

# History of the Order



## *Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller*

Founded in Jerusalem 1113, continuing through Czar Nicholas II  
Confirmed by the Royal Charter and Constitution of H.M. King Peter II of Yugoslavia

*Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum*



The Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller is a non-political, ecumenical, international Christian organization directly descended from the Order of St. John, founded in the late 11<sup>th</sup> Century.

Before the Crusades, a hostel had been established to provide respite for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. During the first Crusade, this hostel was converted to a hospital to serve both pilgrims and crusaders.

- 1099AD** Crusaders stormed the gates of Jerusalem. The leader, Godfrey de Bouillon, was so impressed by the hospital that he endowed it with one of his manors.
- 1100AD** Fighting continued and the hospital grew. The brothers became known as the “Hospitallers of St. John” and earned recognition as formidable warriors.
- 1113AD** Pascal II and the King of Jerusalem recognized the statutes of the Order and approved its religious rule.
- 1126AD** By papal bull of Anastasius IV, the Order became recognized as the Order of Knights and was designated “Ordo Militai S. Johanannes Baptistae Hospitalis Hiero-solimitani.”
- 1128AD** Grand Master Raymond De Puy adopted the eight-point cross of Amalfi to replace the earlier white cross.
- 1291AD** The Crusades ended and the last Christian defenders, including the Knights of St. John, were driven out of the Holy Land.
- 1309AD - 1522AD** After a brief stay on the island of Cyprus, the Knights of St. John captured the island of Rhodes. They defended Rhodes from a great siege by Muslim Turks in 1480, but were finally forced from the island in 1522.
- 1530AD** By treaty with Emperor Charles V, the Knights acquired the Island of Malta. The first few years were devoted to fortifying the island and building great hospitals and schools.
- 1565AD** The Island of Malta was attacked by Turkish forces consisting of 138 ships and 40,000 men. The defenders were 700 Knights plus 8,000 servants, men at arms and townspeople. After a four-month battle, the Knights prevailed. Barely 10,000 Turkish troops survived. The defenders suffered over 90% casualties.
- 1791AD** An unsettled Europe caused by Napoleon and the French Revolution, coupled with the abolition of the great French priories, and the Order’s loss of income, prompted the Knights to conclude a treaty with Tsar Nicholas I of Russia, who subsequently became “Protector of the Order of Malta.”
- 1798AD** Napoleon attacked Malta and the Knights were forced to capitulate. Many Knights went to St. Petersburg where the Emperor Paul was later elected 70<sup>th</sup> Grand Master of the Order. He established two great priories, one for the Latin Rite and one for the Orthodox Rite.

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- 1798AD - 1917AD** - The Order of St. John continued to operate while centred in Russia.
- 1917AD** With the deposing of Tsar Nicholas II, protection of the Order and the Sacred Relics were transferred to the Royal Yugoslav House of Karageorgevic – close relatives of the Tsar and members of the Orthodox church.
- 1962AD** King Peter II of Yugoslavia became “Protector of the Order.” In 1964, he was elected Grand Master. He died in 1970.
- 1973AD** HRH Prince Andrej, youngest brother of King Peter, became Protector and later, in 1978, Grand Master of the Order.
- 1985AD** The Grand Priory of the Americas, established in 1908, was reorganized by Prince Andrej.
- 1990AD** Death of Prince Andrej and institution of a Regency.
- 1998AD** Letters Patent for a Grant of Arms to the Foundation of the Canadian Pories of The Sovereign Order under the prerogative of the Crown exercised by the Governor General of Canada through the Canadian Heraldic Authority.

The International Office of the Order is located in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. There are two Grand Pories of the Order: The Americas and Europe. Various Pories and Commanderies are the active units in each of the Grand Pories.