

Chairman's Address AGM 2020

1. First of all a very big thank you to all of you, to all the members of St. John, of all the branches of St. John, to the colleagues in St. John Council, to all our helpers and collaborators who have really put in a big effort, to push this this old organization not only to higher levels of visibility, but also to higher levels of action.

2. I particularly look forward to seeing the headquarters of St. John refurbished and returned to its state as a truly beautiful building which is also highly functional for our organisation. I have just been to visit the works with James Cilia, our Training Commissioner who has been coordinating the project, and Joseph Pisani, our administration assistant. These works are not just on the outside of the headquarters.

3. This is not going to be a refurbished headquarters for St. John Council. This is the headquarters for all the Association, for all the members of the Association, for all the branches of the Association: we will have multi-function rooms before the use of all the branches of the Association, by the Commissioners, by whoever in the Association needs to make use of the prestigious rooms in the headquarters itself. This is not a project simply to embellish our HQ: this is a project to increase the dignity of this organization. As one of the oldest, if not the oldest, civil society organization in Malta, St John should have a dignified headquarters to represent its history and culture.

4. In this regard, we are also working with Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, FPM, who will be helping us professionally display the historical artifacts at the headquarters and with our branches. This is another project which we will be undertaking in the coming year so that we can have a permanent exhibition in the headquarters, professionally set up for us by FPM,

5. In these headquarters shall also have, as I said earlier, multi-functional meeting rooms. It will be a place for training, as it always has been, but there will be more rooms for training, and more multi-functional rooms for meetings. These meeting rooms of course, will be open not only to the Council, but also to the branches and to whoever in the organization needs to make use of them.

6. I think that it has been extremely important for us to set the stage for a more professional organization and the engagement of a quasi-full-timer, Joseph Pisani , who I would like to thank for his very hands-on approach -he has actually done a lot of work himself in the rehabilitation of the Headquarters- was meant in this regard. Having a small core group of full timers in the headquarters is part of our plan for the coming years. We must recall that this process was jump started by means of the loan which the Priory of England very kindly made available to us.

7. We have managed to supplement that encouraging initial capital injection with our own generated finances, and we need to keep on finding our own revenues as an organisation. We shall do that not only through donations from benefactors, but also through raising our own funds. I think we will be seeing that the headquarters can also provide an infrastructure for, and support to, the branches and to the activities of the branches - we will be hearing more about that in 2021.

8. St John has had to work very hard on its finances, on getting its finances in order and then ensuring that we have the set up to ensure that all its accounts are audited. The culmination of that effort has been that we now have a full compliance certificate from the Voluntary Organisations Commissioner. I am very pleased that we managed to merit this Compliance certificate after a lot of work and effort by all. We had some setbacks, as you know, some years back, but we have recovered from that and we continue to pursue the matter. We have also strengthened the transparency and accountability of the organisation by having all our finances fully audited by professional auditors – this is part of the good standing and image of the Association, now also fully compliant. I thank in particular our Deputy Chairman and Commander Col. Mark Mallia for all his efforts in this regard and also our Treasurer. It is my hope that in 2021, we shall also have consolidated accounts presented at this AGM which reflect the financial situation of our Association and its branches so that we are better informed to take our whole Association forward.

9. I would like to thank the Commissioners of the Branches for the work they have done because we have had a very active year in our St John Rescue Corps, in our St John Training, and in our St John Ambulance First Aid and Nursing. I am very glad that in 2020 we did our share of effort to address the COVID-19 pandemic in our country. We shall have a fuller report on that in our next AGM early in 2021 But we should emphasise that

St. John was there for the community, for the country in the big crisis, which has hit us with the pandemic.

10. I am very pleased and proud of what St John has achieved in this regard. And it must be said: a lot of this would not have been possible had we not had an anonymous donation of forty thousand British pounds, which of course amounted to more in euros, which has helped us immensely to organize ourselves to be able to be more proactive in Covid-19. And this is not over yet. So we hope that we'll be able also to use those funds to help the authorities in the rolling out of the vaccines. I think this is going to be a big challenge for the country here. We are, of course, offering our services to the authorities as we have done all throughout this pandemic. The Commander and I have worked closely with the authorities to make them aware of what we can offer them, and this is why we sent a memorandum to the authorities at the very outset of the Covid-19 crisis to explain to them what we could offer them. We send this memorandum not only to the Prime Minister, but also to the Minister of Health and to the various authorities of the health department. And I think this was also important because it showed the authorities that St. John, is an organization, which is there for when the country needs it.

11. I would therefore like to give a special vote of thanks and to record this in the minutes of the AGM to our benefactors, our anonymous benefactors and our benefactors who have also made donations to St. John regularly, which have allowed us to put our finances in order.

12. We hope, in 2021, to also see that all our branches will have all the facilities which are needed for them to be able to function from the training sites, to have all the facilities available, to have more training rooms, to have all the equipment which is needed; from the rescue site to make sure that Madalena Fort is all the times kept up to the right conditions so that they can offer their services and they can also meet there; and to the Ambulance side so that the actual site in Corradino is upgraded so that we can they can also have their services also in place there, and all the equipment will be safe and protected.

13. These three branches make up St. John, and we need all these branches to be together and to work together, but we also need to ensure that each of them has all the

facilities in place so that they can carry out their functions. We are working on that and we are confident that we will achieve this in 2021.

14. We have also just started a new journey. We have joined Johanniter International. This was an initiative which originated from the Commissioner of St. John Rescue Corps. And I thank Andrew Grech for that. This is a journey that now puts us together with fellow St. John organisations in Johanniter International. But we will also keep on working in 2021 to strengthen our relations with the MASCOM the Malta Chapter of the Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. It was a very beautiful thought expressed by our Reverend Father in the opening prayer of this AGM where he prayed for brotherly St John organisations, and, yes, we will carry on strengthening these relationships because we are all part of the St. John Alliance and need to keep on working together.

15. In 2021, I would like to see in more interaction among our branches, more communication and perhaps more joint projects. This is a theme for us we to discuss later on, and should be put as a challenge to all of us in the coming year.

16. I can see a great future for St. John. St. John is slowly but surely reasserting itself in our community. It will become a stronger brand. St. John Malta is the brand that incorporates all of us and our activities: It incorporates St. John Training. St. John First Aid and Nursing - St John Ambulance, therefore - and it incorporates St. John Rescue Corps. It is, of course, fine that each of our branches retains its own particular identity, but it is extremely important that for the general public, we also have the branding of the Association as a whole. St John Malta presents us as a whole: it is a brand which we need to push forward, to develop further for 2021. In this regard would also like to thank Stephanie Lang, who has helped us by offering the services of her team of PR experts : we will be making use of their services more and more in 2021, because this is a brand which needs to be established even more strongly in Malta than it has been thus far.

17. Dear Colleagues, St John Malta is not a historic relic. Yes, we are an old Association, an Association, with deep tradition. Yes, we do form part of an order of chivalry. We form part very proudly of St. John International, of the Venerable Order of Saint John. We *are* the Venerable Order of St. John in Malta. We are here for these noble purposes of an Order, which is also putting across the values of Christianity, Pro Fidei et Humanitate. We are certainly here for that. And it is very important that we keep on reflecting these values.

But we must also be dynamic in serving to put these values into practice. We must be actively integrated in society, showing ourselves to be modern, to have all the competencies, the equipment and the organizational skills to take St John forward for the many years to come.

18. It has been an honour and a pleasure for me to serve in these years in St. John. I hope to give up more years of service. But do remember that we have now introduced also a Statute which over the years, not necessarily in the next few years, but over the years, would be allowing for turnover even in the leadership of the organization.

19. So I think it is extremely important that we also foster leadership in the organization and that we foster a sense of succession. There have been many years where the leadership of the organization has been very static, where even membership of the Council has been very static. I think we also need to think about the ways that we can change that, and we can take that forward, And I am, seeing how we can have more participation also at levels lower than the Commissioners in the decision making of the organization so that we can have a sense of participatory type of decision making and consensus building in the organization. I hope to be able to work on that more in 2021.

20. I thank you very much for your patience in listening to me. I thank you very much for all your efforts. Let us work together so that this vision of St John Malta as a strong organization, a very active and very well established, indeed entrenched in Maltese society, becomes more and more of a reality in 2020 21. Thank you very much to everybody.