



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

July  
2010

## Chancellor's Update

# A Call To Arms

As we concluded last month with an appeal to the Blessed Mother, let us this month direct our attention to how to do our part. It has been said many times, “There are people who pray and take **no** action. Then there are people who do **not** pray and take action. Then there are those who pray and take action.” We must be the latter. Pray as if everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on you.

Remembering the seventh promise of Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:

### **Tepid souls shall become fervent.**

Let us, then, be firmly persuaded that in this life we must ever beware of placing any confidence in our own works. Our strongest armor with which we shall ever win the victory over the assaults of hell is prayer. This is the armor of God of which St. Paul speaks:

*Put on the armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with preparation of the gospel of peace; in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one; and take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God), by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the Spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints.*

(Ephesians 6, 11:18)

Let us pause and weight well these various expressions. *Stand, having your loins girt about with truth.* There the Apostle alludes to the military girdle with which soldiers gird themselves as a token of the fidelity which they have sworn to their sovereign. The girdle which the Christian must put on is the possession of the truth of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in accordance with which we must repress all inordinate passions, especially those of impurity, which are the most dangerous of all.

*Having on the breastplate of Justice.* The Christian's breastplate is a good life, without which he will have little strength to resist the assaults of his foes.

*And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* The military shoes which the Christian ought to wear, in order that he may go speedily where it is necessary, unlike those whose feet are bare, and who walk slowly, is the possession of a mind prepared to embrace in practice, and to teach by example, the holy maxims of the Gospels.

*In all things taking the shield of faith.* The shield with which the soldier of Christ must defend himself against the fiery darts (i.e., darts which pierce like fire) of the enemy is a steady faith, strengthened with holy hope and especially with divine charity. *The helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit.* The helmet, as St. Anselm teaches us, is the hope of eternal salvation; and lastly the sword of the Spirit, our spiritual sword, is the divine word, by which God repeatedly promises to hear those who pray to him. *Seek, and it shall be given you. He that seeketh, receiveth. Call to Me, and I will hear thee. Call Me, and I will deliver thee.*

Wherefore the Apostle continues: *By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints.* Thus, prayer is the most powerful of the arms with which the Lord gives us victory over our evil passions and the temptations of hell; but this prayer must be made *in the spirit*; that is, not with the mouth only, but with the heart. Moreover, it must last through our life, - "at all times;" for as the struggle endures, so must our prayers. It must be urgent and repeated; if the temptation does not yield at the first prayer, we must repeat it a second, third, fourth time; and if it still continues, we must add sighs, tears, importunity, vehemence, as if we would do violence to God, that he may give us the grace of victory. This is what the Apostle's words, "with all instance and supplication," mean. The Apostle adds, "for all saints," which means that we are not to pray for ourselves alone; but for the perseverance of all the faithful who are in the grace of God, and especially of priests that they may labor for the conversion of unbelievers and all sinners, repeating in our prayers the words of Zacharias, *To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.* By St. Alphonsus De Liguori

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