

GRAND PRIORY OF AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CHAPTER

The Grand Priory of Australia held the 2010 National Chapter at the Sheraton on the Park Hotel Sydney from 16th – 18th April. The Grand Priory was privileged to have the Grand Master, His Excellency Don Carlos Gereda de Borbon, Marquis de Almazan. The Grand Master attended the Plenary Session of the National Chapter and presided over the Investitures.

One hundred and eighty two members and spouses attend the National Chapter and we were pleased to welcome six members of the Grand Priory of New Zealand led by the Grand Prior Chev Colonel Andrew Renton-Green.

Present at the National Council Meeting and Investiture were the past Grand Priors of Australia, Chev Tony Sallmann and Lady Primrose Potter who is currently a member of the Grand Magistral Council, Keeper of the Privy Seal and holds the position of Delegate for Oceania.

At the beginning of the Investiture Ceremony the Grand Master, together with the Grand Prior, Chev Barry O'Keefe and the National Chaplain, Bishop Ian George, commissioned two chaplains one for Victoria and one for the Australian Capital Territory. This year four Postulants were invested, thirteen Officers were advanced to the rank of Commander, two Commanders were advanced to Dame and six Commanders were advanced to Knight.

The Grand Master also admitted to the Companionate of Merit six members ranging from Officer of Merit to Grand Cross of Merit which was bestowed on Chev Tony Sallmann, Grand Prior Emeritus and Grand Prior Chev Barry O'Keefe. An Australian Meritorious Medal (Silver) was also awarded.

Present at the Investiture and the following Gala Dinner was His Eminence George Cardinal Pell, Archbishop of Sydney and past National Chaplain of the Grand Priory. Cardinal Pell has been a member of the Order in Australia for twenty-five years and freely gives his time for the affairs of the Order. On the final morning of the National Chapter, Cardinal Pell was Principal Celebrant at the High Mass in St. Mary's Cathedral, which was especially dedicated to the Order.

During the Mass the Grand Master was seated in the sanctuary close to the Cardinal. The Chaplains of the Order were also seated in the sanctuary.

At the conclusion of Mass the new Processional Cross of the New South Wales Commandery was blessed by Cardinal Pell and dedicated by the National Chaplain, Bishop Ian George.

During his address to the Plenary Session of the National Chapter the Grand Master emphasised that the Order was not an NGO but an Ecumenical Hospitaller Order, an Order of Christian Chivalry, to defend and protect the Christian faith.

The Grand Master spoke of the up-coming Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela where he would meet with the heads of 40 Jurisdictions. An

important part of this meeting was to outline the Communications Plan, where members from all Jurisdictions would be kept fully informed specifically on the spiritual and hospitaller works of the Order. This is to be presented by the Public Relations Commission (PRC).

Part of the Grand Master's vision can be encapsulated by the employment of Communication Transparency.

The Grand Master spoke passionately about the need to involve youth in the works of the Order, though not necessarily as members. Today, there are many natural disasters occurring throughout the world and increasing numbers of youth and young adults are volunteering to assist in these trouble spots. The Order can find ways of assisting or sponsoring organised groups who send volunteers to help in these areas. Not directly as an Order initiated project such as we had in Nias in the aftermath of the tsunami, but as Lazarus sponsored workers under the umbrella of established organizations. This is to be further developed.

The Grand master stressed that there is a need to know what others are doing, to influence others, in attracting future members.

The Grand Prior, Chev Barry O'Keefe, thanked the Grand Master for coming to Australia, a long way from home, however the presence of the Grand Master and in listening to his vision for the future of the Order has been a great beneficial stimulus for members of the Order in Australia. One of the highlights of the Grand Master's visit was the informality and warmth of his personality particularly in meeting all the participating members at the National Chapter and of his openness and frankness.

A Gala Dinner followed the Investiture which was held in St. James' Church, Sydney's oldest church. The President to the New South Wales Commandery, Chev Bill Killinger, accepted the plaudits from all present on a most successful National Chapter.

More detailed accounts of the National Chapter will be published in the May 2010 edition of Lazarus Letter.

The 2011 National Chapter will be held in Perth WA, from 7th-10th April 2011.

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PRC Member*