

**Address by Professor Anthony Mellows on the occasion of his Installation
as Lord Prior of St. John in the Priory Church, Clerkenwell, London EC1
on Thursday 20 November 2008**

Your Royal Highness, Lord Lieutenant, Your Worship, Your Excellencies, Your Most Eminent Highness the Grand Master, Your Royal Highness the Herrenmeister, My Lords, Confreres, Ladies and Gentlemen

Your Royal Highness, with your permission I would like to divide this short address into four sections.

I: Thanks and Welcome

Welcome to everyone present

Your Royal Highness, I am conscious of the great honour which you have done me by appointing me to be the Lord Prior of the Order, and of the great privilege which it is to hold this office. But I am also conscious of its challenges, and so in welcoming all those who are here today I would like to thank everyone who has come to support me as I begin my term of office. Many have travelled long distances to do so. I greatly appreciate and value the presence of every person who is here today – and I mean *every* person - but I would like to mention three groups in particular. .

Governors General

First, I would like to express a special welcome to the Governor General of Saint Lucia and the Governor General of the Solomon Islands. Your Excellencies, I recall with much pleasure the occasions when you were invested as members of the Order. What you have done, by travelling from opposite ends of the earth to be here today, is to demonstrate more powerfully than any words can do the international spread of the Order. And this international spread is reinforced by the presence of the High Commissioners and other Diplomatic representatives. I know that some High Commissioners are personally representing the Presidents or Governors-General of their countries. Your Excellencies, do, please, tell your President or Governor-General how very much the Order appreciates their representation and the interest which they have shown.

Official Representatives of Other Orders

Secondly, I would like to welcome especially the representatives of the Order of the Garter, the Order of the Thistle, the Order of the Bath, the Order of St. Michael and St. George and the Order of the British Empire. You are most welcome, and by your presence you have demonstrated that the Order of St. John takes its place as one of the Crown Orders of Chivalry.

Other Johannine Orders

And thirdly I would like to welcome in particular the Grand Master of the Order of Malta, the Herrenmeister of the Johanniterorden, and the leaders of the Crown Orders of St. John in The Netherlands and Sweden, together with other senior members of those Orders. By your presence you have demonstrated the increasing co-operation between all five Orders of St. John.

II: Appreciation of Colonel Barry

Secondly, Your Royal Highness, if I may I would like to add to your own tribute to my immediate processor, Colonel Eric Barry. I have had the honour to serve under six former Lords Prior. I have learnt from all of them. From that vantage point I have said on other occasions more fully than is possible today how I am absolutely convinced that history will show the essential influence which Colonel Barry has had in shaping the future direction of the Order. I am personally most grateful to him.

III: Those who are not members of the Order

Thirdly, perhaps I could address a few remarks to those here today who may not be very familiar with the Order of St. John.

An Order of Chivalry and a Christian Order

The Order of St. John is an Order of Chivalry of the Crown. That has been clearly demonstrated today. It is a Christian Order, and that has also been clearly demonstrated today. But I should stress that it is a Christian Order which is not in the slightest exclusive, but an Order which with arms widely outstretched welcomes, and welcomes warmly, those of any faith or none who are motivated to share in its work.

A Great International Humanitarian Charity

Taking these two elements together, what you have seen today may be the pinnacle of the Order, but you would have had to look harder at the third, and what some would say, is much the most important aspect of the Order, namely that it is a major international humanitarian charity. We have tried to show that by giving in the last two pages of the Order of Service examples – and they are only examples – of the very wide variety of caring activities and programmes for the training and development of young people which the Order carries on in many countries of the world. I would encourage you to look at those pages afterwards.

It is right that today's ceremony is taking place in the traditional home of the Order, but in some respects I wish that we could be in a much larger place. Think of the Royal Albert Hall., with its capacity of 8,000. Then think of a hall three times as large. And then multiply the product by 10. Then imagine that immense hall with a capacity of about 250,000, filled with St. John volunteers and salaried staff. They would be the members of the two great charitable foundations of the Order, the St. John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem and St. John Ambulance. Among that vast body you would see a great range of ages, from the young to the old; persons of every colour; persons of every background; and persons of every personal circumstance. That great body would show the Order in its charitable aspect. Whether or not its members realise it, their work is a manifestation of Christian love in action.

IV: Members of the Order

In the final section of this address, I turn to the majority of those who are here today, the members of the Order. Your Royal Highness, if a Lord Prior was selected by a political process, candidates would have to produce a manifesto. My manifesto would have four themes:

1. “One St. John”

I have referred to those many, in numerous countries, who are engaged in a great range of caring activities. I want them all to *feel* that they are members of one organisation, that there is “One St. John”. Such a feeling depends on knowledge of what we are all doing, and knowledge depends on communication. So I see considerable emphasis being placed in the coming years on communication.

2. “Outward St. John”

We are all naturally concerned with our own particular activities. But that concern is to be focused on the community we serve. That community is much wider than we may at first think, and it goes beyond our own village, town or city; indeed it may extend to a different continent. I will seek to encourage an attitude – and it is a matter of attitude – of not being concerned solely, (and properly) with our own immediate environment, but of always looking outwards, looking beyond ourselves.

3. “Forward St. John”

Thirdly I see an organisation in which each constituent part has paused; reappraised the needs of the community which it serves, and which it should serve; thought afresh how best those needs can be met; and then, invigorated, going forward.

4. “Reconciling St. John”

St. John will always be a care-giving organisation. In giving that care it earns trust. And that trust enables it to go to places where others cannot go, and to do things which others cannot do. Going back some years, St. John was the only organisation which could go into Soweto in South Africa. More recently, St. John in Northern Ireland was particularly successful in straddling sectarian and political divides during the troubles in that Province. And the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem is crucially placed to play a part, however small, in bringing together Christian, Jew and Muslim. This is not to suggest that St. John should reduce its care-giving activities, far from it. But I do believe that there is a plus factor, that in giving physical healing St John is often able to reconcile, and so to contribute to the healing of societies in an additional, and perhaps higher, way.

The big picture

What does all this amount to? I see *one* organisation, an *invigorated* organisation, an organisation which is *relevant* and *effective*, and an organisation in which the larger parts form the powerhouse by which the whole organisation can *go forward*.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this address, I thanked everyone for coming and supporting me today. If you wish to help me further, it would be to do anything which you can to enable these aspirations to be achieved.

Your Royal Highness, I am most grateful to you for the opportunity to give this address.