



ORDER OF MALTA®

6 July 2020

His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Angelo BECCIU
Special Delegate of the Holy Father to the Order of Malta
Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints
Palazzo delle Congregazioni
Piazza Pio XII, 10
I-00193 Roma

Subject: The Constitutional Reform Process

Your Eminence, Dear Cardinal Becciu:

We, the Presidents of the National Associations of the United States and Canada, write this letter to express our concerns about the constitutional reform process over the past three years. Together, our Associations constitute more than one-third of the Order's members worldwide, but we have been excluded. We look for your counsel and assistance.

I. Background Facts

1. In early 2017, the Holy Father called for the elimination of nobiliary requirements for holding office in the Order, which requires an amendment to the Constitution, and a reform of the formation and life of the professed Knights of Justice to draw ever closer to the evangelical counsels of the Gospel. The latter reform does not require an amendment to the Constitution or the Code.
2. Also in early 2017, the Holy Father suspended the progression of Aspirants to the First Class and Knights of Justice in simple vows pending the reform of spiritual formation.
3. In May 2017, Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre was elected as Lieutenant of the Grand Master for a term not to exceed one year.
4. In February 2018, over 100 knights and dames gathered in Rome to discuss proposed constitutional reforms in a series of specialized committees. It was a positive meeting.

5. As a summary of the discussions and proposed changes was being prepared, the Lieutenant of the Grand Master Dalla Torre's one-year term was coming to an end. A second Council Complete of State was called for May 2018.
6. To the astonishment of the Professed and a large majority of the National Associations, Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre was elected as Grand Master on the first ballot rather than as Lieutenant of the Grand Master.
7. Following the 2018 election, the proceedings for constitutional reform were stopped. There has been little effort to revise the formation of Aspirants or the continuing formation of the Professed.
8. Due to the Holy Father's suspension of Knights of Justice, Aspirants cannot proceed forward and Knights in simple vows cannot profess solemn vows. Many young men have been waiting at the gate for over three years to discern their religious vocations in the Order. Meanwhile, the solemnly professed Knights of Justice are slowly dying out.
9. The Grand Chancellor has showed no interest in pursuing the constitutional amendment to eliminate nobiliary qualifications for holding office, as proposed by the Holy Father, and has blocked efforts to improve the spiritual formation of the Professed.
10. When the Grand Master was diagnosed with a serious illness in early 2020, the constitutional amendment process took on a new urgency in the Grand Chancery. We understand that a revised draft Constitution and Code has existed since at least as early as March 2020, but none of us has seen it. We understand that a few members of the Order who are loyal to the Grand Chancellor have seen the draft and are participating in its revision. We have heard rumors that this revised draft contains proposals from the 1997 constitutional reforms that the Vatican rejected. All of the Professed, the Priors and Regents, and most National Association Presidents have been excluded from seeing the drafts or participating in discussions.
11. The Association Presidents have asked several times to see the current draft of the proposed Constitution and Code. The Grand Chancellor has declined the requests on the excuse that the drafts are already with you:

15 May 2020

**Your Excellency, dear Michael [Grace],
thank you for your letter and email. The first drafts are now under
revision with the Special Delegate of the Holy Father. As soon as this
will be accomplished a consultation process will be commenced.
With best confraternal wishes, Albrecht**

12. As of the date of this letter, almost two months after Albrecht's email message, we still have not received the draft Constitution and Code. We have not received even a summary of the proposed changes. Most importantly, we have no idea whether the Holy Father's strong suggestion to eliminate nobiliary qualifications for high office has been respected.
13. On 20 June 2020, the Association Presidents received notice of a meeting set for 11 September in Switzerland to elect 15 capitulars to approve the revised constitution that we have never seen. Without having a draft, it is impossible for the Association Presidents to select the best capitulars in a deliberative way. Because of the global pandemic and severe travel restrictions, most of the Presidents will not be able attend the Association Presidents' Meeting in Switzerland.¹

II. Authorities

1. In 2017 the Holy Father asked the Order to eliminate nobiliary qualifications for holding office and to reform the formation of Knights of Justice.
2. All of the Professed voted in favor of the elimination of nobiliary qualifications for holding office in the Order.
3. The Lieutenant *ad interim* as the administrative leader does not possess the authority of the Head of the Order to preside at an Extraordinary Chapter General. Const., Articles 17.1, 22, and Code, Art. 175. Canon Law supports this conclusion.

¹ The upcoming meeting in Switzerland to select the Presidents' capitulars is of particular concern, because the last meeting of Association Presidents to elect capitulars in January 2019 involved a prior secret meeting among the Grand Chancellor and certain European nobles to agree in advance on a slate of capitulars, as well as certain voting irregularities at the meeting that we can describe in detail later.

4. The "Grand Master or the Lieutenant" is the one who "presides" over the Chapter General. Art. 22.2.a. The "head of the Order convenes and presides over the Chapter General" in accordance with Art. 22. Code, Art. 175. He "sets the place and date of the Chapter General, giving notice at least six months in advance to the constituent bodies." Art. 177.1. The purpose of this advance notice is to enable the constituent bodies to understand the issues and designate the appropriate capitulars to attend the Chapter General.
5. The Lieutenant *ad interim* possesses the authority to convene a Council Complete of State, Const., Art. 23.1, and to preside over the Council until a Grand Master or a Lieutenant of the Grand Master is elected and takes the oath of office. Code, Art. 188.1. The Council Complete of State must take place within 90 days of the notice of the death of the Grand Master. Code, Art. 145. That date would be not later than 31 July 2020.
6. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a reasonable case of *force majeure* to defer the meeting of a Council Complete of State until the capitulars can travel and gather safely in Rome.

III. Conclusions

We respectfully request your assistance to restore the Order to normal governance under Canon Law and the Constitution and Code of the Order.

- A. The first order of business is for the Lieutenant *ad interim* to convene Council Complete of State for the sole purpose of electing a Grand Master or Lieutenant of the Grand Master, preferably the latter.
- B. Following the election, the Order must proceed with a program of spiritual formation for the Professed as requested by the Holy Father.
- C. The suspension of the entry of Aspirants and of the Professed from proceeding in solemn vows, now nearly three and one-half years running, should be lifted as soon as possible.
- D. The Association Presidents have a legitimate deliberative role in the constitutional reform process that has been blocked by the Grand Chancellor. We request to see the current drafts that the Grand Chancellor has prepared. We believe that the 1997 Constitution and Code are excellent overall and require very few changes, the

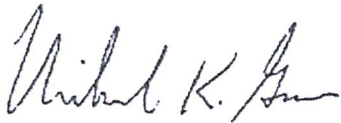
most important of which is to eliminate nobiliary qualifications for leadership of the Order. Specifically, Articles 11.4 and 13.2 of the Constitution should be deleted.

- E. After being elected at a Council Complete of State, the Lieutenant of the Grand Master should convene an Extraordinary Chapter General for an open and deliberative process of constitutional reform to make the change requested by the Holy Father.

We are deeply grateful for your service to the Order during these turbulent years and wish to assure you of our highest regard and best wishes,



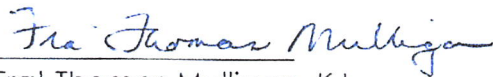
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