

## THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA IN AUSTRIA

Since the **12<sup>th</sup> Century** the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem is also in Austria. The seat of the Grand Priory of Bohemia and Austria was first in Prague.

In 12<sup>th</sup> Century the Order started to establish own Commanderies at the important Pilger- and trade-routes and received generous donations. A Commandery consisted of a church and a hospital (hospice) and some property to keep it autonomous. The hospice stood for all patient and traveller openly. These independent administrative units had to make annual payments to the Grand Priory, with which the hospital in Jerusalem, later on Rhodes and Malta also fortifications were built or supported.

From the Commandery of St. John the Baptist to **Vienna** (Kaerntnerstrasse) is e.g. well-known that it had **to equip Crusaders** for the Holy Land.

The "Hospitallers" first practice peacefully protection of pilgrims and service for "Our Lord the Sick". After being pressed by the Turks and the conquest of Jerusalem (1099) the members started War service to defend the Holy Land.

Therefore, naturally also **Austrian knights took part at all fights against the Turks** at land or water, e. g. at Akkon (1291), the islands Cyprus (1309) and Rhodes (1522) as well as at the victorious defence of the island of Malta (1565) and at the sea-battle of Lepanto (1571).

Also in the course of the Turk sieges of Vienna (1529 and 1683) our knights participated with important functions. Mentioned should be **Fra' Leopold of Kollonitsch**, the Comtur of Mailberg, Vienna and Unterlaa, later on Bishop von Wiener Neustadt and Cardinal of Gran (Esztergom/Hungary), who belonged to the triumvirate of leading generals of the Austrian defenders. As a former commander of the fortress of Malta he was full of experience and was among other things responsible for the whole medical service and the prisoners exchange. After the siege he paid personally for several hundred orphans their maintenance and education.

Through the **loss of Malta** (1798) and the **Napoleonic Wars** nearly the entire European possessions of the Order were lost, with exception of the Bohemian and Austrian Grand Priory. This existential crisis of the Order led to a profound new meditation and in further consequence again to the **concentration on the service for the needy**.

In **1876** the Grand Priory of Austria settled **an agreement** with the Imperial Austrian Ministry of War to set up **voluntary Ambulance Corps in the case of War**. In the WW I the Grand Priory of Austria directed alone **two hospitals, six homes for convalescent patients and four mobile groups of surgeons** as well as **eight hospital trains**, which took care of more than **460,000 wounded soldiers** that were picked up at the front. The trains were confiscated after the War and the Grand Priory came into financial difficulties by the high expenditures for this assistance, because the **new Republic refused the assumption of the costs**. The outbreak of the world economic crisis aggravated this situation, so that the Grand Priory was forced to sell some possessions and **the house in Kaerntnerstrasse/Johannesgasse 2**.

In **1938** the Grand Priory was divided **in two separated Grand Priories**, one for Bohemia and one for Austria. Everybody was afraid of the III. Reich and the Order hoped that the rich Bohemian possessions would survive. Due to the reason that the Order did not recognize National Socialistic Regime all possessions in Austria came under a **Commissary Administration**, but the Grand Priory was not expropriated or dissolved.

The Grand Priory suffered a strong loss of members by the WW II, but received its possessions after 1945 – of course plundered (by own people and the Russians) and damaged.

Despite these losses the Grand Priory of Austria leads today still the **Commanderies Mailberg** in Lower Austria, **Maria Pulst, Fuerstenfeld** and **Altenmarkt** and **Ligist**. With much financial effort buildings were saved and led to efficient use.

**Eight Churches** remained also incorporated: The church of St. John the Baptist in Kaerntnerstrasse in Vienna, the subsidiary church St. John in Unterlaa near Vienna, the parish churches Mailberg and Gross Harras in Lower Austria, the churches Fuerstenfeld, Altenmarkt and the patronage church in Ligist in Styria as well as the parish Maria Pulst with the subsidiary church of Lebmach in Carinthia.

The Grand Priory started with first greater activities in the early sixties and founded the **ambulance corps Malteser Hospitaldienst Austria (MHDA) in 1956/1957**. Since then eight other Charitable Works, in which volunteer helpers and members of the Order are working, have been established.

A **private elementary school in Mailberg**, St. John-station in a house of the mercy in Vienna, two Charitable Foundations and St. John's Club are examples of patronage and the large charitable commitment of the Order in Austria.

The Grand Priory is **founding member of Malteser International**, the Order of Malta's worldwide relief service, supports MI annually. It played also a special **role in the expansions of the diplomatic relations** of the Order. Now Austrian members are in the diplomatic service of the Order in Jordan, Moldavia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Romania as well as envoys at the constant Missions of the Order at the United Nations in Geneva, in Vienna, to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and for questions of the Roma people.

The Grand Priory finances these possessions and supports its charitable works through receipts from **forest** (3,000 ha) and a **tourism enterprise** in Styria, by **lease incomes** of **Hotel Mailbergerhof** in Vienna as well as some other small properties and flats in Vienna. It runs a **biological farming** and a **Castle-Hotel in the Commandery Mailberg** and has **lease incomes** of the **vineyards** there.

Today **450** members are inscribed in the Grand Priory of Austria. 2 Professed Knights, 1 Profess Chaplain, 25 priests, 26 Knights and 3 Dames of Oboedience, 198 Knights and Dames of Honour and Devotion, 49 Knights and Dames of Grace and Devotion and 147 Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace are within these members. 97 members ( 21 %) are ladies.

The Grand Priory is active in the fight against **Mimic Orders** or "self-styled orders" and has won against several representatives of these dubious organisations in court actions, **produces Orders decorations in best quality** and offer it via our Webshop to all members of the Order around the world.

## THE WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS IN AUSTRIA

- **Malteser Hospitaldienst Austria (MHDA)** consists of about 2.200 exclusively honorary and voluntary members, who generate more than 150.000 hours in service per year, mainly in fields of welfare work with handicapped, of medical and rescue services and of disaster relief activities.

Social work and work with handicapped: Personal devotion to the next in need – an action that can not be done by the welfare state– is one of the main focuses of a Knight of Malta. In this sense services in nursing for the sick, support of handicapped people and pilgrimages, for example to Lourdes, Rome and the Holy Land are carried out. There is a cooperation with two soup-kitchens in Linz and Graz, as well as assistance by our *Betreuungsdienst* on weekends and holidays. Our *Aids-Dienst* looks after patients, who suffer from Aids and try to promote education and social acceptance. The *Medikamentenhilfe* collects and ships yearly medicines and medical equipment for deserving to Eastern European Countries. The *Palliativdienst* does palliative service and tries to help people in the last part of their life

Medical and Rescue Services: First –Aid courses and ambulance service are offered in Vienna, Salzburg, Innsbruck and Graz. The MHDA is driving regularly in cooperation with other organisations as e. g. the Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe or the Red Cross. Ambulance service is also provided for concerts and other big events.

Disaster Relief: The MHDA started to help in this field after the flood in East-Tyrol 1966. It has helped the Czech refugees (1968), gave assistance after the earthquake in Friuli (1976), was active in Montenegro (1979), South-Italy (1980/81), Ethiopia (1985/86) and helped GDR refugees in Hungary (1989). Countries as Romania (1989/90), Kurdistan (1991), Slovenia and Croatia (1990-92) and Albania (1992 and 1999), Bosnia and Serbia (1993-95) received help as well as the Tsunami victims (2004/2005). Emergency aid was offered at last in Italy after the earthquake in L'Aquila 2009 and after the floods in Germany 2013.

The MHDA is partner of the Organisation NiN (**Neighbour in Need**) and was strongly involved in the **help for refugees** in 2015/16.

- **Haus Malta** is a house for old and sick in Bürgerspitalgasse 1 in Vienna's 6<sup>th</sup> district that was established with the help of a charitable donation in 1990. It tries to give 35 inhabitants a familiar home in a comfortable atmosphere and with loving care.
- **Johannesgemeinschaft** was established in 2009 as work of our Order, after three years of probation. About 20 young people are doing praying, retreats and social work in the spirit of our Order.
- **Malteser Care GmbH (MC)** was founded in March 2010 and is doing Case and Care Management. E. g. geriatric, chronically ill, handicapped people or casualties, who want to stay at home and on their own, can contact MC to get the necessary and competent treatment at home by registered nurses. We are one of the ways to establish this service in whole Austria. MCR has already taken care for 1.000 Austrian people since its start and 300 persons are actually served by it.
- Benefactress KR Hilde Umdasch set up the first Hospice for Austrian children in Amstetten. Opened in September 2015 the house for 10 critically ill children is run by the **Malteser-Kinderhilfe GmbH**.

The Grand Priory has also started in 2018 to set up a house for old and sick with approximately 80 beds, called **Malteserordenshaus**, in close cooperation with the St. Elisabeth sisters in the 3<sup>rd</sup> district of Vienna, who run a Hospital nearby.

# SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA

## ORIGIN

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta or with full name "Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta" developed out of a brotherhood by the Blessed Gerard that was founded before 1099.

Their first mission was to take care for pilgrims, the sick and the needy later they had also the chivalric duty to defend the faith and to protect the Holy Land. After their patron St. John the Baptist they were called knights of St. John.

1113 accepted Pope Paschalis II the first rule of the Order (in Latin: „ordo“).

1187 after the capture of Jerusalem the Order moved its seat to Acre, 1291 to Cyprus and from 1309 till 1523 to the isle of Rhodes. 1530 received the Order from Emperor Charles V the isle of Malta as fiefdom that was defended victoriously against 40.000 Ottomans under Sultan Mustapha Pasha in 1565. After this Great Siege the Order was called "Order of Malta". During the Napoleonic War Malta was lost 1798 and the seat is since 1834 in Rome.

## GUIDLINE OF THE ORDER

"Tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum" (Protecting the faith and helping the needy)

## WAY OF LIFE

The Order is divided in 3 classes, whereas only the First Class, the Knights of Justice or also called Professed, have made religious vows of Obedience, Chastity and Poverty. The Professed Conventual Chaplains belong also to the First Class and are monks according to the Canon Law but are not obliged to live in community.

The Knights and Dames of the Second Class make a Promise of Obedience.

The members of the Third Class do not make any religious vows or promise but live according to the norms of the Church and are prepared to commit themselves to the Order and the Church. They try to fight against the eight miseries (sickness, loneliness, homelessness, lovelessness, hunger, guilt, faithlessness and casualness) of the world that are symbolized by ends of the eight-pointed cross.

For every Class exists an own need for admission for Novitiate or Aspirancy, that is regularised in the Code of the Order. The Candidates are addressed by the Order. The investiture is taking place in a solemn Holy Mass, around of 24<sup>th</sup> of June, the day of the Patron of the Order.

## WORLDWIDE ACTIVITY

As catholic and fully accepted Layorder by the Holy See and as Sovereign State the Sovereign Military Order of Malta has full diplomatic relations with 100 countries, as amongst others with the Republic of Austria, has permanent missions to the United Nations and its Specialised Agencies, has Delegations and Representations to International Organisations and supports with more than 12.350 members and 80.000 volunteers in more than 120 countries of the world over 15 Million people.

Besides own hospitals, clinics, dispensaries and Hospices, houses for old and sick or handicapped, institutions for refugees and homeless, First-aid and social centres as well as leprosy facilities the Order is active in all fields of medical and rescue service, service for handicapped and after disasters.

The Grand Priory of Austria exists without interruption since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The Grand Priory leads several Commanderies (former independent administration units) and eight incorporated Churches (Commandery and Parish Church Mailberg, Parish Church Groß Harras, Church St. John the Baptist in Vienna (Kärntnerstraße 37), Church St. John in Unterlaa, Commanderies and Parish Churches in Fürstenfeld and Altenmarkt in Styria, Commandery and Parish Church Maria Pulst and Church Lebmach in Carinthia), a Private Elementary School in Mailberg as well as a forest enterprise and a tourism company in Styria.

At the moment 420 members of the Order and about 1.800 volunteers are active in the different charitable works (Malteser Hospitaldienst Austria, Altenwohnheim Haus Malta, Malteser-Alten- und Krankendienst, Malteser Betreuungsdienst, Aids-Dienst Malteser, Malteser Palliativdienst, Medikamentenhilfe, Rumänienhilfe des Großpriorates und Johannesgemeinschaft). The organisation Malteser Care-Ring uses professional staff for their Case- and Care Management in Austria.

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## THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

was founded in 1048 in Jerusalem as a brotherhood for the care of the sick and the housing of the pilgrims. Somewhat later, the military Order of the pilgrims against the overwhelming power of the ottomans was added as a supplementary task. In 1113 an order arose from the brotherhood of the John's Knights. First it was called "Order of St. John of Jerusalem" after its patron saint and later "Order of Malta" after its domicile in Malta. After turbulent periods in its history, the Order again concentrated on its original task.

Presently the Order has six Grand Priorities, six Sub Priorities and 48 National Associations with more than 13.500 members and some 80.000 volunteers. As a sovereign state, it maintains diplomatic relations with 108 countries and supports some 15 million people worldwide.



## THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST IN VIENNA

As early as 1217, the Knights Hospitallers had a hospital with a chapel on the site of today's church. In 1258 the building was destroyed in a fire. The current church is a mid-14th century building, as evidenced by the almost completely preserved attic. The Gothic building structure has a nave and a chancel, which may still be recognized. After changes of the church interior in the Baroque period, it was reshaped together with the façade in 1806 in a neo-classic style. The latest comprehensive renovation and restoration of the church was done in 1997/98, the magnificent organ in 2016/17. To this day the church belongs to the Order of Malta.

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## CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE ORDER

Today 2,200 members volunteer in the works of the Order of Malta in Austria.

These include visiting services, help for the elderly, the sick and the handicapped, regular pilgrimages, work with the homeless, transport, ambulance and emergency care service as well as international disaster relief and reconstruction aid. Christian values and the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence are the foundation of the work.

**Malteser Hospitaldienst** Austria consists of around 2,000 exclusively honorary members, who provide more than 140,000 hours of service each year. The range of services extends from civil protection through the rescue and medical service to personal care services and pilgrimages for disabled, old and sick people. He is also active in the elderly and health service, in the Aids and palliative area as well as in the drug and in the refugee aid.

In **Johannesebeneinschaft** young people try to get to know the Charisma of the Order of Malta and strengthen their faith through retreats, regular prayer and also social services.

The Senior Citizens house, **Haus Malta**, offers a family home in a pleasant atmosphere with loving care to give the 35 residents a pleasant and fulfilling retirement.

The **Malteser Kinderhilfe GmbH** operates the Hilde-Umdasch-Haus in Amstetten, where eleven children, adolescents and young adults with a life-shortening diagnosis and highly complex care needs find security, relaxation, companionship and a life in dignity.

The **Malteser Care GmbH** offers a professional health care and care management structure for sick and elderly in need of care of all care levels at home or in institutions throughout Austria.

## Church of Saint John the Baptist





# POINTS OF INTEREST

## IN THE APSE ...

you can clearly recognize the original Gothic nave. In the Baroque period and in the beginning of the 19th century the church was remodeled. The altar construction and the two large statues of the apostles St. Peter ("I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven ..." Mt 16,19) and St. Paul who was beheaded in Rome with a sword, date back to this period.



## THE ALTARPIECE ...

was painted by Johann Georg Schmidt in 1730; it shows the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan. John the Baptist is the patron saint of the Order of Malta. The lamb on the bottom right hand side reminds us that St. John called Jesus "Lamb of God", in reference to His sacrificial death, present on the altar during Holy Mass (see front page).

## IN THE TABERNACLE ...

shaped like an antique temple, the Blessed Sacrament is kept. Above the tabernacle there is an Ikon of "Our Most Holy Virgin of Philermos", an image of the Mother of God, which is deeply venerated by the Order. The veneration started when the Order settled in Rhodes.



## IN THE CHURCH INTERIOR ...

at your left you have the flag of the Order, sign of the sovereignty of the Order. The flag on your right is of the works of the Order and its organizations: the Maltese cross in white on a red background. The eight points of the cross allude to the eight Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount; according to a more modern interpretation, they also refer to the eight miseries, that the members of the Order are to fight: illness and loneliness, homelessness and hunger, lovelessness and guilt, neglect and faithlessness.



On the left hand wall you will find the neo-classical memorial with the portrait of the Grand Master of the Order, Fra' Jean Parisot de la Valette (+1568). In 1565 he defended Malta victoriously against the numerically superior of the Turkish armada. The capital of Malta was called "Valetta" after him.

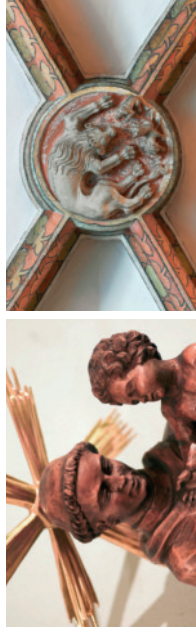
## IN THE NAVE ...

there are over 40 original escutcheons of important knights and the organ originally from the Baroque period. On the balustrade you can see the statues of the four Evangelists.



## IN THE ENTRANCE AREA ...

you will find the statues of St. Anthony of Padua – people pray to him especially after losing belongings – and of St. Jude Thaddaeus on the left – who is invoked in desperate situations.



The keystone in the Gothic cross vault with the motif of a lion is truly beautiful. The ancient perception that the lion breathes life into its cubs, has become the symbol for Jesus Christ who bestows eternal life.