



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER
OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

GRAND PRIORY OF ENGLAND

THE GRAND PRIOR

Christmas Prayer Letter

Christmas Eve, 24 December 2023

Dear friends,

Christmas can seem predictable and, because of that, there is a danger it can lose its spiritual significance. We know the Christmas story so well. We know that we will eat well; get lovely presents; and watch the King on television. Whilst all these things are “nice”, they and the story of Mary and Joseph finding that there was no room in the inn are very familiar to us. We know what is coming.

Monsignor Michael Nazir-Ali reminded us at the Advent Evening of Recollection to embrace the unexpectedness of Christmas. Our Lady teaches how to react to the unexpected whenever God takes us by surprise: “be it unto me according to Thy will”. It is fair to say that Mary did not expect to become pregnant and most expectant mothers don’t plan to give birth in a cattleshed miles away from home and friends. The shepherds were surprised by the angel announcing the birth of Our Lord, and the wise men were drawn by a mysterious star. Although we sing, “Come Thou long-expected Jesus”, He did not come to His people in the way that they expected, thinking only with mankind’s narrow mind, so different from the mind of God.

Yes, we have heard the Christmas story many times but don’t forget the unexpectedness that lies behind it. It has a purpose.

In 2024, we ought to look for unexpectedness and embrace it. How often have we prayed for things or people only to be slightly disappointed that our prayer appears not to have been answered or not answered completely? However, we know we were heard: perhaps the answer was something completely unrelated and unexpected, and we did not connect our prayer with the

23 GOLDEN SQUARE - LONDON - W1F 9JP

EMAIL: PRIOR@GPESMOM.ORG

The Grand Priory of Blessed Adrian Fortescue of the Order of Malta
Trustis a UK registered charity, no. 1166645

answer because we also were thinking only with mankind's mind and seeing only with mankind's eyes.

If we prepare to meet the unexpected, who knows what new things we will do next year; which new friends we will meet; and what occasions we will find to love our neighbour? Our membership and involvement with the Order can help us find the unexpected - whether that is by serving Our Lords the poor or sick, icons of Christ's humility; or (like me) attending a Recollection and having a spiritual awakening, learning to see, and think, and listen more like Christ.

The Priory's first spiritual activity of the New Year will be on the eve of Epiphany, 5 January 2024, when we will celebrate how God revealed His unexpected plan, conceived in the womb of the Virgin and nurtured in Egypt and Nazareth, to the the world: to the Magi at Bethlehem, to St John the Baptist's disciples at the Jordan, and at the wedding at Cana. At St James's, Spanish Place at 7pm, we will bless holy water and chalk to bless us in preparation to meet the challenges and obtain the graces we shall be offered in the coming year.

I wish you all a joyful and blessed Christmas, and a New Year where unexpectedness leads you closer to Our Lord.

O GOD, our dayspring and our dawn,
We turn to You when we fear the dark
And all around us weep.
We ask that You greet us with Your shining light
That we may spread Your warm embrace
And kindle the hope of Christmas
In all whose lives remain in shadow.
Come and be our strength
O Lord, our hope and our salvation. Amen.

Sincerely your confrère,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fra' Max Rummy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

To: Members of the Order in Great Britain; Companions of the Order of Malta; members of the Order of Malta Volunteers; friends and associates of the Order in Great Britain.