



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©  
\* Knights of Malta \*

August  
2011

## Chancellor's Update

### Why Is This Happening?

In recent weeks the news arrived of riots in London. However, unlike riots involving starving or hungry people screaming for food or homeless people demanding lodging, these were young people breaking, entering, looting and setting fires to neighborhoods. As the violence intensified and the fires continued, people became shocked, saddened, angered and eventually outraged. Even the United States was not immune to such events as flash-mobs of young people in several cities were reported. Why were such things happening in bastions of Western civilization?

In an article dated August 10, 2011 in 'Mail Online' British Journalist Max Hastings wrote, "Years of liberal dogma have spawned a generation of amoral, undereducated, welfare dependent, brutalized youth." He described them as having no moral compass, no guilt or shame, no sense of responsibility and no allegiance to anything. Within this perverted social ethos they act as wild beasts, bereft of discipline, seizing or destroying the property of others and welcoming excitement in a life of absolute futility. He blamed the breakdown of families, the decline of domestic life and no respect for producing a large amoral brutalized subculture.

Another journalist described several of the arrested young looters and rioters. These lived comfortably and certainly were not deprived individuals. They simply were caught up with the action. How then did this all come about and what can be done to reverse the destruction of civilization?

More than one hundred years ago there lived an influential man, who was tremendously talented in studying a situation and describing its logical conclusion. In 1888 Pope Leo XIII wrote an Encyclical entitled 'Exeunte Jam Anno', 'The Right Ordering of Christian Life.' The Holy Father's words follow.

"Too sadly, alas! do the words of the apostle St. John apply to our age: *All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life* (1 John ii. 16). For in truth most men, with little heed as to whence they have come or whither they are going, place all their thoughts and all their care upon the vain and fleeting goods of this life; and, contrary to nature and right order, they voluntarily give themselves up to serve things of which their reason tells them they should be the masters. It is a short step from the desire of comfort and luxury to the striving after the means to obtain them. Hence arises the unbridled eagerness to become rich which binds those whom it possesses, and while they are seeking the gratification of their passion, hurries them along, often without reference to justice or injustice, and not infrequently even with insolent contempt for the penury of others. Thus very many who live in luxury call themselves the brethren of the multitudes whom in the depths of their hearts they despise. With minds puffed up with pride, they strive to be subject to no law and to have respect for no authority. They call self-love liberty, and think

themselves *born free like a wild ass's colt* (Job xi, 12). Snares and temptations to sin abound; impious and immoral dramas are exhibited on the stage; books and the daily press jeer at virtue and enoble crime; and the fine arts themselves, which were intended for virtuous use and for rightful recreation, are made to minister to depraved passions. **Nor can we look to the future without fear, for new seeds of evil are continually being sown broadcast in the hearts of the rising generation.** As for the public schools, it is well known to you that...during the years when tender minds should be trained carefully and conscientiously in Christian virtue, the precepts of religion are for the most part even left untaught. Youths somewhat advanced in age encounter a still graver peril, namely, from evil teaching; which is of such a kind as to deceive them by misleading words, instead of filling them with a knowledge of what is true. **For many nowadays seek to learn truth by the aid of reason alone, putting divine faith entirely aside; and...they fall into many errors and fail to discover the truth.** They teach, for instance, that matter alone exists in the world; that men and beasts have the same origin and a like nature; and some even there are who go so far as to doubt the existence of God, the Ruler and Maker of the world, or to err most grievously, like unto the heathen, as to His divine nature. Hence the very essence and form of virtue, of justice, and of duty are of necessity distorted...They fall into the just punishment of pride through ignorance of what is of the greatest importance. **When the mind has thus been poisoned, the moral character becomes at the same time deeply and substantially corrupt;** and so diseased a state can be cured only with the utmost difficulty in this class of men, because on the one side their opinions vitiate the judgment of what is right, and on the other they have not the light of Christian faith, which is the principle and foundation of all righteousness.

“Daily we see, with our own eyes, as it were, the numerous evils that afflict all classes of men from these causes. **Poisonous doctrines have corrupted both public and private life...**The highest good of man will consist in enjoying the comforts and pleasures of life, and...every man will naturally lay hands on all he can in the hope of living happily on the spoils of others. Nor will there be any power mighty enough to bridle passions when fully set astir; for if the supreme and eternal law, which commands what is right and forbids what is wrong, be rejected, it follows that the power of law is thwarted, and that all authority is loosened. **Hence the bonds of civil society will be utterly shattered,** when every man is driven by insatiable greed to a perpetual struggle, some striving to keep what they possess, others to obtain what they covet. Such is more or less the spirit and tone of our age.”

How then can such a subculture be changed and civilization restored? Mr. Hastings saw a need to introduce incentives for decency and to impose penalties for bestiality. However, Pope Leo cautioned, “They who strive by the enforcement of law to extinguish the ever-growing flame of popular passions, strive indeed for what is right and just; but they will labor with little or no result so long as they obstinately reject the power of the Gospel and refuse the assistance of the Church. These evils can be cured only by a change of principles, and by returning in public and private conduct to Jesus Christ and to a Christian rule of life.”

Copyright 2011 by the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Inc. All rights reserved. The O.S.J. Messenger and the Chancellor's Update are among the authorized publications of the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Inc. and the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem-Knights of Malta. World Headquarters and Convent of the Order are located in Reading, Pennsylvania in the United States of America.



Jerusalem 1048-1291, Cyprus 1291-1310, Rhodes 1311-1523, Malta 1530-1798, Russia 1798-1907, U.S.A. 1908-

<http://sovereignorderofsaintjohnofjerusalemknightsofmalta.org/>