

THE SAN LUIGI ORDERS

DEDICATED

in the cause of Christian  
Knighthood to

the present Prince-Grand Master,  
Dr. F. J. Edmond, who has served  
the San Luigi Orders faithfully  
for about forty years.

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## FOREWORD

Historians may speculate ceaselessly over the Eight Crusades to recapture the Holy Land (and the Holy Places in particular) from the Saracens; and to what extent the spirit of Religion, which inspired the Crusades, guided the exploits of those who "took the Cross". What cannot be denied is that in those centuries when knighthood reached its height of fame and honour - and was as truly a vocation as that of the monk - the whole tenor of life showed that these were ages of great faith. The building of Chartres and other French Cathedrals were not only crowning achievements of architects and craftsmen; they were tangible tokens of love and devotion, of belief in the Virgin Birth and Deity of Christ. The dignity of women was higher than ever before (and perhaps since?). This was probably an outcome of the idea of courteous love, coupled with a remarkable, sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and the knightly ideals of chivalry and honour.

It seems hardly surprising, in such a setting, that a Saint should have been King of France and another, his cousin St. Ferdinand III, in Spain. These valiant knights did not glorify fighting, but undertook as a duty the defence of what seemed most precious to all Christians. At the Council of Lyons, convoked by Pope Gregory X in 1274, St. Louis made an unsuccessful attempt to end the rivalry of Templars and Hospitallers by incorporating them into a single Order of Knights of Jerusalem. The scheme was rejected by the respective Orders themselves and came to nothing. No fair-minded person can condone the methods employed to encompass the overthrow of the Templars in the following century, but we are not presently concerned with that. We cannot undo the injustices of the past.

From the successive shipwrecks of Europe's cultural and spiritual life, certain things of imperishable worth have been preserved. It is for us to guard and defend them with the weapons of the spirit. Knighthood, as we understand it, is neither an anachronism nor an empty honorific title. It is a disciplined fellowship of service, to which we are (humbly) proud to belong.

Our own interest in the subject and its development will appear in these pages, addressed primarily to our English-speaking Chevaliers. Even though we do not wear heavy armour and possibly none of us rides on horseback, we still have kings, princes and ecclesiastics in our ranks, just as of old.

I would commend to you all, as our 'battle orders', St. Paul's stirring charge in his Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 6, 10-18.; in which if we are obedient, the work of our Orders will prosper.

January 1961.

George F. Tull,  
GRAND PRIEUR.

The Middle Ages had a high ideal of what a Christian monarch should be, an ideal seldom realised. However, in 1226 there succeeded to the throne of France a boy who came as close to fulfilling this ideal as any ruler ever did. Now known as Louis IX, he ascended the throne at the age of twelve, at the occasion of his father's death. This was a time of political and economic unrest, with the ruling classes intent upon the abolition of the monarchy and the desire to establish their own independence. Except for the vigorous and forthright action of his mother, the renowned Blanche of Castile, his chances for a successful reign were small. As Regent she succeeded in rallying the support of the Church and of the common people. With their help she was able to crush the insurgents and hold the throne for her son. She carefully supervised his education, preparing him for his subsequent role of national leadership. He was famous for his liberality to the poor and his compassionate concern for those in suffering. It is said of him that he cared for lepers with his own hands. In keeping with the model set for him by his devout and inspired mother, he lived up to the highest Christian standards of his time. He is remembered as a brave soldier, a just ruler and a devout Christian. Though, at heart, he was a man of peace, it became his duty to lead the last two Crusades, where he met his death, succumbing to dysentery before the walls of Tunis on August 25th, 1270.

According to St. Paulinus of Nola, (A.D. 409) the Crown of Thorns that was placed upon our Lord's head was first kept at Jerusalem. Later it was removed to Byzantium, probably in the year 1063, in keeping with the dignity and status that city had obtained as one of the five Patriarchates of the Church. Less than two hundred years later, the Byzantine Empire, pounded by the onrush of Mohammedanism, began to fall apart. In order to support his cause of empire, the Byzantine Emperor, Baldwin II sought and obtained assistance from the Kingdom of Venice, with the Crown of Thorns being given and accepted as collateral security. Though Baldwin repaid his debt, Venice refused to return the Crown of Thorns. Then, in 1238, Baldwin II offered this sacred relic to France in return for further assistance. Thereupon it was redeemed from the Venetians and brought to France in early 1239.

The King St. Louis, accompanied by his mother, Queen Blanche, and his wife, Queen Marguerite of Provence, and his three brothers, met the holy relic at Villeneuve l'Archeveque on August 10th, 1239. The King first venerated it, followed by the Princes of the Court and of the Church, and the priests, monks, soldiers and the common people. It was the picture of a nation melting into tears, hardly daring to raise its head to look upon that cruel branch of thorns which cruel men had twisted into a crown of derision for their Divine Victim. Thereupon Louis IX carried it himself, barefooted, to Paris. For its final reception the King built the Sainte Chapelle, which was completed in 1248. In memory of this great event, he gave replicas of this famous relic to his barons.

Louis IX, after whom the City of St. Louis, Mo., is named, will always be remembered for the outstanding qualities of leadership to which any

ruler or holder of public office should strive. He is one of the brightest beacons in all the centuries of Christian world leadership.

We have seen how in the same year that St. Francis of Assisi died, St. Louis, (who became a Franciscan Tertiary), was crowned King of France. Many of his charitable actions seemed to reflect those of St. Francis. More than that, "in his own person he was the ideal of the medieval knight and king. For the first time in the Middle Ages a king in active secular life was an indubitable saint. St. Louis was neither weak nor a recluse, but he ruled his kingdom as a religious duty." (From "A History of Europe" by C.W. Previté-Orton.)

"This saintly man loved God with all his heart". (John de Joinville, friend and biographer of St. Louis.) He was canonized in 1297.

The times, which we live demand a fresh realisation of the ideals of knighthood, that dedicated chivalry and adventurous service which secular society has forgotten. As Hilaire Belloc wrote: "The civilisation of the Renaissance has failed; morals, our new hopes for a stable and contented civic life, our modern appetite for economic justice, are all groping back to the Middle Ages. The more a modern European learns of them, the more he feels that they are his native place." Here our Order has a mission to fulfil, a definite vocation in the world, to proclaim and to live by those principles which were held in high esteem by St. Louis and his Chevaliers.

An unbiased study of medieval history will convince us that the true knight was a man of honour, valour and dignity, disciplined and loyal to the Faith, to his Order and his seigneur. Chaucer, describing the character of the knight who rode on pilgrimage to Canterbury, used words which could have been written of St. Louis and are an inspiration to ourselves:

"He was a verray parfit gentil knight."

"Happy the kingdom governed by a king foreseeing, pious, refined in his character, courageous in adversity. He used his riches to succour the poor, he despised the soft things of life. He loved labour and defended the churches. He established the throne on justice. He caused France to enjoy peace. The Church owes to him her prosperity, and the whole of France the honour wherewith she is surrounded."

( Versicles & Responds from an Office of St. Louis, composed in the XIVth century. )

LINKS WITH THE PAST.

It is a very legitimate pride which makes us look to our historical sources, whether of family, school, church, or knighthood. Every human association is, obviously, rooted in the past - like the sturdy old trees planted by our forefathers and still weathering the storms. In many of the older country churches, one sees painted on a board a list of the clergy who have served that parish from its foundation, perhaps in the XIth century or even earlier. Sometimes the names of those priests are noticeably Anglo-Saxon or Norman French. We are the heirs of that past. Ancient buildings, old forests, carefully guarded traditions, all make us realise our continuity with those who laboured here centuries before us. Deeper than merely sentimental feeling is this sense of history which brings us close to our predecessors in knighthood, with whom we are united.

In Europe we are accustomed to seeing knights depicted on brasses, effigies on tombs, in paintings and tapestries. Some of the very crusaders whom we look upon, with a quaint little dog at their feet, may well have fought alongside St.Louis.

The classic book on St.Louis is the "Histoire de St.Louis" by Jean (John), Sire de Joinville, Seneschal of Champagne. Besides being an intimate friend of the King as a young man, he was the earliest prose writer in the French language who gave a picture of actual French life, an eye-witness account. The bulk of this History, (completed in 1309), deals with the unsuccessful 7th Crusade (1248-54) and though the chapters are short, makes somewhat tedious reading in parts. On this Crusade the King was accompanied by members of the two great military Orders, the Templars and the Hospitallers, as well as by a goodly company of other knights. Since the book is based on the personal memoirs of one who was "full two and twenty years in his company" from the King's first taking of the Cross in 1244, the Crown of Thorns is not mentioned - as belonging to an earlier date.

Though proudly claimed by France as one of her noblest sons, there is something international about this devout crusading monarch. His mother was Spanish and Henry II Plantagenet, of England, was his great-grandfather on the maternal side of the family. St.Louis' message is certainly of international application. "He was the man that in all the world toiled most to have peace between his subjects." When accused of too generous almsgiving, St.Louis replied, "I had liefer that the abuse of great spending that I do were done in almsgiving for the love of God, than in pomp or in the vainglory of this world."

ST. LOUIS TO HIS SON

Written just before his death in 1270.

"Fair son, the first thing that I teach thee, is that thou set thine heart to love God; for without this can no man be saved. Keep thyself from doing aught that is displeasing to God, that is to say, from mortal sin; but rather shouldst thou suffer all manner of torments, than fall into mortal sin.

If God send thee adversity, receive it in patience and give thanks therefor to our Lord, and bethink thee that thou hast deserved it, and that He will turn it altogether to thy profit. If He give thee prosperity, thank Him for it with humility, that thou be not the worse either by pride or other wise, through that whereby thou shouldst be the better; for one should not contend against God with His gifts.

Confess thyself often, and choose a worthy man for thy confessor, that will know how to teach thee that thou shouldst do and from what thou shouldst keep thyself; and thou shouldst bear thyself in such wise that thy confessor and thy friends will dare to reprove thee for thy misdeeds. Hear thou the Services of Holy Church with devotion and without mockery; but pray to God with both heart and tongue, especially at Mass when the Sacring is done. Have a heart tender and pitiful to the poor, to the wretched and to the afflicted, and comfort and aid them according to thy power.

If thou have any trouble of heart, tell it forthwith to thy confessor, or to any man of worth that is not full of idle words; thou shalt bear it the more lightly.

Take heed that thou have in thy company men of worth and loyalty, whether religious or secular, that be not full of covetousness, and speak thou often with them; flee and eschew the company of evil men. Harken gladly to the word of God and bear it in thine heart; and gladly solicit prayers and pardons. Love that which is profitable and good, hate evil wheresoever it be.

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And may the Blessed Trinity and All Saints guard thee and defend thee from all ill; and may God give thee grace ever to do His will, that He may be honoured by thee, so that thou and I, after this mortal life, may be together with Him and praise Him without end. Amen."

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Note. Part of the above testament which relates solely to matters of state and government has been omitted, leaving those parts which are profitable to our own instruction.

THE HISTORY OF THE SAN LUIGI ORDERS

1. L'ORDRE SOUVERAIN, CHEVALERESQUE, NOBILAIRE et RELIGIEUX  
de la COURONNE D'EPINES.  
( The Sovereign, Knightly and Religious Order of the  
Crown of Thorns )

The O.C.E. was founded by authority of St.Louis to mark the great event described above, in 1239. A later French King, Philippe IV Le Bel, (who reigned from 1285 to 1314), the grandson of St.Louis, laid the first foundations of the Order in direct opposition to the Order of Templars, which he dissolved in 1308, appropriating all its wealth; all the spiritual and chivalric ideology of the Templars survived in the new Order, of which King Philippe IV became the first Grand Master.

With the fall of the Monarchy in France, all Orders of Knighthood in that country lost their right to formal organisation. Some, however, remained in secret existence and so did not die out; amongst these was the O.C.E.

In 1880, His Holiness Peter III, the then Patriarch of the Apostolic See of Antioch, authorised the re-establishment of the formal and official organisation of this Order. It has thus maintained its existence unbroken to the present day.

The ancient Abbey of San Luigi (St.Louis) was re-founded on his Feast Day, 25th August 1883, on the frontier of Tripoli-Fezzan in North Africa. The colony by its constitution was independent and known as The Principality of San Luigi, the Rev.Father Henrice Panomez being elected as the first Prince. By Decree of 15th October 1883, he organised an Order of The Crown of Thorns and The Order of The Lion and Black Cross, but in 1889 this Branch of the O.C.E. submitted absolutely, after recognising the priority and legitimacy of the Order under its then Grand Master in America. Thus there is only one Order of The Crown of Thorns extant in the world today, with a history extending back some 700 years.

The Standard of the Order is a banner of silk, half white bearing the Fleur de Lys (of which later mention will be made), and half red bearing the Crown of Thorns, with the monogram of Christ in the centre.

The PATRONS of the Order are St.John the Baptist and St.Louis.

The Office of Grand Master is coupled with the title of Prince-Abbot of San Luigi and he has the right to nominate his successor-designate, in consultation with the Supreme Council.

The Order has an international character and is represented in various countries. It exists today (a) to defend the Christian Ideology, Tradition and Cultural inheritance, (b) to preserve the best ideals of Knighthood of past centuries and the noble spiritual virtues of the Knights Templar, and (c) for restoration and support of the Abbey of San Luigi and its charitable work. The Order also has the aim of rewarding persons who have distinguished themselves in defence of the

the Church, of humanity, or in philanthropic work initiated by the Order and have shown a Christian spirit, a clean life and a noble example.

The decoration of the Order is a Cross of Jerusalem in white enamel, surrounded by a Crown of Thorns in gold on a shield of blue enamel. The ribbon is watered red with narrow white edges.

2. L'ORDRE SOUVERAIN, CHEVALERESQUE et NOBILAIRE du LION  
et de la CROIX NOIRE.  
( The Sovereign, Knightly Order of The Lion and  
Black Cross )

In close association with the O.C.E. is the Order of The Lion and Black Cross. This is to reward those who relieve the poor in distress, who help the widow and the fatherless and to encourage virtues and frugality; also Art, Industries and Patriotism, without distinction of nationality or creed. The O.L.C.N. was founded, (as stated above), by the first Prince de San Luigi in North Africa.

The decoration of the Order is a black Malta Cross, edged with gold, a golden lion rampant in the centre. The ribbon is black with golden edges.

The authorised uniform for the Orders:-

The hat for Chevaliers is a black three-cornered one, with feathers of white for the O.C.E., black for the O.L.C.N. Cockade of the colours of the ribbon of each Order.

The mantle is of dark blue silk lined with gold silk, with the S.L. seal embroidered in gold on the left shoulder.

3. LE GRAND PRIX HUMANITAIRE de FRANCE et des COLONIES.

This is conferred but rarely, by the Grand Master, upon persons of outstanding achievement. There are 3 categories:

- (a) Compagnon de la Couronne d'Epines,
- (b) Compagnon Commandeur,
- (c) Compagnon Grand Croix.



NOTES ON THE CROWN OF OUR LORD

"We adore Thy Crown, O Lord; we celebrate Thy glorious triumph.  
A Crown of Thorns we venerate today, through whose sharp points  
is won a wreath of glory." (Sarum Missal)

The chief reason why the thorny Crown is an object of devotion so dear to our hearts, (as to the hearts of all true Christians), is that it is so fine an example of that virtue of humility enjoined upon us by Christ. He, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Eternal Monarch of all created things, was content, "for us men and for our salvation", to ascend a cross of shame for His throne, to assume a mocking and painful garland of piercing thorns for His Crown. In that light, earthly ambitions must all fade to nothing - as St. Louis realised so well.

Devotion to the Holy Crown avoids excessive emphasis on the physical sufferings of our Lord's Passion. It is a wholesome devotion free from the anatomical objections which may be brought against some later cults. Today, our devotion is centred less upon an actual relic than on its spiritual relevance; through the eyes of faith we venerate the Holy Crown from a distance.

Further, it is a devotion theologically acceptable to East and West alike and geographically linking both, the Crown of Thorns having travelled (as we have seen) from Jerusalem to Byzantium the New Rome, on to Venice and finally Paris. Although it is popularly supposed that the East usually regards the Resurrection as the dominant pattern of Christian life, leaving the West to meditate more upon the Passion of Christ, the two obviously belong together; the Mysteries of Christ are eternal and indivisible. The main body of the historic Faith is held by Eastern and Western Christians as their common heritage, even if the rapprochement between Crusaders and the Eastern Orthodox whom they encountered was not always the behaviour of brothers in the Faith.

Praise be the faithful choir's refrain,  
High triumph to the thorn accord:  
For this eternal death was slain  
And unto life true worth restored.

The Eternal Father's Only Son  
Freed us from pain our souls should bear,  
When for our sakes the sinless One  
The crown of thorns vouchsafed to wear.

When Christ for us did undergo  
Full gladly all the thorns' sharp pain,  
His diadem of bitter woe  
The crown of life for us did gain.

(Hymn from the Dominican  
Breviary - not later than  
xvth century).

The mystical character of our knighthood is brought out in a long and beautiful SEQUENCE from a Votive Mass of the CROWN OF OUR LORD, in the old Sarum Missal:-

"Learn this Crown to venerate,  
and His course to imitate,  
Whose brow it did surround,  
The King of heaven wore this Crown,  
and gave it honour and renown  
by His own sanctity;  
In this casque He fought the fight,  
and put the ancient foe to flight  
and triumphed on the tree.  
A knightly helm in this we see,  
in this the palm of victory,  
the high priest's mitre, too."

That which had been intended by our Lord's enemies to be a mockery of His Kingship has been transformed to the highest honour, above the golden crowns of all earthly kings and rulers.

Reference is made in the same place to the precious relic being enshrined in the French Capital:-

"To her care the holy Crown  
is entrusted as her own.

Holding such a priceless treasure,  
to be longed for above measure,  
thou art enriched indeed;  
Happy land beyond compare,  
to the Lord exceeding dear,  
unequaled in thy mead.

Paris, the pride of Gallic race,  
in thee the Crown hath found a place  
which faithful men revere."

It was a thorn from our Lord's Crown which brought healing to Marguerite Perrier, niece of Blaise Pascal and a pupil at Port Royal. This well-authenticated miracle occurred on 24th March 1656. She was cured of an obstinate disease by touching a relic of the Crown lent to the nuns for veneration.

The Sainte Chapelle is, unfortunately, no longer the Shrine of the Crown of Thorns, which is now kept in the Treasury at Notre Dame Cathedral. Thus what was written of Paris is still true.

The Holy Thorn now in the keeping of the Benedictine nuns of Stanbrook Abbey, England, is one of the largest relics of the Crown still known to exist, comparable in size and similar in appearance to those at Pisa, Treves, Wevelghem, Munich, Andechs and Le Villars. All are from branches of the plant called 'Zizyphus Spina Christi', which grows commonly around Jerusalem; this identity of species between so many different fragments preserved for centuries in places so far apart, is in itself a strong argument in favour of the authenticity of these relics. About a hundred single thorns also remain in various places.

This branch was venerated at Glastonbury Abbey during the Middle Ages, though the documentary evidence of how it reached that holy place has disappeared. It is known, however, that in the 10th century the Emperor Otho I made a similar gift to King Athelstan, who gave part of it to the Abbey of Malmesbury. Divisions of the relic had thus been made before the band or Crown of rushes, into which the thorns were fastened to form a kind of cap, was brought from Constantinople by St. Louis in 1239.

After the dissolution and plunder of the monasteries in 1539, the Holy Thorn referred to above seems to have been preserved in some Catholic family living near Glastonbury. It was brought back to the Benedictine Order by Fr. Peter Warnford, a monk who died in 1657. A few years later, enshrined in a handsome reliquary, it was placed in a Chapel in London served by Benedictine Fathers. On the outbreak of the Titus Oates' Plot in 1679, the Chapel was dismantled and the relic was again hidden for safety and remained so until discovered about 1822. Thence it passed to Stanbrook Abbey.

It may also be of interest to mention that a relic, not of the Crown itself, but a thorn claiming to be taken from the same bush as that from which the Crown was made, was once in the possession of Fr. Ignatius of Llanthony. This was preserved by one of his monks, after Fr. Ignatius' death, and is now kept in the Chapel of Steenoven Mission House, Highbury, North London. The Certificate with the relic states that at the time of the Crusades, a spray of thorns from that bush was purchased for an immense sum of money and brought to England, where it remained in the possession of an old and famous Catholic family; by whom this particular thorn was removed from the spray and enclosed in its present container and given to the Baroness Bertouche, for the express purpose of presenting it to Fr. Ignatius. This Certificate is signed by the Baroness herself.

NOTES ON THE FLEUR DE LYS.

The Fleur de Lys, which appears on the Standard of the Order, also has interesting historical points. A frequent motif in decoration, the Fleur de Lys (or fleur-de-luce = possibly a rebus signifying "flower of Louis") is the traditional symbol of the royal house of France. It was first borne on a royal seal by Louis VII (1137-80). It is also used in ecclesiastical art as an emblem of our Lady St. Mary. Thus a pre-Reformation Shrine of our Lady of Tonbridge, (in the Augustinian Priory there), honoured her under the particular title of "Fleur de Lys, Mother of Pity". This appears to have come about because in the 13th century, a holy French bishop on a visit to Tonbridge said that Mary was indeed the Fleur de Lys - Flower of the valley.

The attributes of St. Louis are the fleur de lys and the Crown of Thorns.

PRESENT OFFICIALS. Prince-Grand Maitre: S.A.S. Mgr. Dr. F. J. Edmond,  
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Grand Prieur pour England & Wales: Rev. G. F. Tull. \*  
Bailli for Scotland: Dr. F. de Prus, Baron de St. Louis.  
Grand Bailli et Délégué Magistral: S. Exc. Prince  
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\* To whom all enquiries and applications in those countries should be sent.

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