



Dear Hospitallers

Christmas is over and the cycle of life rolls on. I wish everyone a very Happy New Year. The New Year in Asia begins on the 10th February and this year will be the Year of the Snake.

Last year a total of 95 Hospitallers in Ireland attended the Foundation Programme which brings it to the total of 830 who have attended since the Programme's inception in 2004.

In New Jersey since 2007 a total of 88 Hospitallers have attended in Westville Grove and the O'Shea Centre.

Again in Malawi from 2007, 292 Hospitallers have attended 5 Foundation Programme's and 4 One-Day Seminars.

Last year in Monze, Zambia 25 Hospitallers attended 2 Foundation Programme's.

We have also during this time given several Foundation Programme's and Seminars in Korea and India.

It is great to reach out to so many people and to hear their encouraging stories of Hospitality in the different situations and cultures and to learn from them.

This year will see the Institute getting more involved in the Services in terms of twice yearly 2 hour seminars for new Hospitaller. This will happen in the Spring and Autumn at Hospitaller House. Also we will be giving Presentations at Infoshare in all the Services at least once during the year. At Hospitaller Headquarters we will be meeting with small groups of Hospitallers on a monthly basis for a one hour reflection on our **Hospitaller life**.

All these activities will help us to connect to our values and heritage and I am sure they will enrich us all. All of us have richness in our own story and it's in the sharing of it that we connect with each other in a deeper way and with the richness of the spirituality of St. John of God and **his Story living on**.

Bro. Gregory

Some time ago, I heard the story of a little girl named Liza who was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her five-year-old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. He hesitated for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, 'Yes, I'll do it if it will save Liza.' "As the transfusion progressed, he lay in a bed next to his sister and smiled, on seeing the colour returning to her cheeks. All around him smiled with him. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, 'Will I start to die right away?'

Being young, the boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give all his blood!

This story so beautifully illustrates for us the extravagant love of God.

"This is my Commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:12-13).



January 2013 Group of Hospitallers

Some times in life we tend to make life very complicated. The example of Jesus in the many Gospel stories, of St. John of God in his life in Granada and also the stories of so many Hospitallers who have gone before us give us tremendous examples of how they went to the kernel of situations before them and reached out to alleviate the pain or difficulty that appears so obvious to them!

Wisdom is said to come with age and experience. Maybe the 21st Century is giving us too many options to think about and maybe delay necessary action?

So

A man fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out. A subjective person came along and said, "I feel for you down there."

An objective person walked by and said, "It's logical that someone would fall down there." A Fundamentalist said,

"Only bad people fall into pits." A mathematician calculated how deep the pit was. A news reporter wanted the exclusive story on the pit. A Civil Servant asked if he was paying taxes on the pit. A self-pitying person said, "You haven't seen anything until you've seen my pit." A fire-and-brimstone preacher said, "You deserve your pit." A Christian Scientist observed, "The pit is just in your mind." A psychologist noted, "Your mother and father are to blame for your being in that pit." A self-esteem therapist said, "Believe in yourself and you can get out of that pit." An optimist said, "Things could be worse." A pessimist claimed, "Things will get worse."

And

"Jesus, seeing the man, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit."



The Bishop in *Les Misérables*

If you picked up *Les Misérables* without knowing anything about the book and began reading, you'd think the main character of the book was someone named Charles Myriel. In fact, you'd spend the first couple of hours of *Les Misérables* learning about the Bishop and his exemplary life. Born into a privileged position

in French society, Myriel married and moved to Italy. But his wife died and he became a priest.

Not long afterward, he was promoted to the position of Bishop. Though his family had lost its fortune during the political upheavals of France, the Bishop received a considerable sum to support his life as clerical royalty. Yet, the Bishop used almost all of his personal income in order to care for the poor. He was a truly, deeply Christian man. The Bishop gave away almost all of his possessions, retaining only a few valued treasures from his past: some silver dishes and candlesticks.

When he met Jean Valjean who came to his door he said: "This door doesn't ask you have you a name, but whether you have a grief. You suffer, you are hungry and thirsty; you are welcome and that you are much more at home here than I am myself. Everything here is yours." You don't need to thank me as it is as much yours as mine. Of course, Valjean took the Bishop literally. After a meal and a few hours' sleep he left and took the Bishop's silver candlesticks with him. Before Valjean was caught by the police and brought back to the Bishop's house, his housekeeper lamented, "He has stolen our silver." The Bishop remained silent for a moment; then he raised his grave eyes, and said gently to her: "In the first place, was that silver ours?" she was speechless. Another silence ensued; then the Bishop went on: "I have for a long time detained that silver wrongfully. It actually belongs to the poor. And the man who took the candlesticks was a very poor man. So it is now with its rightful owner. Valjean in the custody of the police and most likely going back for life to the prison where he escaped from was brought to the Bishop's house. The Bishop welcomed him and told the police that the Candlesticks in his possession were a present from him.

The Bishop's behavior changed Jean Valjean, a hardened prisoner into a man of compassion! Our own founder John of God had the same attitude towards people as the Bishop. Starting from the Venegas Porch, to his house of Hospitality in Granada, John never refused help to anyone. Enjoy seeing the movie *Les Misérables*!

