

12TH ORDER OF MALTA ASIA PACIFIC CONFERENCE HELD IN SEOUL

The 12th Asia Pacific Conference of the Order of Malta was held in Seoul, South Korea between October 18 and 22.

Over 50 representatives from National Associations, Delegations and Embassies of the Order of Malta across the two continents gathered to discuss how to strengthen works and initiatives in this area of the world.

The Asia Pacific Conferences provide an opportunity for discussion, exchange of ideas and to get guidance from the Grand Magistry.

Present were the Grand Chancellor Riccardo Paternò di Montecupo, Receiver of the Common Treasure Fabrizio Colonna di Paliano and the then Prelate of the Order, Msgr. Jean Laffitte. In their speeches at the conference, they provided an update on recent developments as well as



future expectations. Msgr. Jean Laffitte elaborated on the theme of spirituality and formation as a fundamental factor for the growth of members within the charism of the Order of Malta.

Presidents and Hospitallers of the Order of Malta National Associations in the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia and the Delegations of Thailand and South Korea presented medical and social activities as well as emergency interventions in case of natural disasters developed in their respective countries and abroad. Special sessions were attended by Malteser International, which outlined its activities on the Asian continent, and Ciomal, the Order of Malta's special foundation for the fight against leprosy.

The Order of Malta's embassy in Timor-Leste, one of the poorest countries in Asia, highlighted the important work being done by the Order's clinic in the

capital city of Dili to combat diseases and malnutrition.

An important part of the conference was devoted, through the intervention of experts, to fundraising and project financing activities, with the aim of strengthening the financing capacity of the Order's institutions.

The Asia Pacific Conference was also an opportunity for four new members of the Order to be admitted. During the Holy Mass on Oct. 21, celebrated by Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-Jung and concelebrated by the Order's Prelate Msgr. Jean Laffitte at the Jeoldusan Martyrs' Shrine in Seoul, three knights and one dame officially joined the Order of Malta.

The next Asia Pacific Conference, the 13th, will be held in 2024 in Manila, Philippines.

ORDER OF MALTA'S FLAG FLIES INTO SPACE WITH "AXIOM 3" MISSION

The productive collaboration between the Order of Malta and the Ministry of Defence of the Italian Republic is also to be seen in the aerospace sector, with an initiative involving the Order's flag with the eight-pointed white cross flying beyond the earth's borders.

In December, on behalf of the Order of Malta's government, the Receiver of the Common Treasure Fabrizio Colonna entrusted the flag to Italian Air Force Colonel Walter Villadei who, as part of the "Axiom 3" mission that launched on 18 January 2024, was responsible for taking it onboard the International Space Station.

The official delivery of the flag took place in Washington at the Italian Embassy during the press conference to present the "Italian Space Day", in the presence of the Italian Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, Francesco Lollobrigida.

This is a symbolic gesture of great importance for the Order of Malta, since the flag with the octagonal cross, also known as the "flag of the Order's works", is the thousand-year-old banner under which



today some 150,000 Order of Malta's members, volunteers and employees in 120 countries are working to alleviate the suffering of others and to spread the message of peace and hope given by the Supreme Pontiff.

This initiative was possible thanks to the Minister of Defence, Guido Crosetto, who confirmed that his ministry shared the age-old values of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Values that have deep historical roots since, in 2023, the Order participated in the celebrations for the centenary of the Italian Air Force, involving a joint

issue with Italy and the Vatican City of a stamp depicting various military aircraft. The same aircraft that, in the aftermath of the World War II, the Order of Malta received from the Italian State, using them for humanitarian missions, thus avoiding the decommissioning imposed by the surrender treaty.

At the end of the space mission – which will have a scheduled duration of 14 days – the flag will be returned to the Order of Malta as part of a special ceremony at the Magistral Palace, the seat of the Order of Malta's government in Rome.



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"A pair of siblings attending one camp who had never been apart from their parents, who after battling home sickness for the first couple of days didn't want to leave their new friends."

"Another example is when a carer sent camp photos to a participant's parents who were amazed to see their reclusive son dancing excitedly with his new friends," Murphy said.

To ensure the Order of Malta Camps for Disabled Youth remain accessible to all disabled guests, the accommodation, food, and activities at the Camps are provided at no cost to participants.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS FOR DISABLED YOUTH

In November 87 participants were welcomed to the 2023 Order of Malta Australia Camp for Disabled Youth at the Benedict XVI Retreat Centre, Grose Vale.

The annual camp brings together young adults with disabilities, volunteers, and carers for a once in a lifetime experience of fun, friendship and adventure.

At the 2023 Camp guests participated in 'Survivor Olympics', games nights, craft, sports, daily Masses, travelled to Treetops Adventure Park for an action filled day of activities and danced the night away at the camp disco.

"This year's camp was by far our biggest yet, with disabled guests travelling from across Australia to participate" explained Anna Sammut, Order of Malta Volunteer and Project Leader for the Camps for Disabled Youth.

"Following the success of our previous Camps, our reputation amongst disability care providers across Australia has been firmly established and word has spread amongst their clients."

"Places are very much sought after."

Research repeatedly finds that youths with disability, and their families experience higher levels of social isolation compared to the rest of the population. What is not as well-known is the often-painful impact this isolation can have on their development of life skills and social wellbeing.

"Firm friendships have been established between our guests and volunteers who keep in touch long after the camp has ended" Sammut said.

In addition to forming a sense of community, the Order of Malta Camps for Disabled Youth help the young guests overcome personal barriers by providing a safe space to enjoy sports, have fun and interact with others, regardless of ability.

"There are so many inspirational stories that have come from our Camps" explains Order of Malta National Hospitaller John Murphy.

"My favourites include a young man who would rarely communicate verbally but was talking by the end of the camp."



The Camp is organised and run by volunteers, which helps keep down the costs.

With many guests already asking, "Will there be another camp next year?" the Order of Malta is seeking donations to raise the \$50,000 to host another camp in 2024. Gifts of \$2 and more are tax deductible for Australian taxpayers and can be made on page 5.



WORLD DAY OF THE POOR 2023

"Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor" (Tob 4:7)

Sunday 19 November 2023 marked the 7th Annual World Day of the Day Poor.

The **World Day of the Poor** is a Roman Catholic observance, celebrated on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time since 2017. It was established by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter, Misericordia et Misera, issued on 20 November 2016 to celebrate the end of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

As a Catholic lay Order, we see it as an important day in our calendar where

we can make an effort to 'mark it' and complete some special works.

We ask each region to organise an opportunity for members to encounter our lords the poor and commemorate this occasion.

In South Brisbane, members, volunteers and candidates had the privilege of being of service to Guests of Emmanuel City Mission.

The team arrived early and provided a hearty breakfast of eggs, bacon, fruit, homemade fruit and chocolate slices and barista coffees. All participants were encouraged by the knowledge that Order of Malta initiatives were underway, around the world, in support of the Pope's call to be attentive especially today to those in society who have the least.

As an added initiative, Order of Malta Members have been generous in supplying new underwear and toiletries much needed by guests of ECM.

The homeless in West Melbourne and St Kilda were visited by our Order of Malta Community Care Van volunteers who delivered sweet treats and beverages, in addition to our hygiene care packs. The companionship and gifts were very well received.

Members and volunteers in the Northern Territory distributed 70 dignity bags between Alice Spring, Santa Teresa, and Darwin to mark this special day. The dignity bags were filled with sanitary items: shampoo, body wash, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste as well as small towels, and socks.

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The Order of Malta (ABN 37 142 209 121) is a Public Benevolent institution and is endorsed by the Australian Tax Office as Deductible Gift Recipient.
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Want to learn more?
Visit www.orderofmalta.org.au to see video highlights and images from the camp.

*** PROJECT UPDATE**



AN UPDATE ON HOLY FAMILY HOSPITAL, BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem is the heart of Christmas. Each December, Manger Square hosts a life-size nativity scene, illuminated by stars and a three-story Christmas tree. Liturgical choirs perform most nights, and the Christmas market draws visitors—Christian and Muslim alike—from all over the region and around the world.

2023 year was different. Bethlehem was locked down and many manned checkpoints.

Most of the workforce has no salaries or work because of the closure and the absence of pilgrimages.

While the war is over 40 miles away, Bethlehem suffers not from fighting or bombing, but from the halted economy. In response, providing meals for the children demands precedence over exchanging gifts and treats.

This year in Bethlehem, there were no Christmas tree, choirs, lights, or decorations.

The 100 plus year-old traditional Christmas parade composed of marching bands and bagpipers from the parish scout troops was a more solemn religious procession.

Christmas was very much like that first Christmas 2000 years ago. No gifts, no celebrations, no fireworks, or festivities—just a babe born on a deep winter night under a bright star.

But Christmas was not without hope.

Just as Mary and Joseph found shelter in the manger, the Holy Family Hospital, 1,500 footsteps from the birthplace of Christ, continues to provide refuge to mothers delivering their babies without

mean very few have salaries and the small savings people were able to amass after Covid are quickly disappearing.

Our Hospital is one of the very few employers continuing to pay full wages on time. Our construction project is a bright spot of hope as the work continues, employing a great variety of tradesmen. We were even able to add a few new employees to the site. Despite the closures, we are finding supplies and making steady progress.

Fewer families can contribute to their care as a medical bill competes with a bag of groceries. Our contracts with the UN and the government of Palestine normally cover a fraction of the cost of some deliveries and NICU care for refugees and state employees.

In normal times, this helps cash flow. Today these funds have all but dried up.

Holy Family Hospital Foundation is redoubling efforts to meet this funding gap to maintain full salaries and full services until the resumption of peace.

For over thirty years, the Order of Malta has committed to improving lives in the greater Bethlehem region.

Babies we delivered are grown up and working for the church, for the universities, for the government and for our very own Holy Family Hospital.

A new generation of doctors and nurses who drew their first breaths at our Hospital are now working in service to the mothers and babies of Bethlehem.

The circle of life and the circle of hope are deeply intertwined in Bethlehem.

Over 70% of the population was born at Holy Family Hospital.

Today we are the largest employer and trainer of medical professionals. Our Hospital is a touchstone of the community and a veritable factory of hope. Please help us continue this work.

regard to financial need or religious creed. Each and every baby born in this night-time of war reminds us that babies are a sign from God of his unconditional love for us all.

The Order of Malta's Holy Family Hospital is the heartbeat of Bethlehem.

The Hospital lights stay on all night long every day of the year and the halls are warm and welcoming. The midwives, nurses and doctors stand ready to care for the most complicated deliveries and the mothers know to expect the very best care delivered without regard to need or creed.

Some mothers, because of travel restrictions due to the war 40 miles away, are not able to reach the Hospital to deliver their babies as travel is dangerous at night. They deliver at home, without medical care.

Sana recently delivered her baby at home because she could not reach the Hospital. In the morning Sana and her husband took the baby to the Hospital. The baby was cold and infected because homes in Bethlehem do not have central heating and they were not prepared for a home delivery. Both Sana and her baby were admitted for follow-up care.

As the war wages on in Gaza, the shutdown of Bethlehem continues to



If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to our Emergency Appeal to support the work at Holy Family Hospital, please complete and return the donation coupon on page 5.



If you would like to support this project with a donation, you can do this on page 5.



CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS BY BEING OF SERVICE TO OTHERS

Whilst our Order of Malta volunteers are active throughout the year, many provide a festive touch or additional services to celebrate Christmas.

On the Wednesday before Christmas Order of Malta volunteers, Maria and Maddie, prepared a Christmas feast for our guests at the Community Care Kitchen in Bondi.

On the menu was tempura prawns, cherries and roast Turkey. They even

NEW HOMELESS OUTREACH SERVICE IN DARWIN AND PALMERSTON

The new Order of Malta Outreach service in Darwin and Palmerston sees Members and volunteers, prepare, pack and distribute 100 meals to the homeless.

The program is designed to deliver a nutritious meal to people living rough, usually camped in bushland on the edge of the city or in park areas.

They often are found in places that make them less visible to authorities or the public for a variety of reasons. As a result, they are not always easy to find.

By seeking out the homeless our volunteers often stop to ask them where they are from and what brings them there.

Their life journeys deeply touch our hearts and as we serve and listen, we learn about lives defined by courage, resilience, fraternity, simplicity and faith.

The distribution finds a diverse group of people. The majority are First Nations



set out Christmas crackers for our guests. The kitchen continues to go from strength to strength with a strong sense of community established. There are a number of regular guests and a full volunteer roster.

In Brisbane, members, family and friends of the Order of Malta were active in service to guests of Emmanuel City Mission (ECM) for a spectacular Christmas Eve lunch that included carved leg ham, jacket potatoes, salad and Christmas pudding.

Brisbane had turned on one of its sultry summer days, resulting in a huge thunderstorm as lunch was served. Close to one hundred guests were safely dry and enjoying wonderful fellowship and a

People from remote communities who are visiting Darwin and have nowhere to stay, people escaping violent situations in their communities, people with substance abuse issues (including alcohol), people who have been excluded from their communities and cannot return.

People of all ages, including family groups with young children, are among the recipients. Amongst them are people with health issues and our volunteers have rendered first aid as well as called for medical assistance as required.

In addition to a nutritious meal, our volunteers also distribute hygiene packs, containing soap, socks, a toothbrush and toothpaste.

Each service costs approximately \$400 in groceries. That equates to only \$4.45 per meal.

Plans to extend the project to Alice Springs in cooperation with St Vincent de Paul Society (NT), starting from March 2024, are also progressing.

The project is strongly supported by Bishop Charles Gauci and the Vicar-General, Father Prakash who is also the local Parish Priest.



generous lunch.

On Christmas morning, members again served visitors to ECM with a veritable feast of bacon, eggs, ham, sausages, mince pies, shortbreads, Christmas cake and so much more. So much was provided that takeaways for all was a must.

Guests spoke of their thanks for the opportunity to be together with people who care for them at a time that can be emotionally traumatising. One lady spoke of the miracle provided to her by the gifts she had received both physically and in fellowship.

A special thank you to all our volunteers for the work they do in service of others.



LOURDES DAY MASSES

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the 2023 Order of Malta Lourdes Day Healing Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney on Saturday 2 December.

Once again, The Most Rev Anthony Fisher Archbishop of Sydney, who is also an Order of Malta Chaplain, presided over this special celebration. The congregation at the annual Mass was joined by thousands who watched the livestream of this special celebration. Those in attendance received a blessing for good health and a bottle of water from the Lourdes sanctuary for their personal use.

A special mention to our Celebrants, volunteers and Members who organised and assisted at the Mass.

A recording of the Mass and a gallery of photos captured by Giovanni Portelli Photography are available at www.orderofmalta.org.au

UPCOMING MASSES

Please join our Lourdes Healing Masses in Melbourne and Adelaide on Sunday, 10 February 2024.

- * 10am at St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Adelaide
- * 10am at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne

REMINDER

Order of Malta Annual Pilgrimage to Lourdes:

The 66th annual pilgrimage of the Order to Lourdes will start in Paris on Monday 29 April. The group will travel to Lourdes on Wednesday 1 May and stay there until Tuesday 7 May 2024.

If you and your family members and friends are interested to attend the 2024 pilgrimage email info@orderofmalta.org.au

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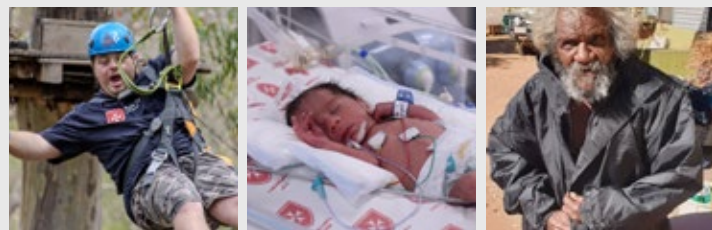
You can make a donation by visiting www.orderofmalta.org.au/donate or by completing this form and returning it in the reply paid envelope provided.

- I am happy for the Order to allocate my donation to where the need is greatest; or
- Camps for Disabled Youth
- Emergency Relief Fund for Holy Family Hospital
- Homeless outreach service in Darwin and Palmerston
- Coats for the Homeless

REMEMBER, GIFTS OF \$2 AND OVER ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

- Send me information about leaving the Order a bequest
- Please remove me from your mailing list.

Donations will be allocated to projects as requested by the donor. However if the needs of a project have already been met, we will allocate funds to another Order of Malta charitable activity.



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