



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

EMBASSY IN THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

## **Speech by Ambassador Niels Carl A. Lorijn at a reception on 23 June 2023, on the occasion of the feast day of St. John the Baptist**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

I would like to thank you for your presence here today to celebrate the feast of St John the Baptist, patron saint of the Sovereign Order of Malta. My sincere gratitude also goes to Monsignor Talapka, Chargé d’Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature and to our Confrère Fr. Slowiński former Chaplain of the Order’s Headquarters in Rome, for celebrating Holy Mass on this occasion.

For more than 900 years, the Order of Malta has found its calling in the Latin words *Obsequium Pauperum*, meaning an awareness and a willingness to serve those in poverty. Poverty in the deepest sense of the word, being the absence of something essential. There is no form of need more absolute and essential than that of a person who is suffering. Suffering from poor health, from disability, from loneliness, from distress, from persecution, from death and destruction.

These are the people that we, the Order of Malta, serve across the globe, irrespective of their nationality, their religion or belief, their race, or their gender. Today, our 52,000 employees, 95,000 volunteers and over 13,000 members carry out that mission in more than 120 countries, by providing emergency relief in conflict zones and areas affected by natural disasters; by running hospitals, clinics, elderly homes and dispensaries; by treating neglected diseases; by building schools, shelters and water systems; by distributing meals and medicines; by supporting local communities and by improving the livelihoods of the poor, the disabled, victims of abuse, the marginalised.

Together with the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine saw the biggest and fastest mobilisation of the Order’s structures across Europe in recent history. Within 24 hours of the Russian invasion, we were providing first-aid, food, clothing, psychological care and shelter to thousands of victims in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries.

- Over the past 18 months we delivered:
  - Over 6,000 tons of emergency supplies to 70 cities and towns in the Ukraine;
  - 700,000 hot meals to internally displaced persons;
  - 25,000 beds and other equipment to about 200 shelters across the country;
- We provided care to 300,000 refugees at the borders;
- We sent 17 ambulances and resuscitation vehicles to eastern Ukraine;
- We trained 20,000 people in first-aid; and
- We provided 25,000 adults and children with psychological counselling and psycho-social support.



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Unfortunately, we live in a world where Ukraine is not an isolated case. Long and sometimes forgotten internal and external conflicts in Yemen, Palestine, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and most recently Sudan (just to name a few), are causing devastation, famine, disease, and human rights violations. Some 110 million people are currently on the run according to the UNHCR, the highest number ever.

The Order of Malta is present in most of these places, witnessing the suffering first hand and helping the victims. Our humanitarian efforts on the ground are greatly facilitated by the Order's unique status as a sovereign entity and a subject of international law. The Order of Malta has bilateral relations with 112 countries, including Poland, in addition to the European Union; Permanent Observer status at the United Nations and its specialised agencies; and official relations with many international organisations.

Our diplomacy, which is purely humanitarian in nature and completely detached from any political or economic agenda, is essential to the Order's ability to carry out its humanitarian work effectively and efficiently, often in the most challenging circumstances.

In many of our interventions, programmes and projects around the world, we work with partners, from governments and multilateral agencies to local NGOs. Why? Because when we work together, we can do more. We can do more to lessen the suffering of our brothers and sisters in need; we can do more to bring hope; we can do more to promote solidarity, generosity, compassion, tolerance, and respect for human dignity.

And that is the thought that I would like to leave you with. Together we can do more.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or my colleagues at the embassy or indeed at our headquarters in Rome, to learn more about the Order of Malta and to see how we can work together, in Poland, in your own countries and on the international stage.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you again for honouring us with your presence. I wish you good health and prosperity and look forward to an ever growing and fruitful collaboration.

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