

THE HISTORY OF THE PRIORY OF ST. BERNARD DE CLAIRVAUX
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Our priory began life as the Commandery of St. Bernard de Clairvaux of New Orleans in April 1996 under the mentorship of the Priory of St. Andrew, Nashville, TN. It was stood up as a Priory April 5 of 1997 as the Priory of St. Bernard de Clairvaux of New Orleans. The prime mover and first Commander was Chev. Hugh J.F. Robertson, MD, who recruited mainly from the medical community and prominent members of New Orleans society. Thus our priory's charitable outreach has a significant medical character. The priory later petitioned GPUSA successfully and the official name of the priory was shortened to the *Priory of St. Bernard de Clairvaux* as no other jurisdiction then bore the name requiring a locational distinction.

The coat of arms of the Priory was originally, in simple terms, a vertically divided shield of white on the left and black on the right with the GPUSA modified Patriarchal cross on the white portion and a gold fleur de lys on the black portion. It was later decided by the Grand Herald GPUSA that a more uniquely identifying design should be created and in 2009 newer, more appropriate arms were designed and adopted. The new arms are based on the arms of the French Abbey of Clairvaux (black with a diagonal of red and white checks.) The Heraldic designer added charges of a field of gold Fleur de Lys in the upper right and a gold crescent reversed in the lower left which are both important symbols associated with the City of New Orleans. The formal heraldic blazon of arms is:

ARMS: Sable a Bend counter compony Argent and Gules in Sinister semy of Fleur de Lys and in Dexter a Crescent reversed Or.

CREST: Issuant from a wreath Argent and Gules a Vol enfiled by a Crozier proper mantled Gules doubled Argent.

The priory has also adopted a badge consisting of eight gold Fleur de Lys surrounding a red cross paty (*pattee* in French) which we place upon our priory shirts and other apparel.

In October of 1999 an OSMTH/GPUSA International Grand C&I was held in New Orleans at the historic St. Louis Cathedral. Notable during this very notable event were the formative discussions of the Silent Knight program conceived by Col Chev. Craig Carlson, GCTJ. Following shortly thereafter were two further GPUSA Grand C&I's in October 2002 and again in May of 2005, just before Hurricane Katrina.

While we have held C&I's in several churches and denominations over the years including St. Louis Cathedral, Christ Church Episcopal, and Christ Anglican Catholic Church, we have established as our home church the historic and beautiful Our Lady of Prompt Succor National Shrine in uptown New Orleans. Gracing our ceremonies is a beautiful towering stained glass panel of St. Bernard which rises majestically over the main entrance.

In 2000, a request to explore what charitable outreach might be provided to Haiti came from the Grand Priory of France through OSMTH and down to us from GPUSA. As there have long been historical and cultural ties between New Orleans and Haiti (Saint Domingue) this request was honored and during the Grand Council meetings in New Orleans in 2002, a formal fraternal relationship was established between Grand Priory France and the Priory of St. Bernard de Clairvaux with the exchange of flags and formal documents. The perennial Grand Prior of France, Maj Chev. Marcel dePicciotto, MD, began years of regular attendance at our priory C&I's and remains a very special and beloved friend.

Main charitable outreach efforts and partners have included:

St. Louis Cathedral
American Red Cross (Turkish Earthquake relief.)
Trinity Christian Community
Good Samaritan Services of the Anglican Catholic Church
Financial Aid to Police or Fire personnel hurt or killed in the line of duty.
Archdiocese of Port Au Prince, Haiti
Stuffed Animals for Christmas from Canada and the Priory of St. Clair (Detroit) to St. Tammany Parish District Attorneys Office "Angels"
Fairhaven Ministries
International Hospital for Children
Association Hatienne Development Humaine (Haitian Association for Human Development)
Haitian Earthquake Relief (in kind and cash effort totaling \$400,000+)
Hurricane Katrina Relief (with a \$10,000 GPUSA contribution) aiding needy priory members with \$22,000+ in direct financial aid. (Special thanks to the Priory of St. Patrick for its \$5000 donation.)

Our current charitable partners, in bold text above, are the Haitian Association for Human Development (AHDH), The International Hospital for Children (IHC) and Fairhaven Ministries, all of which network, collect and ship container loads of medical supplies, medicine, other necessary items and equipment throughout the world.

The AHDH under the leadership of its founder and priory member, Chev. Charles Rene, MD, KCTJ, has an established clinic in La Valee Jacmel, mounts as many as four medical missions per year and has conducted over 50 such missions to date.

Though we are a small priory, a number of our members have held or still hold high office in

GPUSA and OSMTH. They have included the offices of Grand Prior GPUSA, Grand Commander OSMTH, Legate General for Asia and Africa OSMTH, Grand Herald GPUSA, Deputy Grand Prior Region V GPUSA, Grand Chirurgion GPUSA, Grand Armorer GPUSA, Deputy Grand Aumonier and OSMTH Principal Herald of Arms.

Our priory is also proud to have created a Templar Farewell Salute funeral ceremony which may be performed during the memorial service if requested by the deceased before death or by request of the deceased's family. Briefly, our members attend the church service in capes and are seated together. The Farewell Salute party consists of three sword bearers who process to the front of the church and offer a sword salute to the casket, using the Latin words "Vale, equite, frater, amicus... Te salutante!" This translates as, "Farewell, Knight (or Dame), brother, friend... We salute you!" The party then recesses back to the rear pews of the church. Further refinements are planned.

Our priory membership remains rather static between 50 and 75 active members and the advent of hurricane Katrina very nearly signaled the demise of the priory, but it has managed to survive in our very damaged and more compact little city.

COMMANDERS/ PRIORS :

1996 – 1997	Chev. Hugh J.F. Robertson, MD	Commander
1997 – 2000	Chev. Hugh J.F. Robertson, MD	Prior I
2001 – 2002	BG Chev. Robert C.G. Disney	Prior II
2003 – 2010	Chev. Russ W. Copping	Prior III
2010 – 2011	Chev. Raymond R. Egan, Jr.	Prior IV
2011 – 2012	MAJ Chev. W. Kenneth Mann, MD	Prior V
2012 -- 2015	Bernard L. Baisier, GOTJ	Prior VI