

SPEECH OF THE GRAND MASTER TO THE POSTULANTS

Slovakia, 18th July 2020

Dear Postulants,

The word Postulant comes from the Latin and it means to be a candidate to a certain position, and, in fact, you are candidates to become Knights and Dames of St. John. But the word Candidate has a very special meaning by itself because in the old Rome the citizens applying for a Job with the Public Administration of the Empire had to come to the Senate dressed in an immaculate white gown, whitened with chalk, called "Toga Candida", as a clear demonstration of their Purity, so those wearing the Candida were called the Candidates. Ever since the notion of Candidate is associated with the idea of purity of intentions, and I'm sure that all of you have the purest intentions when you applied to become Knights and Dames of St John.

We are all living what probably is the most dramatic period of our Lives, a period that will be sadly remembered in the History of Mankind but our Sovereign Order of St John has been known throughout History as the Hospitaller Knights or the Knights of the Hospital because our main mission, our Noble mission, was not only the military defence of Europe, but it was to assist the ill and the needy without any discrimination as St. John of Jerusalem taught us to do.

Only after the Great Siege to Malta in September 1565 the Knights of St. John took also the honourable designation of Knights of Malta, but even then they have never abandoned their Hospitaller mission and to honour this historical tradition our Ceremonies in Malta take place in the building of Sacra Infermeria that was considered the best Hospital of the World of Its time, so presently our Federation of Pories as direct and legal descendant of the Old Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem, continues even during this terrible pandemic, to fulfil its noble mission of assisting the ill and the victims infected with Corona Virus.

Probably the most dramatic effects of this period are the Confinement and the Social Distance which we must respect and also the masks that we must wear. Thousands of victims of the Pandemic had to die alone without the comfort of the presence of their families and for us all there are no more handshakes to our friends, no more hugs and kisses to our loved ones, and the expression of our faces is hidden behind masks.

Scientific studies show that Human beings express 55% of their feelings and of their emotions using non-verbal communication such as body language, face expressions, touch and physical proximity but the confinement deprived us of more than a half of our capability to communicate, deprived us of the closeness that we are biologically programmed to seek when we are vulnerable, lonely and afraid.

Even with all the limitations imposed by the pandemic your future brothers and sisters in St John, our Knights and Dames, have continued serving the ill and needy from the United States to Benin, from Malta to Hungary and Slovakia, from Cambodia to Angola, and our Doctors, nurses and paramedics continue in the front line assisting the victims of COVID-19. We can all be very proud of them and feel very honoured by their work, their commitment and their dedication.

Dalai Lama once wrote that the people have been created to be loved and the things have been created to be used, and the problem of the present World is that we love the things and we use the people, however in our Sovereign Order and State we make the difference because people always come first! Dear Postulants, you are entering an Order and a Sovereign State of true nobles, nobles not by their birth but by their actions in favour of all of those who need us.

Alone nobody can solve the problems of the World, but if we work as a group, as a team, we can make the difference and during the almost 1.000 years of our existence, the Knights of St John have been making the difference, and what we expect from you is exactly that you work with us and, together, we will continue making the difference.

For the famous Czech writer Milan Kundera, the true Friend is the one with whom we share our victories and is there to support us in the bad moments of our lives, the true friend is the one who doesn't lend us only his car, but also lends us his shoulder, his precious time and his words of support, the true friend doesn't give us only a ride to a party, he takes us to his own private World. For Milan Kundera Friends are an alliance against Adversity and old friends are the witnesses of our past and are part of it, but I personally believe that the Past is a far away country where you can never return to, because borders are closed forever, so our new true friends will be the witnesses of our Future and part of our journey to come.

How many of those true friends do you have until now?

Be sure, dear Postulants, that from now on, among your new brothers and sisters, Knights and Dames of St John, you will find many of those true friends who will always be there for you. They have been waiting for you for almost one thousand years.

Be welcome!