



Q: When was the Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem founded?

A: The Order in the Holy Land may have been set up for leprous knights by the Blessed Gerard, founder of the Knights of St John (Hospitallers), in the early 12th century, although this is speculation. There is a document of donation from Louis VI to a Brotherhood of St Lazarus in France in 1112. The first extant document to mention the St. Lazarus lepers *of Jerusalem* is a charter given by King Henry I of England between 1106 and 1120. Specific mention of the leprosarium outside the walls of Jerusalem was made in a travelogue dated 1128-1135. The Brothers of St. Lazarus in Jerusalem were definitely acknowledged by Pope Gregory IX in 1234. The Military and Hospitaller Order of St Lazarus under Augustinian Rule was confirmed by Papal Bull of Alexander IV in 1255.

Q: Wasn't the Order abolished by the French monarchy?

A: The Order of St Lazarus had been originally founded by Papal authority, and hence could only be suppressed by a Papal order and not by any secular authority. The Order of St. Lazarus was declared abolished (along with all other royally-awarded Orders) by the revolutionary French National Assembly in 1791, but these abolitions were not recognized by the restored French monarchy who continued these Orders. In 1825, King Charles X decreed that the Order *was no longer awarded and "is to be allowed to become extinct"*. *Note the wording: he did not "abolish" the Order, since only the Pope could do so. Under Canon law extinction of an Order occurs 100 years after the death of the last member - the last living member admitted before the revolution died in 1856 and hence the Order would have become extinct in 1956. However, the Order was taken under the protection of the Melkite (Catholic) Patriarch of Antioch and All the East in 1841 and re-organized in 1910, and so extinction was averted. The Order has thus been under the Spiritual Protection of the Patriarchs of Antioch for over 170 years.*

Q: Is the Order of St Lazarus a new or revived Order or a continuation of the old Order?

A: *Some critics maintain that the present Order is a new foundation dating from 1910. However, the Melkite (Catholic) Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem have maintained (most recently in the Kevelaer Declaration of 2012) that it came under their protection in 1841 and has been under this protection ever since. This is well within the time allowed to rescue an Order from extinction under Canon law (see above). The Patriarchs supported a re-organization (note: not a new foundation) under new statutes in 1910 under the auspices of a group of French Catholics as a now secularized but still Catholic Order under the control of a Grand Master and protection of the Patriarch. Since the Melkite (Catholic) Patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and All the East rank in status just below the Pope (who is Patriarch of the West), it can hardly be claimed that they don't have the status to re-organize and rescue from extinction a Catholic-founded Order.*

Q: What is the attitude of the Catholic Church to the Order of St Lazarus?

A: *There is no easy answer to this.* The Holy See, as the formal Vatican State, cannot recognize any Order other than the Pontifical Orders and Chivalric Orders dependent to it – i.e. the Sovereign Military Order of Malta where the Supreme Pontiff appoints a Cardinal Patron, and the Order of the Holy Sepulcher whose Grand Master is a Cardinal appointed by the Pontiff – and those Orders granted by sovereign States with which it entertains diplomatic relations. On this basis, the Vatican has issued *notices in L'Osservatore Romano (the Vatican newspaper) including the Order of St. Lazarus among the list of Orders that it does not recognize (most recently in 1970).* Notwithstanding this, *the Spiritual Protectors since 1841 have been the Patriarchs of Antioch, one of the highest-ranking Catholic prelates, and a number of Cardinals are protectors of individual jurisdictions. Furthermore, in 1992, Pope John Paul II officially received on a number of occasions senior members of the Order, and even celebrated a private Mass for members of the Order in his chapel (see picture).* Peter Bander van Duren notes that *we need to distinguish between the Holy See (the Vatican State) and the Apostolic See (the Pope as head of the Church and successor of the Apostles).* So a short answer is that the Order seems to enjoy Apostolic recognition, but not Vatican recognition. Since the Order is now Ecumenical (since the late 1960s), it is arguable that as a Catholic-founded but now secularized Order, it is not up to the Vatican (the Holy See) to recognize it or not any more.

Q: Wasn't the Order split into several factions?

A: *Yes, in the 1970s there were acrimonious splits, most notably into the "Malta" obedience under the (Spanish) Duke of Seville, and the "Paris" obedience under the (French) Duke of Brissac. However, it is important to note that these splits were formally resolved several years ago, under the Houston reunification agreement of 2006. Subsequently, the Norwich Group agreed to support a new Grand Master at its meeting in Vienna in 2008. Later in 2008, a Chapter-General of the Order was held in Manchester where the Spiritual Protector encouraged the reunion and a new Grand Master for the united Order (Don Carlos Gereda de Borbón, Marquis of Almazán and cousin of the Duke of Seville) was elected by the combined votes of the Knights and Dames at the Vienna and Manchester Chapters-General. Since then, constitutional amendments have been recommended and accepted subject to the next Chapter-General. Copies of these agreements are under the "Constitution and Bye-laws" tab in the Members area of this website. Unfortunately, other small groups as yet remain outside the unification process.*

Q: Does the Order have recognition from heraldic and legal authorities?

A: The oldest heraldic court in the world that is still in daily operation – *that of the Lord Lyon King of Arms in Scotland*, a Great Officer of State of Queen Elizabeth II and head of the Court of the Lord Lyon – in 1968 confirmed in a matriculation to the Order the arms that it bore prior to 1672. This recognizes the Order as the continuation of the old Order of St Lazarus ([link](#)).

Q: Is the Order still Christian?

A: Yes. The Order has since the late 1960s been Ecumenical, welcoming Christians of any denomination, not just Roman Catholics. It includes Roman Catholics, Protestants, Greek and other Eastern Orthodox, and other Christian denominations. Membership is fairly evenly distributed between Catholics and Protestants. Non-Christians may not be members of the Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem but may be awarded the *Order of Merit* of St Lazarus, and a number of non-Christian monarchs have been admitted to this latter Order.

Q: When did the Order become secularized (i.e., under lay jurisdiction)?

A: It is incorrectly claimed that the Order became secular under the Bull of Clement XIV of 1772; however, that Bull held that members of the Order could not hold ecclesiastical benefices, but it did not alter the fact that it remained under Papal jurisdiction. As there was no alteration of the Order's statutes or regulations until the reorganization of 1910, this is considered the date of secularization, although the Holy See did not formally indicate its lack of recognition, and thus relinquishment of jurisdiction, until 1935.

Q: Was the Order still awarded or active in the 19th century?

The turmoil of the French revolution had put an apparent end to formal admission ceremonies to the Order. This however did not prevent the ruling Grand Master Louis Stanislas Xavier de France, subsequently King Louis XVIII, from investing dignitaries into the Order of St. Lazarus. Notable among these were Tzar Paul I, his sons and members of the Russian Imperial Government, and King Gustav IV of Sweden and other members of the Swedish Court. Other French members appear to have been admitted during the Bourbon Restoration. In 1825, King Charles X, then serving as Protector of the Order, decreed that the Order *was no longer awarded and "is to be allowed to become extinct"*. In spite of this, the Order continued to be listed in the official *Almanach Royal* until 1831 when all the Royal Orders recognized in 1824 had their recognition withdrawn. The members of the Order however remained active and continued to associate together. Loyal members of the Order continued to use their old titles well into the mid-nineteenth century. In 1841, the Order was placed under the spiritual protectorship of the Melkite (Catholic) Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, and this may have initiated the Order's support towards the building of the Mount Carmel Sanctuary in Haifa, Palestine completed in 1867.

Q: Wasn't the Order of St Lazarus given to the Duke of Savoy and is now the Order of SS Maurice and Lazarus?

A: In 1565, Pope Pius IV recognized the seat of the Order at Capua, near Naples. Pope Gregory XIII in 1572 gave the Grand Magistracy of the Order to the Duke of Savoy and his successors, and the Duke merged it with his existing Order of St Maurice to form what is now the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus (a dynastic order of the House of Savoy). In France, the French kings (particularly Henry IV) were not prepared to see the knights and valuable property of the Order

of St Lazarus go to a foreign power and neither he nor the highest French court, the Parlement of Paris, recognized the Papal decision. Henry IV continued to appoint Grand Masters with their seat at Boigny in France. As a solution to this impasse, in 1607 Pope Paul V created the new Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel for Henry IV, who immediately merged it with the French commandery of the Order of St Lazarus (this was confirmed by the Parlement of Paris). This French union of the two orders into the United Orders of St Lazarus and Our Lady of Mount Carmel was ratified by the bull of Cardinal de Vendôme (under the authority of Pope Clement IX) in 1668. Thus, the splits and mergers with other orders *both* ultimately had Papal approval and lead to two still extant orders: the Order of SS Maurice and Lazarus (Savoy) and the present Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem (the Mount Carmel part of the appellation was dropped in the early 20th century).

Q: What is the translation of the Latin motto of the Order?

A: The generally accepted translation of “Atavis et Armis” is “By Ancestors and Arms”.

Q: What is the purpose of the Order?

A: The Order is a fully-functioning Christian and Hospitaller Order of Chivalry, which was originally founded for care of lepers who were pilgrims in the Holy Land. It also admitted knights and soldiers of the other two military orders, the Templars and the Hospitallers of St John, who had contracted leprosy. Its Hospitaller mission continues today in the same area. In 2011, over 2.3 million Euros (about \$US 3 million) were expended on Hospitaller activities, including supporting hospices, housing and support programmes for the elderly and disabled, disaster relief, social welfare programmes, and other health-related charities. Of note, some 10% of that was expended on Hansen’s Disease (leprosy)-related care and treatment projects in India, Africa, the Americas, Asia and the South Pacific, as a continuation of our historic special mission to lepers dating from the 12th century. ([Link to Hospitaller report](#))

Q: Why is it still referred to as a “Military” Order?

A: That was the title under which the Order of Chivalry was founded in 1255, related to activities in the Holy Land during the Crusades, and which it retains. Nowadays, we are “military” only in the sense that as an Ecumenical order we fight for Christian unity. We also fight for modern day lepers – both actual people with Hansen’s Disease (leprosy), and the sick, stigmatized, disadvantaged and rejected in society. Our beneficiaries and our work cover all religions and our partners in this work are as likely to be Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, or any other religion (or none), as Christian. Despite the historical appellation “military”, we see our work as a contribution to peace.

Q: Where is the Headquarters of the Order?

A: The traditional headquarters are those of the Order dating from the 12th century at Boigny, in France, and the Castello Lanzun, in Malta. The Seat of the Order is in Madrid (the residence of the Grand Master) in the San Domingo el Real monastery, and the Chancellery and administrative Offices are in Washington DC.

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