



**The Great Priory of the United Religious, Military, and Masonic Orders  
of the Temple and of St John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta  
of England, Wales and its Provinces Overseas**

My dear Brother Knights, wherever you may be, I am speaking to you from home here in Swansea, through the wonders of modern technology made possible by my 'in house' production team.

In these very unusual circumstances, I thought it appropriate to send this message to all Brother Knights in the Constitution on this, the appointed day of our May Great Priory 2020. First, I trust that you and your loved ones have managed to stay safe and well through all the trials of the past months. Our daily lives have changed in recent weeks in a way that we never thought possible, and I certainly never realised how much I would miss the privilege of attending meetings, participating in ceremonies and, above all, enjoying the companionship of Brethren and Brother Knights.

Under normal circumstances, many of us would be gathered together at Freemasons 'Hall in London enjoying a Chapter of Great Priory. The business of the meeting includes the election of the Grand Master and I do thank you all most sincerely for allowing me to be re-elected in a way which has never happened before and, hopefully, will never occur again. I would then have gone on to re-appoint Very High and Right Eminent Knight, Andrew Rainbow, as my Great Seneschal which I am delighted to do and I thank him for the loyal support he gives to me and the dedication he shows to his position within the Order.

As the Statutes remind us, the appointments of Knight Grand Cross and Knight Commander of the United Orders form part of the Grand Master's exclusive prerogative. The dignity of these highest Grades is preserved by their exclusivity and the fact that numbers are strictly controlled, not only by our Statutes but by the Concordat we entered into with the Great Priorities of Ireland and Scotland in May 1930, 90 years ago.

Today, I confer the honour and dignity of Knight Grand Cross of the United Orders on R.E.Kt. Graham Leslie Flight. Graham was first appointed P.Gt.St.B.(B.) in 1997; following which he served as Provincial Prior for Sussex from 2000-2013; and in 2009 was appointed Knight Commander of the United Orders. He is now known to all of us as our Grand Sovereign in the Order of the Red Cross of Constantine and, as I am sure you will agree, has given long, distinguished and meritorious service to our Order which I am confident will long continue and for which I thank him.

I am equally delighted to appoint to the honour and dignity of Knight Commander of the United Orders:

R.E.Kt. Knight Peter Gordon Ward France who served as Provincial Prior for Monmouth and South Wales from 2010 to 2016.

R.E.Kt. Peter Davies, the Provincial Prior for Devonshire and Cornwall from 2011 to 2018.

And, R.E.Kt. Stephen John Wyer, who served as Provincial Prior for Worcestershire between 2011 and 2017.

These three Right Eminent Knights all served their Provinces with great distinction and continue to support all the activities of Great Priory in an exemplary manner and I know you will all join with me in congratulating them, and Brother Knight Graham, on their new dignity within the Order.

For all those with appointments and promotions in Great Priory, please be assured that you have received your new ranks from today and are now to consider yourselves duly invested. I offer you my personal congratulations and I thank you for the contribution you make to your Preceptories, and your Provinces, which has led to your receiving preferment today. Your ranks were not conferred lightly and should be received with the expectation of even more dedicated service to the Order. Always remember that the Knights in your various Preceptories will now look up to you for counsel, guidance and advice which I am sure will be forthcoming.

I suppose that we are fortunate in this Order in having two Chapters of Great Priory each year, thus hopefully giving us an opportunity this year to make amends; and I do hope and pray that by the time we are due to convene in November for our Great Priory of Malta, things will have settled down and our lives will have resumed some degree of normality, in which case I am sure you will all make a special effort to attend and receive your Malta Ranks in person.

More than ever in these troubled times we rely on the tremendous efforts our Provincial Priors make in holding their Provinces together and ensuring that we are aware of the circumstances of our Brother Knights throughout the Constitution. In the past year I have had the pleasure of appointing eight new Provincial Priors and installing six of them personally.

In June last year I installed R.E.Kt. David Philips as Provincial Prior for Staffordshire and Shropshire in succession to R.E.Kt. Gary Read who sadly passed on earlier in the year.

August saw the Great-Vice Chancellor, the Great Marshal, and several other Great Officers accompany me to Brazil where we constituted a new Province of River Plate which covers Argentina and Uruguay. Following which I installed R.E.Kt. Brian Partington as the Primus Provincial Prior. The following day I installed R.E.Kt. Detlev Fenselau as the new Provincial Prior for South America following the passing of R.E.Kt. John Collakis.

Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire was the next Province we visited, and I was pleased to install R.E.Kt. Graham McGowan-Smyth on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September at Sindlesham as a consequence of the retirement of R.E.Kt. Ray Cochrane.

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, R.E.Kt. Pieter De Kock was installed in charge of South Africa Cape following the retirement of his predecessor, Lt. Col. Peter Dagg.

In October I travelled to Nottingham to install R.E.Kt. Jim Crossley in charge of Nottinghamshire as the result of my appointing the new Great Seneschal last May.

While later that month I journeyed to Leeds and installed R.E.Kt. Hearl Lenton as Provincial Prior for West Yorkshire as a result of the sad passing of R.E.Kt. Paul Grafton.

Last, something which I believe to be unique at this time (but this may change in the near future), just over 2 weeks ago R.E.Kt. Timothy Dillon was deemed installed into charge of the Province of North and East Yorkshire in succession to R.E.Kt. Paul Darley. Although circumstances have denied him his special day, he was duly installed over the telephone and I know he will do an excellent job for us, along with his new team of officers in that Province.

Those eagle-eyed amongst you will have noticed that I am wearing the Swift Pin which indicates that I have taken part in the 20 for 2020 Appeal, which I mentioned at Great Priory last November and which has been extremely well received by you. We are now officially launching this appeal to enable us to give additional support to the Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group at a time when international politics and the devastating effects of Coronavirus has cost it vital funding and placed it under unprecedented financial pressure. I want to clarify the system for qualifying for a pin. The £20.00 donation must be made by you, as an individual and not by a Province or a Preceptory. The monies should be sent to Relief Chest KT 20 4 20 20 and not to Great Priory or the Eye Hospital. This will enable us to reclaim Gift Aid wherever possible. I should add that donations will not be included as individual donations in the Annual Statement but as an appeal total. I urge you to go to the link on the Mark Masons 'Hall website and watch a short video prepared by the Eye Hospital demonstrating the work they do, which I know will inspire you further in the cause which we already feel so passionate about.

Sir Andrew Cash, the Chairman of the Group, has also written to us expressing his thanks for the £300,000.00 we have pledged over the next three years to support their Mobile Outreach Programme and, as you see, our Great Priory Logo is clearly visible on the vans.

I would like to thank the Great Vice-Chancellor and his team at the Chancery, the Great Marshal and his Deputies and all those who have made this another successful and memorable year for the Order. In particular, I wish to pay tribute to R.E.Kt. Lt. Cdr. Angus Hannagan who retires today after six years as an active Great Officer and who has been a first-class President of my Council since my installation in 2017. At the same time, I am sure we would all wish to welcome V.E. Kt. Jonathan Whitaker as the new President.

I was to have Consecrated The Grand Master's Body Guard Preceptory only yesterday and I am hoping that this can now take place on the day before our November Great Priory. Many of you will be aware that we plan to hold a Family Service next year on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2021 at Wells Cathedral and I would ask you to note that date in your diaries. This will be another opportunity for us to come together as Brother Knights and families, publicly witness our faith, and join in the singing of some wonderful Christian Hymns; none greater than our adopted Hymn, Bishop Walsham How's stirring, "For all the Saints" to the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams. In conclusion, I hope and pray that the Great Captain of our Salvation may keep you and your loved ones free from harm and that we will be spared to meet again as Brother Knights in the service of the Order. May we use this time not only as a period of reflection, but as an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood within the Order, making each of our members feel that they are part of an international fraternity of Christian Masons, driven by faith and the sure hope that we will come through these troubled times, better, stronger and holding fast to the precepts of our Order.

And now, as is customary at our May Chapter, I invite you join with me, the Past Grand Master, and other Brother Knights, in the singing of The Templars 'Hymn.