

Further History

Most of the materials found in this history file, written some five years ago, were contributed by Mr. Guy Stair Sainty, Historian of the Order of St. John. Anyone seeking a more in-depth study of the Order, its work and its long history will want to read it carefully. This more comprehensive history of the Order is provided here to augment the basic information provided elsewhere in this website.

I. The History of the Order of St. John

By the early middle-ages, Jerusalem had become a major place of pilgrimage, although the difficulties that would be encountered by travelers passing through lands constantly in turmoil, divided by wars and quarreling princes, coupled with a long trip by sail across seas devastated by pirates and marauders, made the venture extremely risky. On reaching the Holy Land there were few Christian organizations able to provide assistance to travelers, who were harassed and sometimes captured and held for ransom by the local inhabitants.

The original Order of Saint John, surviving today as the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta (the Sovereign Military Order of Malta), could be traced back to a hospital probably founded in about 1080 by the brothers of the Benedictine Monastery of Saint Mary Latina. This Order may be regarded as the first of the Chivalric Orders of Knighthood that were imitated across Europe, both as Religious Military foundations, and later as Princely awards for their allies and supporters.

The earliest Rector or Master known to historians was a certain Gerard (later Beatified), whom it has been claimed came from Martigues in Provence, although his origins are unproven. Most sources are agreed that he was probably governing the Hospital when the soldiers of the First Crusade captured Jerusalem on Friday, 15 July 1099. His rule has provided the origins of the statutes of the Order and is an astonishing text for its time. The hospital, which was run on Greek lines and divided into wards, may have had as many as one thousand beds with occasionally up to two thousand patients, at the peak of Christian rule - an immense edifice and tribute to both the financial means and devotion of the Knights. Through the introduction of relatively sophisticated Arab medical techniques, western European knowledge of medicine was considerably enlarged and improved.

In examining the history of the Most Venerable Order it is worth reciting the history of the Knights of Saint John in England, since the Most Venerable Order is dedicated to maintaining the traditions of those ancient Knights while recognizing that only the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta can represent historical continuity. The first English knights Hospitallers were probably recruited early in Raymond du Puy's Mastership of the Order. An English priory was flourishing by the middle of the twelfth century and in 1144 the site of the present headquarters of the Most Venerable Order at Clerkenwell was donated to the Order by a certain Jordan of Bricett (or Brisset).

The earliest recorded prior was a certain brother Walter, named in documents from 1143, 1152 and 1162, who was succeeded by Richard de Turk, named in 1165 and 1170. From henceforth the succession of priors may be given with reasonable certainty, although it was not until the election of brother Richard, treasurer of England, in 1204 that the dates of election, death or resignation of every prior are known.

In 1180 Henry II granted an estate at Buckland in Somerset to the Order, which became a seat of the sisters of the Hospital. It is not known precisely when the Hospitallers first came to Scotland, but certainly before 1160, and they were established at Torphichen between 1173 and 1178. The Commander or Preceptor at Torphichen, sometimes called the Prior, was subordinate to the Grand Priory of England and, until the war of independence of 1296, the Scottish Hospitallers paid two hundred marks a year to the English Priory. Many of the early brethren were actually English and the Hospitallers remained loyal to Edward I during the struggle for Scottish independence, leading to hostility to the Order on the part of the native Scots after Edward's victory in 1298.

The first identifiably Scottish prior, Ralph (or Rodolph) Lindsay, was recorded in 1314 and in 1356 the then prior, Thomas de Lindsay, was described as "Master of the Order of Saint John at Torphichen". The Master at Torphichen had a seat in the Scottish Parliament, ranking as the premier Lord immediately after the Earls. The Order's hospital in Ireland was established in 1174 and, by 1202, its properties had become so substantial that the Irish Hospitallers were granted autonomy (eventually becoming a Priory), although remaining part of the "Langue" (or Tongue) of England and Ireland.

England and its kings played a major part in the succeeding Crusades and the knights Hospitaller no less so. In 1184 Roger des Moulins became the first Grand Master of the Order to visit England, joining a fruitless attempt to persuade Henry II to join a new Crusade. During this same visit, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who was accompanying the Grand Master, took the opportunity to consecrate the Priory Church that had recently been completed.

The dissolution of the Order of the Knights Templar in 1312 resulted in considerable additions to the Hospitaller properties, although the charges used to bring about the downfall of the Templars were clearly false and the Masters of the Temple continued to be remembered in the prayers of the English knights. Unfortunately the king had sought to alleviate his own financial problems by alienating many of the Templar properties, to settle his own debts, and the Hospitallers came into conflict with some of the most powerful barons in England. An Act of Parliament of 1324 confirmed the Hospitallers in their rights but this was still challenged by the dispossessed barons, costing the Order much in expensive litigation that continued for years. The issue was eventually settled in favor of the Hospitallers and among the commanderies they acquired was that of Egle (now Eagle) in Lincolnshire, to which the title of (Capitular) Bailiff and the grand cross was subsequently attached.

Grand Master Aubusson in Rhodes Following the capture of Rhodes by the knights of Saint John, known for the next two centuries as the knights of Rhodes, became the principal defenders of Christendom against Muslim incursions through the Mediterranean. The Most Venerable Order today has a presence on the island through part of the ancient Auberge of the English Langue, which was generously given to it in 1919. The English knights were never numerous, only the German Langue being smaller (as so many Germans joined the Teutonic Order), numbering three out of eighty knights in 1303 and twenty-eight out of two hundred with the establishment of the headquarters in Rhodes. While the Order grew, the English contingent remained static. By 1514, when there were five hundred and fifty knights of the whole Order, there were still only twenty-eight members of the English Langue, of whom four were grand crosses, the Grand Prior, the Turcopilier (who was generally resident at the Convent and many of the Grand Priors were first Turcopilier), the Bailiff of Egle and the Prior of Ireland (the Preceptory or Commandery of Torphichen did not carry the grand cross).

During the first siege of Rhodes In 1495, King Henry VII successfully demanded of the Grand Master that only Englishmen could be appointed to the Priory of Ireland (in contravention of the general rule), as

the Priors had sometimes been over-sympathetic to the aspirations of the Irish chieftains. The Grand Priory of England had at one time as many as thirty-six commanderies but, as the number of serving-brothers decreased in the fifteenth century, some of the smaller commanderies were combined.

Ireland at one time had twenty-three commanderies but since the Irish knights were rarely seen in the Convent of the Order none were appointed after the loss of Rhodes and the Grand Prior retained these commanderies. Scotland had at one time two commanderies but the smaller, at Balantrudach, was ultimately combined with Torphichen. The Bailiff of Egle was, until the reforms of the Statutes of the Order in 1999, one of the five great officers of the Most Venerable Order, with the Grand Prior, the Lord Prior, the Chancellor and the Hospitaller. (Sadly this ancient title no longer exists having been suppressed in the 1999 reforms.) The most renowned professed sister of the Order was Sister Ubaldesca of Pisa, who was later canonised.

The work of the Order was now sufficiently well known to attract the support of the Royal Family and, in 1876, the Princess of Wales (later Queen Alexandra), accepted membership as a Dame of Justice. Both the Dukes of Albany and Connaught, two of the Queen's younger sons, became Knights of Justice, the latter being a particularly enthusiastic supporter of the Order. The Prince of Wales himself had accepted the dignity of Bailiff Grand Cross of Honor and Devotion of the Sovereign Military Order in 1881, demonstrating his enthusiasm for chivalric organizations.

In 1888 the Prince presented a petition to the Queen, on behalf of the Prior and members of the English Order of Saint John, that she would grant them her Royal Charter, thus regulating the Order's legal position in Great Britain. This petition received the Royal Assent on 14 May of that year and the Order was given the style of the "Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem in England" with the Queen as Sovereign Head and the Prince of Wales himself as Grand Prior.

Although not a State Order, the Order of Saint John was now an Order of the British Crown, its decorations could be worn on military uniform and announcements of appointments or promotions made in the official government periodical, the London Gazette. However the grade of "knight" of the Order did not (and still does not) confer the title of "Sir" on the recipient and members of the Order of Saint John are not given any special precedence. New knights of the Order receive the accolade from the Grand Prior when they are touched on the shoulder with a sword and receive their robes and insignia, although the accolade is omitted in the ceremony of reception of knights in the Priory in the USA.

The Prince of Wales succeeded Manchester as Grand Prior by virtue of the Royal Charter of 1888 and his eldest son, the Duke of Clarence, became Sub-Prior (until his death in 1892 when his younger brother the Duke of York succeeded him). With the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 the Prince of Wales succeeded, as Edward VII, and the Duke of York became Prince of Wales and Grand Prior. The latter's successor as Sub-Prior was no longer a member of the Royal Family and, between 1901 and 1948, when the title of Lord Prior was instituted for the 2nd Lord Wakehurst, there were six peers appointed to this charge.

With the accession of George V in 1910, the new King appointed his uncle, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught (Bailiff of Egle since 1894), as Grand Prior. Connaught was succeeded in 1939 by H.R.H. Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester (younger brother of King George VI), who was himself succeeded by his son, H.R.H. Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the present Grand Prior, in 1974. Although the establishment of the British Grand Priory was then unrecognized by the Order of Malta, Queen Victoria's

Charter stated that it was the "Sixth or English Language of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem" and a relationship with the Bailiwick of Brandenburg was established immediately with the appointment of Prince Albert of Prussia, the Herrenmeister of the Johanniter Order, as an honorary Knight of Justice.

In 1907 the Grand Prior was empowered by a further Royal Charter to found Priories throughout the British Empire, since the Ambulance Brigade was already becoming established across the globe. In 1918 the Priory for Wales was founded as a separate entity, the Priory of Scotland was given autonomous status in 1947, and branches of the Order were established as the Priory for South Africa (with approximately eight hundred members today), the Priory in New Zealand (with nearly seven hundred members), the Priory of Canada (with approximately six thousand four hundred members), the Priory in Australia and the Commandery of Western Australia (with nearly one thousand five hundred members together), the Commandery of Ards in Northern Ireland was made self-governing in 1952, as well as the Commandery in Central Africa.

Today the world-wide membership of the Order (fifty-eight per cent of whom are serving brothers or sisters) totals approximately twenty-five thousand. Priories are headed by a Prior (the Governor-General in states of which the British Sovereign is also Sovereign where Priories are established), Commanderies by a Knight Commander (this is not longer a grade in the Order but an executive post, held by a Knight pro tempore). The title of Sovereign Head is similar to the title that the British Monarch holds as Sovereign (without the addition of the word "Head") of the other British Orders, while a junior member of the Royal Family is Grand Prior, just as junior members of the Royal Family hold the titles of Grand Master of the Orders of the Bath, Saint Michael and Saint George, the British Empire and the Royal Victorian Order.

II. *Pro Fide*: The Christian Character of the Order

The twin mottoes of the Order of St John, *Pro Fide* and *Pro Utilitate Hominum* (For the Faith and In the Service of Humanity) encapsulate its identity and mission and together emphasize the integral connection between faith and action. This duality is seen in our historical origin and continuing life. The hospital in Jerusalem was established about the year 1080, the lay brothers holding St John the Baptist as their patron, and working under the authority of the Benedictine order. The hospital appears to have been governed by Gerard when soldiers of the First Crusade took Jerusalem in 1099.

For our present purpose it is significant that the hospital ministered to the wounded and the sick without distinguishing between those of different faith, whether Christian, Jew or Muslim. The Christian ethic of care for the poor and the sick was foundational in every sense, and within a century, with the benefit of papal endorsement, ‘confraternities’ or communities of lay brothers answerable to Jerusalem, had spread as far as Europe. Our Order honours this as our origin. The leadership by laity, and the apparent absence of discrimination between those of the three distinct Abrahamic faiths who were treated in the hospital of Jerusalem, especially the offer of the hospital’s care to the Muslim wounded, is a noteworthy precedent for charitable endeavours which are Christian by inspiration and in character.

The original Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, which became the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (“the Order of Malta”) claimed to have been the oldest specialized Christian charitable movement of the undivided Western Church. Stemming from the same root, there have emerged four non-Church orders—our own Order and the German, Dutch and Swedish Orders of St. John—which are recognised as legitimate in their respective countries and which together comprise the Alliance of the Orders of St. John. By themselves and in co-operation with the Order of Malta the Orders are instrumental in providing a focus for united Christian charitable endeavour between different ecclesial traditions and for a sense of shared discipleship between individuals.

A Christian Order with the Great Officers as Guarantors

The requirement for every Great Officer of the Order “to make a declaration that he or she personally professes the Christian faith”, is appropriate and should continue to be entrenched. By their declaration and through their subscription to the basic tenets of Christian faith they exercise oversight in the Order as guardians and trustees of its tradition of faith and unity. Although it is only the Great Officers who are formally required to make a profession of Christian faith, the guarantee of the Christian ethos of the Order rests not only on those individuals, but also on the presence and witness of the many other Christians, both clerical and lay, within the Order’s membership.

Chaplaincy to the Order

The Christian character of the Order is further expressed in the specific Christian ministry of chaplaincy as authorised and encouraged by the Priories and St John Associations. Such ministries under the leadership of the Priory Deans or their equivalents continue to leaven, educate and sustain the Order’s work of service in society and offer faithful pastoral support to those who carry its responsibilities. The ministry of chaplains does not only consist of personal or individual work. There is also a ministry to the structure, the ‘corporate personality’ of the Order to which the chaplain will bear Christian witness, and where possible exercise his or her vocation to challenge, enable, give direction or guide. The development

of Chaplaincy already taking place within the Order is to be highly commended. Priors, Commanderies and St. John Associations are encouraged to express their commitment to *Pro Fide* by the appointment and authorisation of Chaplains, (who may or may not be Order members), with pastoral responsibilities and conditions of appointment as appropriate to the needs of the Order and its personnel in each situation.

Continuity in the Tradition

Two further developments will emphasize our Christian tradition:

(a) In order to safeguard the full identity of the Order both mottoes *Pro Fide* and *Pro Utilitate Hominum* should be used together.

(b) The orientation and education of new members is a responsibility which the Order and each Establishment must embrace to ensure that postulants have a deeper understanding of the tradition of Christian faith and values of the Order into which they are being inducted and in which they will be honoured to participate as members. This preparation should be experienced some time before the Declaration and Investiture. Guidelines for such preparation are appended to this.

An Ethic of Care for the Human Community

In spite of present tensions there are more inter-faith contacts in our own societies as well as internationally than ever before. Many voices from different theological cultures warn that the historic faith traditions must abandon their seeming tendency to purvey a single exclusive expression of truth for the whole human family. It is critical in our time to understand that there will be no peace between nations without peace between religions. It is of special relevance to the many faith-based relief organisations like our own to discover that there is a growing ethical consensus between diverse religious traditions. It is true that particular ethical codes grow from particular religions.

Nevertheless, contemporary inter-faith dialogue is discovering common ethical values in the diverse religious traditions of our world, acknowledgement of which will enable the human community to live more fruitfully together. The Order has a significant contribution in this connection for our vocation of service plainly and often dramatically exhibits this ethic of care. This ‘Golden Rule’, not conditioned by context or culture, is expressed in almost all the great religious traditions and finds clear expression in Jesus’ teaching “in everything do unto others as you would have them do to you, for this is the law and the prophets” (St. Matthew, 7:12).

The Order shows forth the truth that joint action by persons of diverse faiths brings mutual respect and new empathy and understanding with those who differ from us. Our obedience to the demands *Pro Fide* and *Pro Utilitate Hominum* in our time, our open hospitality and our reflection upon our own experience of faith—these things have the potential to draw us into an inter-faith understanding in which we are better equipped to witness in a deeply troubled world, to witness to what faith and humble obedience to God and patient attention to each other might have to offer to struggling and suffering nations throughout the globe.

The wording of this statutory declaration has great merit. In its expression “the aims of this Christian Order”, the adjectival use of “Christian” is descriptive. The aims of the Order are clearly stated elsewhere in Order formularies and at any time they may be clarified by the Order. A candidate for membership who

subscribes to the “aims of this Christian Order” has a clear and practical expectation of the required commitment. The Christian faith and values which shape the life of the Order are focused on outcomes of charitable service. Rather than the emphasis being *primarily* upon “spiritual beliefs or doctrine” it is on works of mercy rendered through St. John. (St. James, Chapter 2).

The importance of service is illuminated by our relationships with the other Orders in the Alliance and the Order of Malta. A joint declaration by representatives of the Order with those of the Order of Malta stated that “the Most Venerable Order has pursued the same high ideals of charity, especially to the poor and sick, which were the very cause of the foundation of the Sovereign Order nearly one thousand years ago.” Another common statement declared that our Order with the other Alliance Orders together “provide a Christian answer to the problems of a troubled and materialistic world. They have a common devotion to a historical tradition and a unique vocation: the lordship of the sick and poor.”

Statements made by the Order as a member of the Alliance would appear to place greatest weight on unanimity in charitable ideals drawn from our common Christian heritage rather than doctrinal affirmations *per se*.

Inclusive Membership in the Contemporary Religious Context

In some situations the Christian Church is a minority faith alongside other of the historic religious traditions such as Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. The situation in pluralist, multi-ethnic societies in this regard is not dissimilar to that pertaining in our ‘post-Christian’ societies. Christian hospitality is a criterion which can be applied to the Order’s relationships to persons of other religious faiths, especially in a time of ideological conflict in which a large component of the prevailing tension relates to inter-religious misunderstanding. As an increasingly multi-ethnic international organisation the Order needs to be characterized by an hospitable disposition towards other faith traditions while holding fast to its own origins and foundational identity in Christian faith.

Conclusion

As we have stated, we have received widespread support for our Interim Report and, in particular, for the proposals contained in it. We therefore invite the Grand Council to issue a statement on the lines of the draft which is attached as Annex A.

We envisage that that Statement will have effect in all Establishments. One of our proposals is that there should be an induction programme for all new members of the Order, before they are admitted, and that a major (but by no means the only) element of that programme should deal with the tradition of the Warren Limbrick *Dean of the Priory of New Zealand* + John Waine *Prelate of the Order* November 2004 Christian faith and values of the Order. We have attached as Annex B an outline framework of these aspects. This is intended to serve as a guide for those conducting such programmes, and we invite the Grand Council to approve that framework.

1. The Order is a Christian Order tracing its origin to the Hospital in Jerusalem established around the year 1080 under Blessed Gerard. Its Christian roots continue to feed its life and work.
2. It has two mottoes *Pro Fide* (For the Faith) and *Pro Utilitate Hominum* (In the Service of Humanity) and its life and activities are required to be in accordance with and expressive of them.

3. Admission to the Order is to be understood as taking one's place in a community which is dedicated to the service of the sick and the poor in obedience to the divine law of love.
4. Candidates for admission are required to promise: obedience to the Order and its governing authorities; support for its charitable works; endeavour in upholding the aims of this Christian Order.
5. The two Foundations of the Order, namely the St. John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem and St. John Ambulance, provide the focus for much of the Order's wide spectrum of charitable activity, and the participation of members in it.
6. The Great Officers of the Order exercise oversight in the Order as guardians and trustees of its tradition of faith and its unity.
7. Membership of the Order may be conferred on any who desire to share in its work. It is for each postulant to decide whether with a good conscience he or she can accept the character and aims of the Order.

Profession of the Christian faith is not an essential condition of membership of the Order, but this is to be understood in the light of the Declaration required of all postulants. The onus is on the man or woman who is invited to the privilege of membership to decide whether he or she can with a good conscience promise to be faithful to the stated aims and purposes of this Christian lay order of chivalry.

In spite of present tensions, there are more inter-faith contacts both locally and internationally than ever before. In the Order's commitment to the care of the poor and the sick, it aims to discover others who share its vision of a world in which understanding grows through the service of God's loving purposes.

III. A Shared Tradition: The Orders of St. John of Jerusalem

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta (SMOM), and the four orders in The Alliance of Orders of St. John of Jerusalem — Die Balley Brandenburg des Ritterlichen Ordens Sankt Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem (Johanniter Order), The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (The British Order), Johanniter Orde in Nederland (The Dutch Order) and Johanniterorden i Sverige (The Swedish Order) — share a commitment to the traditions established by The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in the middle ages.

The Medieval Order

The Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem was an order of the Catholic church, which expressed love of God and neighbour in practical action. Its brothers and sisters were committed to a radical version of the Christian ideal of service to poor pilgrims, “the holy poor of Christ”, whom they cared for when they were sick and treated as their “lords”, irrespective of their religion. In time they extended this care to every sick person, whatever his or her condition. To them a sick man or woman really represented the person of Christ and should be treated as such. And so they aimed to provide nursing and medical care of the highest quality in appropriate surroundings.

The order also came to express its vocation in helping to defend the poor, and, by extension, all Christians when they were physically threatened. It developed into a “military order”, which played a prominent part in the defence of Christian Europe until the late eighteenth century. In that role it paid that attention to excellence which it had already shown in its care of the sick. It was, therefore, a Christian religious order, the functions of which were expressed in the phrases *tuitio fidei* (defence of the faith) and *obsequium pauperum* (allegiance to the poor), as well as in the motto *pro fide et pro utilitate hominum* (for the faith and in the service of humanity).

The Modern Orders

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta is the original order. It is an order of the Roman Catholic church. The four orders in the Alliance, stemming from the same root, are orders of chivalry as well as being Christian confraternities. The Balley Brandenburg and Dutch and Swedish Orders are Protestant. The Most Venerable Order has members drawn from all Christian denominations. In all these orders there is the obligation to uphold and exemplify the Christian faith. Military functions have been abandoned, but values which are traditionally associated with nobility and chivalry are still of central importance. They are reflected in terminology, such as in the use of the title of knight; in discipline; and in very strict conditions for membership.

Sharing a unique vocation to subject themselves to the lordship of the sick and the poor, these five orders are committed to treating the infirm, whatever their religion, as their superiors, rendering to them that respect and quality of treatment which would be due to Christ himself. This, and their centuries-old tradition, distinguishes them from other international or national bodies engaged in similar charitable work.

A Brief History of the Orders of St. John of Jerusalem

The Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem originated in the second half of the eleventh century as a dependency of the Benedictine abbey of St. Mary of the Latins. With the success of the First Crusade in 1099 and the Christian occupation of Jerusalem, it was endowed in Europe as well as in the Levant. In 1113 Pope Paschal II liberated it from Benedictine control and during the next fifty years its Rule was composed, it became privileged as an exempt order of the church, military obligations were added to hospitaller functions and an international structure developed, based on priories (later called grand priories) and commanderies. In everything the order did it expressed the radical ideal of the lordship of the poor and the sick.

Driven from Jerusalem in 1187 it established its seat of government in Acre on the Palestinian coast. By now fully developed, it had become a major military and political force. With the loss of the Holy Land in 1291 it moved its headquarters to Limassol in Cyprus, before transferring them to the island of Rhodes in 1309. Governing Rhodes for over two centuries as a frontier order-state, it added to its own extensive possessions in Europe most of the properties of the Knights Templar, whose order had been dissolved in 1312. Rhodes fell to the Turks in 1522. Granted Malta by the emperor Charles V, the Order moved there in 1530, famously withstood a Turkish assault in 1565 and created another order-state, over which it assumed full sovereignty until the end of the eighteenth century.

The fall of Malta to Napoleon in 1798 ushered in nearly forty years of stagnation, but with the establishment of its headquarters in Rome in 1834 the Order, by then known as *The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta*, embarked on a work of restoration in which its structure was reformed and the care of the sick again became its priority. Since its move to Rome the Order's international status and rights to sovereignty have been even more widely confirmed through their recognition by many countries throughout the world.

Two circumstances gave birth to the Orders of St. John in *The Alliance*. The first of these was the Reformation. The Order lost estates and position in those countries which had adopted the Reformed Faith, but the bailiwick of Brandenburg, now known as *Die Balley Brandenburg des Ritterlichen Ordens Sankt Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem*, which already in the middle ages had enjoyed a measure of independence from the grand priory of Germany, remained in being as a Lutheran institution. It bought its freedom from the grand magistracy, but maintained quite close ties with Malta in the eighteenth century. Converted into a civil order in 1812, its surviving knights provided the basis for its revival in its earlier form by the crown of Prussia in 1852. It is recognized as an Order by the Federal Republic of Germany. Its members include Protestant nobles from neighbouring countries.

Two of its foreign commanderies transformed themselves into independent Orders in 1946. *The Johanniter Orde in Nederland* had Prince Bernhard as its head. *Johanniterorden i Sverige* had the king of Sweden as *Herre och Mastäre*, the present king is the high protector. The second circumstance was engendered by the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the consequent loss of Malta. The control of the provinces by the Order's government was tenuous. After the restoration of the monarchy in France those knights of Malta who were resident there offered knighthoods to certain persons in Great Britain, as part of a larger plan and without the authority of the lieutenant grand master.

The body which thereby came into being was not recognized by the grand magistracy as a revival of the grand priory of England, which, together with the grand priory of Ireland, had been dissolved in the Reformation, but its charitable achievements led in 1888 to its reconstitution as an order of the British crown as *The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem*.

The Legitimacy of the Orders of St. John of Jerusalem

The existence of many bodies with pretensions to be legitimate Orders of St. John of Jerusalem has confused the public and has led the orders mentioned below to compose the following statement. The sovereignty of *The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta* as a subject of international public law is grounded on a long tradition and is confirmed by the fact that it has full diplomatic relations through the exchange of plenipotentiary ambassadors with more than ninety sovereign states. The Order under its grand master is acknowledged by the Holy See to be the original Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, which originated in the eleventh century. It is even recognized as such on the basis of its history by competent authorities, including law courts in countries with which it does not have diplomatic relations.

Stemming from the same root are the four non-Roman Catholic Orders of St. John of Jerusalem associated with one another in *The Alliance: Die Balley Brandenburg des Ritterlichen Ordens Sankt Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem, The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, Johanniter Orde in Nederland and Johanniterorden i Sverige*. Representing medieval provinces and territories of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, they are duly constituted orders of chivalry, recognized as such by the sovereign authorities in the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom and the Kingdoms of The Netherlands and Sweden.

The continuity of these five Orders of St. John of Jerusalem from the original foundation and their generally recognized standing in public law explain why they stated in a joint declaration of 14 October 1987 that “they are the only Orders of St. John of Jerusalem which can legitimately use that name”. Their status and their role as orders exemplifying the Christian faith are buttressed by stringent conditions for membership, which are strictly enforced. Membership of all of them, whether in the form of knighthood or not, demands a vocation to the service of the poor and the sick and is usually granted only after genuine commitment has been demonstrated.

The fruits of that commitment are to be found in the substantial and effective work they undertake throughout the world. In one hundred and fifty countries their almost fifty thousand members and about four hundred thousand regular volunteers and hands-on supporters, backed by millions of individual donors, run ambulance corps, relief services, hospitals, hospices, clinics and medical programmes; care for the elderly, the disabled, children and the homeless; and engage in first aid training and disaster and humanitarian relief. No other order claiming to use the title of St. John of Jerusalem can be described in these terms.

The Priory in the United States of America

The Priory was formally established at a ceremony of dedication on May 11th, 1996, held in the National Cathedral, Washington, DC. His Royal Highness the Grand Prior presided and formally handed the instruments of foundation to the new Prior, John R. Drexel IV, KStJ. The Priory includes the members of the American Society of the Order of Saint John, a non-profit corporation founded in 1958 to provide

support for the Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem. This is still the mission of the Order in the United States, which raises funds for the Hospital and donates medical supplies and equipment to assist its humanitarian mission.

The membership of the Priory includes many distinguished Americans and presently numbers over one thousand. The majority of the members had historically been admitted in the grade of Officer Brother or Sister, and after a period of several years if consistent in support of the work of the Order may expect to be promoted to Commander Brother or Sister and eventually to Knight or Dame. Since 1997 most new appointments to membership have been made in the grade of Serving Brother or Sister, the fifth class of the Order.

The Priory is presided over by the Prior, who is appointed by HM the Queen as Sovereign Head, during her pleasure. He in turn appoints the members of the Council who hold their offices for renewable three-year terms. The chief executive officer of the priory is the Chancellor, assisted by one or more Vice Chancellors, the Sub-Prelate of the Priory (usually, but not necessarily, the Episcopalian Bishop of New York); the Hospitaller (who is chairman of the Priory Hospital Committee); the Treasurer; the Registrar-Secretary; the Almoner (presently also Historiographer); and the Legal Counsel.

The Priory Council is composed of each of the above and may also include a further group of members who do not hold specific office, as voting members. There is also a Director of Ceremonies, an Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary who do not vote. The Priory Chapter includes each of the above and an additional thirty-four members from across the United States.

The annual investiture is usually held on the second Saturday in November, in recent years alternating annually between the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York and another location in the United States. Investitures have been held at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco and may take place in the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, or in such other locations as may be determined in the future. New candidates receive their decorations on this occasion; the ceremony is usually preceded by an assembly of the membership and followed by a formal dinner.

IV. The Chivalric Alliance of Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem (Alliance de Chevalerie des Hospitaliers de Saint Jean de Jerusalem)

The Alliance, as it is customarily described, was formed at the instigation of the Johanniter Orders in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden with the subsequent addition of the Most Venerable Order, in 1961. Its stated purpose and aims are "to reduce to silence the enemies of Christ" and "to succour the sick and to help the destitute". The preamble of the statement of 13 June 1961 read "A knight must do his utmost to combat all manifestations of unbelief. He must employ every form of persuasion to combat the enemies of the Church, using all the powers and spiritual forces at his command; a word of encouragement at the right moment, a disinterested piece of advice, a noble action.

The Order represents the whole spiritual heritage of its founders; in taking their vows knights assume for themselves, of their own free will and conviction, the objectives of their Crusader predecessors. The Order is a non-political body of people inspired by the same ideals. They support, exhort and encourage each other, fraternally and chivalrously, in the accomplishment of their duty and their work. The Order unites them in a powerful Brotherhood, giving them strength and spiritual sustenance. The vow they take is a living reminder of the duties they must faithfully fulfill and of self-renunciation; it embodies the entitlement of nobility alike for the Order itself as for its members". The Convention between the four Orders stated in particular:

I. All Orders of St. John to-day are dedicated, according to their various Constitutions, to the Christian faith and to the work of caring for the sick and needy. The fulfillment of these tasks is largely exemplified in the establishment and operation of hospitals, welfare institutions, nursing schools, first aid organizations and associations for social aid and care of the sick, and like institutions.

II. The signatory Orders of St. John hereunder mentioned are akin to the older Tongues, respect the ancient rule and its underlying purpose, but are each of them free, independent and autonomous, and they now form an Alliance of Orders of St. John to be known by that description.

The signatory Orders of St. John are as follows: Die Balley Brandenburg des ritterlichen Ordens St. Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem [[.johanniterorden.de](http://johanniterorden.de)]

The Grand Priory in the British Realm of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem [[.orderofstjohn.org](http://orderofstjohn.org)]

Johanniter Orde in Nederland [[.johanniterorde.nl](http://johanniterorde.nl)]

Johanniterorden i Sverigein [[.johanniterorden.a.se](http://johanniterorden.a.se)]

*With these are to be counted the four Associations in union with the Bailiwick of Brandenburg, namely:
Johanniter Ridderskap de Finland*

Association des Chevaliers de St. Jean, Langue de France [[.ordredesaintjean.asso.fr](http://ordredesaintjean.asso.fr)]

Genossenschaft der Johanniterritter in der Schweiz

Johannitarend Magyar Tagozata [[.johannitarend.hu](http://johannitarend.hu)]

III. The signatory Orders are firmly of the opinion that the unity of all Orders of St. John is demanded by history, by their faith and by their common purposes and will fortify their international standing, and that if their efforts and labours are to be effective on the international plane these should be carried on shoulder to shoulder and as a common task.

IV. To enable all Orders of St. John to promote the success of the many international tasks which they undertake and with a view to facilitating also the co-ordination of their various activities, the establishment of a suitable joint committee and of a General Secretariat may be envisaged. The realization of this will only be effected by agreement between all Orders at the time members of the Alliance of Orders of St. John hereby established and if circumstances call for it or make it appear expedient. The organization, duties and powers of these bodies will be laid down by special regulations framed by agreement in the same way. In any case the members of this Alliance recognize that regular mutual contact is desirable.

V. Other Orders, associations, or institutions recognized as Orders of St. John by all members of the said Alliance at the time may with the consent of all such members in like manner adhere to this Convention and become members of the said Alliance.

VI. Any member of the Alliance of Orders of St. John may withdraw there from and from this Convention by giving six months notice in writing of that intention to all other members at the time.

VII. The word "Alliance" used in the heading and text of this Convention has no political meaning and is not to be interpreted in the light of public international law, and no individual Sovereign person is intended to be bound or committed by this Convention.

VIII. This Convention shall be drawn up in the English and German languages and the text in each language shall have equal validity. HEREBY AGREED AND SIGNED by the Orders mentioned in Article II at the meeting of their delegates held at the Commandery of Niederweisel on the 13th June 1961". Two years later, on 26 November 1963, the Alliance was consolidated with the signing of a joint declaration between the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and the Most Venerable Order, at St John's Gate, London, by the Grand Chancellor of the SMHOM, the Prince of Resuttano, and Lord Wakehurst, Lord Prior of the Most Venerable Order. The text of this document reads:

The relationship which exists between the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta and the Grand Priory in the British Realm of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem is not always clearly understood, and it is to dispel any misconceptions which may exist that this statement is being made. A dispute, long since relegated to the realms of academic discussion, as to whether the Most Venerable Order was the lineal descendent of the old Grand Priory of the Sovereign Order, at one time caused division amongst those concerned with such questions. Certain it is that the Most Venerable Order acquired a completely independent existence when it was granted a Royal Charter by Her Majesty Queen Victoria, who became its Sovereign Head.

Since this time the Most Venerable Order has pursued the same high ideals of charity, especially to the poor and sick, which were the very cause of the foundation of the Sovereign Order nearly one thousand years ago.

It will be easy to understand, therefore, why two great Orders, representing the same traditions, pursuing the same ideals, serving the same cause and wearing the same famous eight pointed cross, should have the greatest respect and esteem for each other. It is our great happiness to declare that such a relationship does truly exist, and that it is the dearest wish of both Orders, to seek ever more ways in which they can collaborate, to promote God's glory and to alleviate the sufferings and miseries of mankind.

To supplement this statement, a further agreement was drawn up between the SMHOM and the Venerable Order in 1983. *This was signed by Sir Maurice Dorman, Lord Prior of the Most Venerable Order and Sir Peter Hope, KCMG, then President of the British Association of the Sovereign Military Order. It reads as follows: Twenty years have passed since the signing of the Joint Declaration concerning the relationship between the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and the Most Venerable Order of St. John, during which the relationship between our two Orders has grown ever closer. In it the common ideal of the struggle in the defense of our suffering brethren was affirmed and the amity between the signatory Orders was acclaimed especially the common wearing of the eight-pointed Cross of St. John.*

The last two decades have seen an increase in the world-wide suffering of our brethren, our response has likewise expanded. The banner of our eight-pointed Cross has been flown increasingly where-ever in the world sickness or distress have made demands upon us. Our ties are strong and our purpose to help Our Lords the Sick identical. We are pleased to record our joint efforts to help the elderly which have already seen the creation of Alms Houses in Sussex and Wales.

We are also united in one fight against False Orders, those self constituted and self styled groups which lack both authenticity or legitimacy of origin but variously describe themselves as an "Order of St. John" or an "Order of Malta". However the Johanniter Orden in Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands is a legitimate and honoured ally. We pledge ourselves anew to carry into the Twentyfirst Century the historical aims and obligations of our Orders.

The most recent agreement between the five Orders culminated in a further statement which clarifies the difference between those Orders which are recognized as such by the Sovereign authorities of the countries in which they are based and the self-styled "Orders of Saint John" whose pretension to be Orders of Chivalry are unrecognized by such sovereign authorities. Confirming the close and friendly relations between the five Orders, this statement reads as follows:

The Orders of St. John

With the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta which is Roman Catholic, the four non-Catholic Orders of St. John provide a Christian answer to the problems of a troubled and materialistic world. They have a common devotion to a historical tradition and a unique vocation: the lordship of the sick and the poor. They strive to realize their aim by mutual collaboration as well as by their own works. They are the only Orders of St. John which may legitimately use that name. The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem had its origins in Jerusalem in the late eleventh

century and was recognized as an Order by Pope Pascal II in 1113. From that date it was a religious Order. Its members took monastic vows and lived according to a religious rule.

In the course of its history it developed a class of knights who took no vows, while knights belonging to the first class continued to be professed religious. The Order, therefore, uniquely combined and still combines within itself the nature of a religious Order and an Order of chivalry. In the former capacity it was and still is subject to the laws of the Church. The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta (generally known as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) is this Order. It is widely recognized as a sovereign subject of International Public Law. It has five Grand Pories, three Sub-Pories and thirty-seven National Associations throughout catholic Christendom. Since 1834 its extra-territorial headquarters have been in Rome. The Grand Master is H.M.E.H. Fra' Angelo de Mojana di Cologna [Since succeeded by H.M.E.H. Frà Andrew Bertie].

Four non-catholic Orders of St. John of Jerusalem are recognized by their sovereign authorities in the countries in which they are based. They are: Die Balley Brandenburg des Ritterlichen Ordens Sankt Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem (generally known as Der Johanniterorden). Besides seventeen Associations in the Federal Republic of Germany, there are Austrian, Finnish, French and Swiss (which are officially recognized in their respective countries) and the Hungarian in exile. Its Headquarters are in Bonn. Its head, styled Der Herrenmeister, is H.R.H. Prince Wilhelm-Karl of Prussia [Since succeeded by his son, HRH Prince Oscar of Prussia].

Johanniter Orde in Nederland. It was formed as an independent Order in 1946. Its headquarters are in the Hague. Its head is H.R.H. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. Johanniterorden i Sverige. It was incorporated by royal charter in 1946. Its headquarters are in Stockholm and the High Patron is H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf.

The Grand Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (generally known as the Order of St. John). It has six Pories, two Commanderies and forty Saint John Councils throughout the English-speaking world. Its headquarters are in London. Its Sovereign Head is H.M. Queen Elizabeth II.

The four non-Catholic Orders are associated with one another in the international Alliance of the Orders of St. John of Jerusalem. They are Orders of Chivalry, but they are to be distinguished from most national Orders because of their Christian faith and their traditions as religious confraternities of Christian laymen. In all these Orders are fostered such ideals of the medieval Order as are applicable to their circumstances, essentially the care of the sick and other service to fellow men. 14 October 1987. Signed by H.M.Em. H. Fra' Angelo di Mojana, Prince and Grand Master of the Sovereign, Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, called of Rhodes and of Malta; H.R.H. Wilhelm-Karl, Prince of Prussia, Herrenmeister of the Johanniter Order; H.R.H. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, Landcommander, Johanniter Order in the Netherlands; Fredrik Lowenhielm, Johanniter Order in Sweden; Rt. Hon. the Earl Cathcart, Lord Prior, The Most Venerable Order of Saint John.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta (known more generally as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) is the successor to the ancient Hospital in Jerusalem and Crusader Order of Knighthood. This exclusively Roman Catholic Order has its headquarters at the Palazzo Malta, 68 Via Condotti, Rome, Italy, and is

governed by its 78th Prince and Grand Master, His Most Eminent Highness Frà Andrew Bertie, along with a Sovereign Council. It has approximately eleven thousand members grouped into six Pories (Rome, Naples, Lombardy-Veneto, Bohemia, Austria and England) and National Associations across the globe including three in the United States and one in Canada. It enjoys the status of a Sovereign Entity in International Law, maintaining reciprocal diplomatic relations with eighty-six States, and is an Observer Member of the United Nations.

The appearance of a number of private associations which profess to be "Orders of Chivalry" is not a modern phenomenon. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries several similar organizations emerged, encouraged by the interest in chivalry inspired by writers such as Sir Walter Scott. These included the "Order of Saint Joachim" (which asserted the support of Admiral Lord Nelson), the "Order of Saint Hubert of Bar", a false "Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem", [1] the "Order of the Temple of Jerusalem" (one of several "rediscoveries" of the supposed secret Order) and the Order of Saint George of Burgundy" which all had brief lives, generally thanks to the sponsorship of one individual, often using an invented title.

In 1824 the French government, through the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor, issued a decree regulating the wearing of Orders and condemning several organizations of questionable legitimacy and most other European nations followed suit. Many other self-styled Orders came and went during the course of the next century and a half and, while most of them failed to survive the lives of their founders, a few still flourish today. The Holy See, as the superior of all Catholic religious Orders, was particularly troubled by the increasing number of such bodies which appeared during the early twentieth century and, in 1935, 1953, 1970 and 1976, issued statements condemning such "Orders" and listing the principal examples of such.

The founders of such "Orders" were hoping to satisfy the ambitions of those anxious for recognition but whose personal standing or religious affiliation may have made them ineligible for membership in a genuine Order. Many of the members are sincere and respectable people deluded into believing that they were receiving a real "honor" and persuaded that, through their membership, they were supporting a worthwhile charitable institution. A romanticized view of history has often made it easier for them to accept some of the more outlandish and astonishing claims (the sponsor of one Order claimed to be a representative of the Cosmic Masters from other planets in our solar system, while another established the first "International Authority for Terrestrial Operation of Galactic Powers Task Force").

The motives of those who were sponsoring such organizations were varied, sometimes financial, sometimes out of vanity, sometimes to inflate a questionable social position, perhaps even to support a genuine charity. The most troubling of the self-styled Orders are those that assume the name and badge and adopt the history of an internationally recognized Order of Chivalry.

The SMOM and the four members of the Alliance of Orders of Saint John are engaged in important charitable work and humanitarian activities, it is particularly unfortunate that there are a number of extant organizations which have assumed the name and style of "Order of Saint John". When the machinations of one of the self-styled "orders" are exposed, sometimes following criminal activities by one of their sponsors, there is an inevitable reflection on the name of Saint John that may injure the recognized Orders. The latter have made a concerted effort to publicly disassociate themselves from these

organizations and, to this end, have formed a False Orders Committee that constantly updates the shifting allegiances between the different groups and attempts to warn the general public against them.

They have been aided in this by the Holy See which, on 28 November 1976 and 1 December 1976, published statements in the *Osservatore Romano*, making it clear that the so-called "Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem" was nothing to do with the Sovereign Military Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta. Fortunately, in two recent cases (and one pending) brought against self-styled Saint John Orders in US Federal Courts, the American Judiciary has shown itself willing to penalize these groups financially and use very explicit language in condemning their activities [*Alhadeff v. Georg*, decided 30 November 1983, and *W.D. H. et ux. v. Markovics*, 27/28 February 1989]. The Court in the Markovics Case specifically recognized the legitimacy of the SMHOM and the Alliance Orders as the true historic successors of the crusader Order of Saint John.

The self-styled Saint John "orders" will no longer get away with pretending that they are historically connected with the crusader Order; furthermore they and their officers now run the risk of criminal prosecution. The US Justice department also recently indicted one of the most notorious proponents of the "self-styled" Order, the false "Prince" Robert Bassaraba de Brancovan Khimchiachvili, who is now awaiting trial with his associates for wire fraud.

Since the decision in these two cases, then serving President of the United States Ronald Reagan was invested with the Collar of Merit of the Ordine al Merito Melitense of the SMHOM by the Grand Master himself at a dinner in New York, providing added evidence of the recognition accorded to the SMHOM by the United States of America. In 1994 the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta was admitted to Observer status at the United Nations among the "intergovernmental" organizations, which include the International Committee of the Red Cross.

It is the deliberate intention of the organizers of most of the self-styled Saint John or Malta Orders to confuse their organizations with the name and work of the genuine, recognized Orders. The origins and ultimate abolition and suppression of the Catholic Grand Priory of Russia and the (non-Catholic) Grand Priory of Russia have been discussed earlier and examined in detail by the late Frà Cyril Toumanoff, [*Fra' Cyril Toumanoff, L'Ordre de Malte et l'Empire de Russie, Rome 1979*] whose work was cited by the Court as an authoritative source in the Markovics Case.

The so-called "hereditary commanderies" of the Russian Grand Priorities, held by proponents of the modern "revivals" as evidence of their continued existence, ceased to exist with their dissolution in 1811, and the title of Commander in this Grand Priory disappeared with the deaths of those holding them at that time. The descendants of the founders of Russian (or any other) commanderies, cannot claim to be the successors to such commanderies, even had they been admitted to membership of the SMHOM, since a commandery of the Order of Malta exists as real property and not as an honorific title. Furthermore, the conditions required of knights and commanders under the statutes of the original Russian Grand Priory cannot be fulfilled today.

The proponents of the Russian survival make persistent pseudo-historical claim that the Russian Grand Priorities survived the legal suppression of the Commanderies by Emperor Alexander I and his decision to refuse further admissions to the membership. Several "historians" of these bodies do not hesitate to deceive their readers by claiming that the Papal decision to elect Tommasi established a new order, in

opposition to the Russian Grand Priorities: yet it was these self-same Russian Priorities that put forward Tommasi's name as their candidate for the Grand Magistery and who specifically acknowledged his Grand Magistery, as did the Emperor Alexander I. This refusal to recognize that the Council of the Russian Orders explicitly acknowledged the legitimate succession of Grand Master Tommasi is the fatal flaw that entirely discredits the assertions of legitimacy of the so-called Russian Grand Priorities or their purported successors.

A detailed survey of the known self-styled Orders of Saint John, with an outline of their origins and leaders, follows here. It should be emphasized that the leadership, members and names of these organizations are somewhat fluid. Readers should consider that any Order of Saint John, Order of Malta, Sovereign Order of Saint John, Knights of Malta or Knights Hospitaller that cannot be specifically identified with the recognized Orders listed on this site (as a member of the Alliance, or under the Order of Malta), may be safely considered to be "self-styled". False Orders Committee.

The "False Orders Committee" (FOC) is an independent Committee, established by the initiative of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in 1974. The four recognized Orders of St John in the Alliance are represented on this Committee. In the context of the wider scene of unrecognized orders of Chivalry, the FOC is charged with preventing the misuse of the names, emblems and official documents of its Member Orders, and to forestall unlawful acts arising from the imitation of those names and emblems.

In September 2000, the False Orders Committee issued the following declaration, endorsed by members of the Alliance: Self-Styled Orders of St John The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, generally known as the Order of Malta, and the four Orders of St John of Jerusalem which co-operate in the Alliance of the Orders of St John are united by a common historical tradition and a unique vocation: the care of the sick and the poor.

These Orders have established a joint committee to investigate and deal with the ever increasing number of organizations which misuse the symbols and emblems of the orders of St John, causing confusion in the minds of the public and impeding the welfare and Hospitaller activities of the national and international bodies of the Order of Malta and of the Alliance Orders. The Sovereign Order of Malta is unique in combining the nature of a Religious Order with an Order of Chivalry and is widely recognized as a sovereign entity of International Law. Confraternities were created after the Reformation which have legitimately conserved the institutional aims and emblems of the Order in their different Christian traditions and which the Sovereign Military Order of Malta recognizes.

The four Orders of St John of Jerusalem associated in the Alliance are recognized by the sovereign authorities in the countries in which they are based. They are:

Die Baileij Brandenburg des Ritterlichen Ordens Sankt Johannis vom Spital zu Jerusalem (Der Johanniterorden) based in Berlin, the head of which is H.R.H. Prince Oskar of Prussia.

The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem based in London, the head of which is H.M. Queen Elizabeth II.

Johanniter Orde in Nederland based in The Hague, the head of which is H.R.H. Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands.

Johanniterorden i Sverige based in Stockholm, under the High Patronage of H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf.

The Orders of St John in the Alliance are Orders of Chivalry and are distinguished from other national Orders because of their Christian faith and their traditions as religious confraternities of Christian lay people.