



Monthly letter n°142 - January 2017

Historically, the presentation of his weapons to the young German rider deemed to be worthy of the rite is attested by Tacitus. After he described the scene, he called it “the first honour with which youth is invested”.¹ In 791, Charlemagne knighted his son Louis, so that this rite of dubbing which was continued in the West was at the origin of chivalry, apart from any religious overtone. It is only from the Xth until the XIIth century that the Church annexed and idealised chivalry. It should be noted that here, in contrast with the feudal system, chivalry never was hereditary and all its members were chosen. When William of Holland was knighted, he was told: “I receive thee in our college.” Hence, an unflinching solidarity.

Such idealisation found its highest expression in the military monastic orders. We claim the greater part of their spiritual heritage for our own, such as we received it from the Chevalier Ramsay (1736), such as it was later formalised by the Scottish Rite of Heredom (1764) and finally such as it was incorporated into the Great Orient of France (1804).

However, chivalry is neither specific of the Medieval West, nor of Christendom, nor of Freemasonry. As Léon Gautier wrote, “It was born everywhere at the same time, and everywhere it was the natural effect of the same aspirations and of the same needs”.²

Everywhere, it follows a code of honour whose moral values are bravery, loyalty, courtesy and *largesse* (or liberality) and he who falls short of the code is banned from the order.

Everywhere, ideal chivalry places itself at the service of a type of utopia: the common good.

Everywhere, *largesse* is the chivalrous virtue characterised by generosity and liberality towards all those in need.

As a member of the Jurisdiction, each and every one of us is accountable to himself for his own *largesse*. He does not belong with those who, as Br. : Pierre Dac put it, give nothing discreetly and give much ostensibly. Every year, each Lodge elects an Almoner who takes up those duties, in accordance with the decisions of the Lodge. In this way, we are regularly kept informed of examples of active solidarity.

With respect to the Supreme Council, it has had a Great Almoner since 2008. It remained to provide him with modern means to exercise that virtue of liberality on an institutional basis. Since 2016, a study is being conducted as to the feasibility of creating a Foundation of the Supreme Council sheltered, in legal terms, by the Foundation of the Great Orient of France who has given its approval in its capacity of Sheltering Foundation. The necessary administrative documents (articles of association, convention and by laws) are being drafted by a commission of seven members of the Supreme Council, chaired by the Great Almoner, and they will be submitted for approval to the supervisory authorities, by and with the agreement of the Foundation of the Great Orient of France. Thus, the Foundation will be entitled to receive donations and legacies in attractive taxation conditions and to exercise any philanthropic activity in the name of the Supreme Council. It will be possible to develop humanitarian aid and solidarity actions projects as well as academic and community collaborations. Ideally, one third of the initial capital will be provided by the Supreme Council, one third by the volunteering Lodges of the Jurisdiction and one third by the voluntary contributions of members who will benefit from legal tax deductions. As a result, as soon as it is operational, the Foundation will greatly contribute to the prestige of the Jurisdiction, of that of the Great Orient of France, both inside and outside our Order.

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Translated by JPGNT

¹ Tacitus – Germania – Chapter XIII

² Léon Gautier (1832-1897), *La Chevalerie*, Arthaud 1959, Chap. 1 p 27.