



ABRUZZO EARTHQUAKE:

Order medical teams assist 1,000 displaced persons

Grand Master in Brussels with the President of the European Commission

An Agreement with great implications

In mid February (16-19), the Grand Master, Fra' Matthew Festing, made an official visit to the European Commission in Brussels.

Received by the President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, the Grand Master, together with the Grand Chancellor, Jean-Pierre Mazery, signed an important

international Cooperation Agreement. A wide range of cooperation was set out: assistance in emergency and post-crisis situations including rehabilitation and development, medical and social assistance to persons involved in migration, support to local economic and social development, protection of victims of trafficking and other vulnerable

groups, dissemination of international human rights, inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and sponsorship of seminars and workshops on topics of common interest.

"The Agreement underlines the strengthening of the relationship between the Order and Europe," noted the Grand Master, and President Barroso affirmed: "The European Commission shares the Order of Malta's values and mission and will do all it can to support its work." The Grand Master will meet again with President Barroso, in Rome, in the Magistral Villa.

The busy few days also included meetings with Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament Javier Solana, EU foreign policy chief, and with NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. A delegation of European MPs offered a luncheon in honour of the Grand Master in the Parliament building and he also met the board and members of the Order of Malta's Belgian Association. Particularly significant was the visit to La Fontaine, a social centre for the homeless run by the Order's Belgian Association in Bruxelles. ■

The passing of the Order's Cardinal Patronus

Cardinal Pio Laghi, the Order's Cardinal Patronus for 16 eventful years, left us on 10 January. His last message to the Order was read with emotion by the Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing, to the attendants at the Order's Venice Strategy Seminar which took place the following week and where His Eminence had planned to address the participants. Instead, his touching words, dictated in the fading moments of his life, expressed his love for the Order and he exhorted members to continue their charitable activities in the spirit of Christian love, which is at the heart of the Order's work.

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■ Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing with European Commission President José Manuel Barroso

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The passing of the Order's Cardinal Patronus

Requiem Mass in St. Peter's Basilica in the presence of the Pope *(Continues from page 1)*

The Grand Master praised Cardinal Laghi's work for the Order, describing him as "one of its most eminent members and a great moral and spiritual guide." Requiem Mass was celebrated on 13 January in St. Peter's Basilica by the Dean of the College of Cardinals, Angelo Sodano. During the ceremony Pope Benedict XVI recalled Cardinal Laghi's long and distinguished service to the Holy See as one of the most expert Vatican diplomats, and then his appointment as Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education in 1991. The Pontiff recalled that John Paul II also assigned him in May 1993 to "the high role of Patron of the Sovereign Order of Malta." The funeral was attended by the Grand Master, the members of the Sovereign Council, the Prelate of the Order, Mons. Angelo Acerbi, and many members of the Order of Malta. ■



■ Cardinal Patronus of the Order, Cardinal Pio Laghi (1922-2009)

Memorial Mass honours Fra' Andrew Bertie, 78th Grand Master

An inspiring life remembered

On 7th February, exactly a year from the passing of the 78th Grand Master of the Order of Malta, Fra' Andrew Bertie, his life, didication and works on behalf of the Order were celebrated. They were recalled in a moving acknowledgement by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Dean of the College of

Cardinals, at the anniversary Mass he celebrated in the Basilica of St. Alessio and St. Bonifacio, on the Aventine in Rome. In his homily Cardinal Sodano paid tribute to Fra' Andrew's dedication in his twenty years at the head of the Order, saying: "His entire life was inspired by profound principles of faith." The Grand Master

Fra' Matthew Festing, cardinals Jean Louis Tauran, Renato Martino, Andrea Cordero Lanza di Montezemolo, Giovanni Lajolo, members of the Sovereign Council, the Italian UnderSecretary of state Gianni Letta, the Diplomatic Corps and many Order representatives and members were among the assembly. ■



■ A moment during the celebration in the Basilica of St. Alessio and St. Bonifacio

Abruzzo earthquake: the Emergency Corps of the Order aids 1,000 displaced persons

The Order of Malta Italian Emergency Corps (CISOM) is providing aid for 1,000 displaced persons affected by the Abruzzo earthquake. With their medical personnel, rescue workers and specialised nurses, the volunteers of the Order have been working non-stop under the coordination of the Italian Civil Protection since early Monday 6 April, when an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale hit the town of L'Aquila. The earthquake has so far caused 293 deaths, more than 1,600 injured and left 28,000 homeless. The Order's volunteers are concentrating aid at the epicentre of the earthquake, Poggio di Roio, where they have set up a 'tent city', providing 700 beds, with another 275 beds in nearby San Felice d'Ocre. The Order's two medical centres, on continuous duty, treated over 150 patients in the first tumultuous days. The team is currently providing over

2,000 meals per day. Two trained sniffer dogs of the Emergency Corps aided the National Fire Department to find survivors in L'Aquila, helping find 36 survivors, pulled out alive from the rubble of buildings in L'Aquila. On behalf of the Italian Civil Protection, the Order's Emergency Corps will continue to manage the two camps for the duration of the state of emergency, which is expected to last for at least three months, as the earth continues to tremble.

You can support the victims of the earthquake by sending your contribution to:

ACISMOM

Account number 000401124060
Bank: Unicredit Banca di Roma
IBAN: IT 06 J 03002 03223
000401124060
BIC-SWIFT: BROMITR1723
Reference: Terremoto Abruzzo ■

CISOM

The Italian Emergency Corps of the Order of Malta was founded in 1970 and is part of the Italian Civil Protection network.

It carries out immediate first aid in emergencies with 70 groups across the country, counting on 1,800 volunteers.

The Emergency Corps aids victims of natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies, as well as providing medical aid at major public events.

Website:
www.ordinedimaltitalia.org



■ The Order of Malta Emergency Corps sniffer dogs look for survivors in L'Aquila

State visit to Hungary

Grand Master and Hungarian authorities
celebrate a continuing commitment

The Grand Master, Fra' Matthew Festing, at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Hungary, László Sólyom, visited the country in early February. Following his talks with the President at the Sandor Palace, Budapest, the Grand Master and his delegation had talks with the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament Katalin Szili, the Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kinga Göncz, the Cardinal Archbishop Peter Erdő and the Apostolic Nuncio Juliusz Janusz.

“After the Revolution of 1956 the Order of Malta was able to offer immediate assistance to thousands of refugees and homeless people,” the Grand Master recalled during his Press Conference together with President Sólyom. “In 1989 the traditional friendship between the Order and Hungary – interrupted for several years – was re-established after the country regained its freedom and national independence. Since then, the Order’s Hungarian Association and its hospitaller service, the MMSZ – celebrating its 20th anniversary this year – have accepted the invitation of

the Hungarian authorities to work in numerous health and social centres with the support of our embassy. Several programmes have been set up to tackle these commitments, including the creation of a national network,” he said. The Grand Master also met with members of the Order’s Hungarian Association and the Order’s Hungarian Hospitaller Service (MMSZ) volunteers, where he was able to offer his personal congratulations and to thank them for their continued dedication and commitment. ■



■ Grand Master Festing and President Solyom during the press conference

The MMSZ in action

The Order's hospitaller service counts 13,000 employees and volunteers

Coordinated by the Order's Association, the Order's Hungarian Hospitaller Service (MMSZ) works in healthcare and social centres throughout the country. "I am very pleased that the Hungarian authorities have shown their appreciation for the results obtained," the Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing said after his meeting with President Sólyom.

The background

The Magyar Maltai Szeretetszolgálat (MMSZ), was founded 1989. In its 20 years of service to the poor and the sick, it has grown to become the largest provider of social facilities in Hungary, running almost 200 social institutions. It has three foci: voluntary groups and donations, mostly in kind; social and healthcare system, such as childcare, the disabled, the homeless, the elderly; and problem solving social strategies. An example of this last: a

'prevention by playing' programme where the aim is to prevent crimes committed out of boredom, by promoting communities and activities for the young.

The foreground

In addition to its employee structure of 900, MMSZ has 12,000 trained volunteers. It owns and manages six hospitals and nursing homes in nine Hungarian cities, caring for 2,200 people. The sweep of MMSZ activities is broad - from day care centres and clubs for seniors, to an outpatient care service, the supply of medicines to the sick poor, a mobile X-ray unit for prevention of tuberculosis, soup kitchen services which provide around 18,000 meals daily - to name just some. One of the organisation's most imaginative projects is the equipping of a former German Hospital train so that it is now able to house 110 homeless.

The figures

In 2008, MMSZ distributed goods worth 2.5m Euro to the needy. Its services cover: Institutional care: the elderly-15 homes; the homeless - 22 institutions; the disabled - 8; child protection -20; addicted - 7; healthcare and services - 44; a total of 10,000 people cared for in institutions every year. A pre-Christmas food collection 2008 meant that 121 tons of food worth 195,000 Euro could be purchased and distributed to 14,000. Another imaginative project was the creation of a 'Donation card' agreed with a supermarket which resulted in further donations. The MMSZ Rescue Team for victims of national disasters became official in 2008, having been already working for 10 years. In 2009, its 20th anniversary year, MMSZ reaffirms its aims - to establish support for the needy, reinforce and expand the donor base and create strategic partnerships. ■



■ MMSZ rescue teams are ready to assist in times of emergency or disaster

Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo honoured by the Order of Malta

The Grand Master, Fra' Matthew Festing received Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo at the Magistral Palace in January and conferred on him the insignia of Bailiff Grand Cross of Honour

and Devotion of the Order. In his speech of thanks, the President of the Governorate of Vatican City State described the Order as "spreading the Christian virtues of love and brotherhood. These ideals – indeed

supreme ones – have driven the members of the Order since the beginning of their history." And he concluded: "The Order has always focused on the new, emerging needs that are endlessly arising in our society."

The centuries old relationship between the Order of Malta and the Vatican was also extended to postal services.

On 24 June last year an Agreement was signed which recognises the full validity of stamps issued by the Order of Malta and the Vatican. ■



■ The Grand Master congratulates Cardinal Lajolo

Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo

was born in Novara, studied theology in Rome and Munich, was ordained in 1960 and a bishop in 1989. He was Apostolic Nuncio in Germany from 1995 to 2003, then Secretary for the Relationships with States of the Holy See (Vatican Foreign Minister). In 2006 he was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI as President of the Governorate of Vatican City.

Ceremony on the Aventine welcomes new members

At the recent February ceremony for new admissions to the Order, in the Order's Church of Santa Maria dell'Aventino, Mons. Alfred Xuereb was admitted into the Order of Malta as Conventual Chaplain ad honorem by Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing and members of

the Sovereign Council. Born in Victoria-Gozo, Malta, in 1958, since September 2007 Mons. Alfred Xuereb is personal secretary to Pope Benedict XVI, together with Mons. Georg Gaenswein. After ordination in Malta, Mons. Xuereb took his doctorate at the Gregorian University, worked in the Roman Curia

in various posts, before his current appointment. Also welcomed as new members of the Order at the ceremony were Archduke Gerhard of Austria-Este, Archduke Martin and Katharina of Austria-Este, Archduke Carl Philipp and Annie-Claire of Austria and Archduke Simeon and Maria of Austria. ■

International Seminar in Venice

Order leaders look to the future in a changing world

“

At this Venice seminar we wished to convey to the members of the Order

who hold posts of responsibility the challenges that they can expect to see over the next ten years and the skills we must develop,” Winfried Henckel von Donnersmarck, Chairman, noted at the start of the Order’s International Seminar in Venice mid January, attended by over 400 Order leaders from the five continents.

Opening the meeting, Grand Master Fra’ Matthew Festing remembered first of all the Cardinal Patronus of the Order, Pio Laghi, who had died just days before, and whose message to the participants - to honour their tasks, their commitment, the Church – he read with emotion.

Fra’ Matthew stressed some of the Order’s priorities: the encouragement of vocations, the extension and enhancement of health care and humanitarian operations, and the Order’s emergency relief service, Malteser International. Special meetings were convened for the Professed knights, the Presidents, the Hospitallers and the Order’s Diplomatic Corps, and then twelve working groups met

and discussed their own topics in detail and deliberated on the demands this century will make upon all. In every group, the focus was on reviewing spiritual commitment and its development in the future, on the promotion of the Order’s many charitable activities around the world and its special international programmes, the promotion of pilgrimages, the Order as promoter of peace among nations, religions and societies and the Order’s response to the needs of the 21st century. The highly successful meeting was acknowledged by the Grand Master, and participants echoed his reactions both in their comments and their resolve to carry forward with energy and strength the Order’s ancient, unending mission: *tuitio fidei, obsequium pauperum*. The Seminar ended with a solemn High Mass in the splendour of St. Mark’s Basilica, celebrated by the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Angelo Scola, who outlined the Order’s humanitarian and spiritual mission: “From faith to action: faithfulness to its origin is where lies the secret of the life of your charism, now over a thousand years old and yet still fresh with youth.” ■



■ Twelve Working Groups defined the future of the Order



■ Fra' Gherardo Hercolani

Grand Commander appointed

The Grand Commander of the Order, Fra' Gherardo Hercolani Fava Simonetti took up his new role last month, having been appointed at the Sovereign Council meeting of 12 February, on the occasion of Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre's election as Grand Prior of Rome.

Fra' Gherardo Hercolani was born in Bologna, entered the Order in 1963 and in 1967 took his vows as a Professed knight.

Fra' Gherardo was formerly the Grand Prior of Lombardy and Venice (1984-94) and since 2006 has been a member of the Order's Sovereign Council.

The Grand Commander is the religious superior of the Professed Knights and of the Knights and Dames in Obedience and is in charge of instructing the members of the Order in the fulfilment of the principles of living the Faith and caring for the poor and the sick.

At the same meeting, in place of Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre, the Grand Master and the Sovereign Council appointed Duncan Gallie to the Sovereign Council. Entering the Order in 1995, he is a knight of Justice, Pro-Chancellor of the Grand Priory of England and Senior Master at St. Edmund's School, Ware, England.

THE ORDER'S BILATERAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS: THE NEW AMBASSADORS

Letters of Credence recently presented to HMEH the Grand Master, Fra' Matthew Festing at the Magistral Palace, Rome, were

- **Czech Republic**, HE Pavel Vošalík
- **Thailand**, HE Pradap Pibulsonggram
- **Lithuania**, HE Vytautas Alisauskas
- **Ukraine**, HE Tetiana Izhevskaja
- **Hungary**, H.E. János Balassa
- **Seychelles**, H.E. Graziano Luigi Triboldi

The Order has steadily increased its diplomatic relations in recent years and currently has bilateral diplomatic relations with 102 countries. ■

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Lourdes

The Order's International Pilgrimage takes place 1 – 5 May

Spain

Order of Malta's International Summer Camp for Disabled Youth takes place in Segovia, Spain 15-23 August

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CURRENT ACTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Relief for Sri Lanka victims

Malteser International has launched a relief action for victims of Sri Lanka's recent civil war. In northern Sri Lanka, distribution of hygiene kits, clothing, mosquito nets and food supplies for internally displaced persons forced into 'transit camps' is underway. But in spite of these interventions and other support actions, the situation in the camps is deteriorating, and people do not have enough drinking water and food. The threats of starvation and disease are ever present. ■

Medical donations in Bulgaria

The Bulgarian authorities have expressed their great appreciation to the Order's Ambassador in Bulgaria, Camillo Zuccoli, for the much-needed donations in kind to 50 towns over the last four years. Eight ultrasound scanners for the early detection of cancer symptoms, cardiac defibrillators and eco-dopplers have been donated and installed at separate hospitals, with numerous consignments of food and clothing delivered to care homes for elderly people. The Embassy has also provided an ambulance and a mini van for the King Ferdinand Hospital for Pulmonary Diseases in Iskretz. ■

Order action in Cuba after Hurricane Ike

Hurricane Ike which hit Cuba late last year left chaos in its wake and still today reconstruction work goes on. Immediately following the catastrophe, the Order's Embassy in Havana swung into action with food and basic necessities, bringing them to the stricken victims, thousands of whom had lost homes and livelihood. The donations, which went to the region of Pinar del Rio, were effected with the help of the local bishop. In the city of Las Pozas, volunteers distributed packages of food and clothing, while the damaged Hospital of San Cristobal received extra supplies of bedding and medicines. The Embassy's future plans cover the rebuilding of houses – a project which will take many months. ■

The Order of Malta and Montenegro sign Postal Convention

A Postal Convention signed between the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and Montenegro on 23 February initiates a regular postal service between Montenegro and the Sovereign Order. The Convention, effective from 1 March, was signed by Jean-Pierre Mazery, Grand Chancellor, and Gian Luca Chiavari, Receiver of the Common Treasure, with Andrija Lompar, Minister of Transport and Communications of Montenegro during a ceremony held in the Order's Magistral Palace in Rome. Montenegro is the 54th country with which the Sovereign Order has signed Agreements for the circulation of mail bearing its stamps. Established in 1966, the Order of Malta's Magistral Postal Service has to date issued 387 series of stamps, with images concerning the Order of Malta, religious themes, the Order's history, its art heritage and its humanitarian works. Revenue from the sale of its stamps provides a contribution towards the Order of Malta's funding for its health and humanitarian works. ■



■ Jean-Pierre Mazery and Gian Luca Chiavari with Andrija Lompar

the Order of Malta
Newsletter

The email newsletter of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta

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