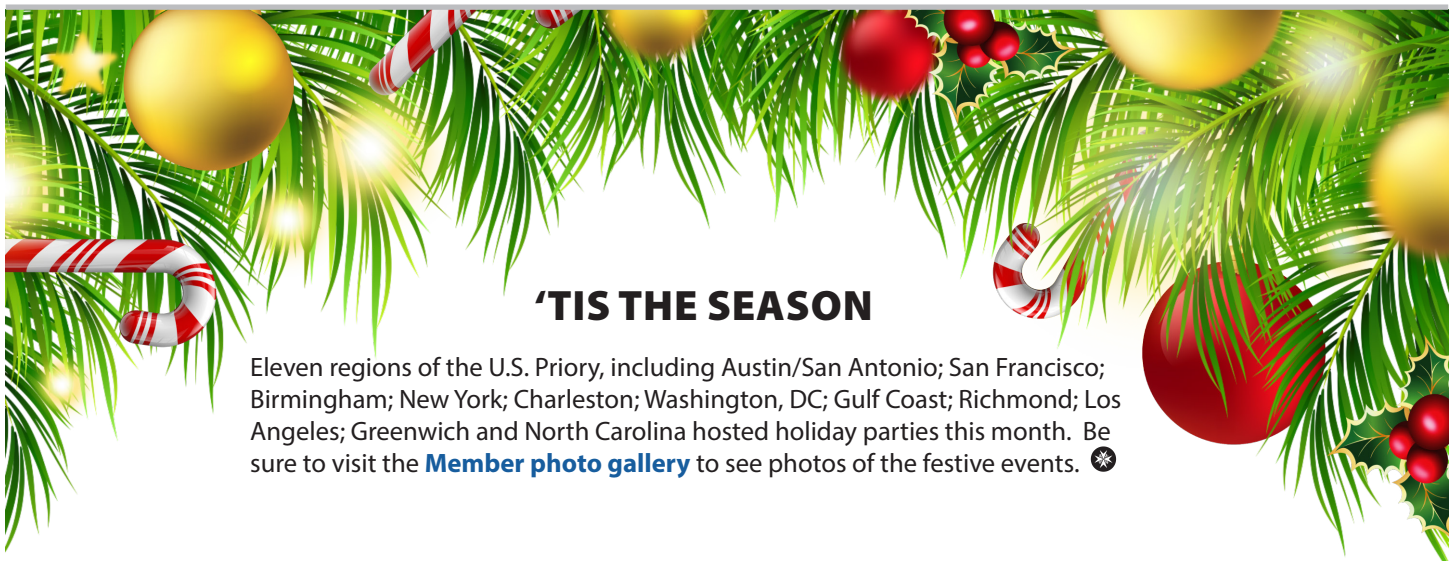
Honoring the feast day of the Order's patron, St. John the Baptist, the Order's annual service of commemoration brings processions, hymns, lessons, and prayers to the magnificent baroque setting of St. Paul's Cathedral. The occasion blends the grandeur and pageantry of the Order's historical past with 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.** ❄️





PRO FIDE

When I was a little boy, I was enthralled by the old Christmas stories that lived in my family's past. I loved the Christmas season and how the church celebrated it. I also loved my own family traditions for the season of Advent and Christmas that brought church and family together. One of

those traditions was to watch (among other things) Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*.

We would then widely debate between children and parents which of the many versions was indeed the best. To this day, my brothers and I will argue about the best Scrooge, Marley, or ghosts.

A Christmas Carol is neither only a ghost story, seasonal fable, nor only entertainment; it is Dickens's sermon in narrative form. Raised and formed in the Church of England, later living out much of his life as a Unitarian, still his theology carries the very best of Anglican moral theology.

You see, Charles Dickens preached not from a lectern but with characters, with pathos, and through a dramatic arc. Dickens was no priest, but in this story, he is preaching as a lay Anglican who believes that the way we treat other people



(especially the poor) is the measure of what we truly think and believe about God. In a flash of mercy and judgment, Dickens allows us a glimpse of a soul cracked open by grace—this is at the heart of *A Christmas Carol*.

The simple story of Ebenezer Scrooge is a call to conversion. Scrooge isn't just a crotchety old miser, but a portrait of what it looks like when we let our hearts be governed by avarice and fear, when we set ourselves up as gods of our own money and time, when we shut ourselves off from love, from community, and from joy. Dickens isn't attacking the person of Scrooge or the behavior of greed he is revealing the results of those things. Dickens is also, more importantly, showing us that even the most calloused heart can be broken open to love. In the visits of the three spirits, Scrooge is given an opportunity to repent and to be redeemed. That is, to be changed. And that is the Christian story. The prophets and apostles call people to repentance. They promise real change and real healing, a renewed life.

Dickens has a vision of the faith of the early church, the kind of faith that asks us to be Christ's hands in loving our neighbors, caring for the vulnerable, and being generous in our time, our attention, and our resources. This theological DNA is at the core of our own Order of St John; an order of the Lord's sick and poor.

Dickens believed that Christian faith was about the church and about what we did with our hands and our hearts in the wider world. In Dickens's day, many believed that the poor were lazy, or worthless, or subhuman. Dickens's vision is profoundly biblical, for the whole of humanity, from monarchs to commoners, from businessmen to orphans, reflects the image of God and is our "fellow passenger to the grave." Dickens's idea of Christmas is radical not just in the 1840s but today as well, because his vision of what it means to "keep Christmas well" is not a holiday observance but a lifetime of compassion and justice.

When we read or watch Dickens's story, we are not just being entertained. We are being invited to examine our own lives, to ask where in our lives we have become hardened or calcified or closed-off and to believe that, like Scrooge, we, too, can be changed. Dickens' vision of faith is both tender and hopeful and also grounded in the day to day. He reminds us that the true spirit of Christmas is Christ's call to love—to let God crack open our hearts, to let God into our lives, to open ourselves to God and to one another, not just on December 25th but every day.

Wherever you are and regardless of what day it is, keep Christmas well for the sake of the Lord's beloved sick and poor.

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