

The Celebration of the Feast of Blessed Gérard

at Blessed Gérard's Care Centre in Mandeni, South Africa, on 16 October 2005

After the death of our meritorious member Bishop Mansuet Dela Biyase on 1 July 2005, Rev. Father Jabulani V. A. Ndaba has been elected the Administrator of the Diocese of Eshowe. It is a great honour that he accepted our invitation to be the main celebrant in our service.

The Prince and Grandmaster of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, His Most Eminent Highness Frà Andrew Bertie, has promoted our founder and president, Father Gérard T. Lagleder O.S.B., to the rank of "Conventual Chaplain ad honorem" of the Order of Malta. Father Gérard was presented with the vestments and insignia from the Grand Magistry of the Order in Rome.

All our new members were received into the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard and were given our medal.

Our long serving member, the ambassador of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to Lithuania and Latvia, His Excellency, Dr. Peter Freiherr von Fürstenberg, was our special guest of honour and keynote speaker.

The solemn Holy Mass at Blessed Gérard's Church



Mrs Clare Kalkwarf, Dame of Magistral Grace of the Order of Malta, during her laudatio:

"In 1955 a little boy was born to Hans and Thilde Lagleder in Germany. This

little boy grew up as most little boys do going to church and to school, making his First Holy Communion and being confirmed. At a very early age this little boy showed a keen interest in learning First Aid and in October 1969 – exactly 36 years ago – the man we now know as Father Gérard joined our German sister organisation, Malteser-Hilfsdienst, as an active member. He was then on the road to what we call a divine calling.

Father Gérard began with First Aid training, going on to become an ambulance assistant, a teacher in First Aid, completed his nursing training and became a paramedic in 1975. In June of 1975 he was appointed a group leader of Malteser-Hilfsdienst in Regensburg at the young age of 20. Just one year later at 21 he was authorised to train nursing assistants and paramedics and he received his appointment as a nursing tutor.

Father Gérard felt a calling to the priesthood and entered into the Major Seminary in Regensburg as a candidate for the priesthood in 1976. While studying theology, Father Gérard continued his work for Malteser-Hilfsdienst. He became the head of the Diocesan nursing department of Malteser-Hilfsdienst Regensburg in 1976, a member of the Conference of Delegates of Malteser-Hilfsdienst in 1977 and in 1979 deputy provincial managing director in Hesse.

Father Gérard then obtained his masters degree in theology in 1981, having written his dissertation on "The Novelty in the spiritual tradition of the Order of St. John"

In 1982 he was ordained a priest at Regensburg Cathedral. This was not enough – unbeknown to Father Gérard, God was still pushing in the direction of his continuing to use all his managerial and nursing skills. So as a priest Father Gérard joined the community of the Missionary Benedictines at St. Ottilien Archabbey in 1982.

Still continuing his work for Malteser-Hilfsdienst while in the monastery, he became the district and municipal director of Malteser-Hilfsdienst in that area. On 14 September 1986 Father Gérard made his solemn profession as a Benedictine Monk and was assigned as a missionary to Zululand in 1987. Father Gérard was first the assistant priest in Mahlabatini. Subsequently he was appointed the parish priest of Mangete and Mandeni 15 years ago.

During this time as a missionary in Zululand Father Gérard thought that his work for the Order of Malta would have come to an end. He believed that his work was now of a purely pastoral nature ministering in the rural areas of Zululand.

However, unbeknown to Father Gérard, God was still calling and pushing him gently and on 28 October 1992 (13 years ago) he founded the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard together with four other people.

What you see here today – the 12 projects of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard, is a culmination of all those years of gathering knowledge and experience to do the work which God has called him to do. Blessed Gérard himself was a Benedictine monk and worked in this special field of hospitality. Father Gérard has followed very closely in the footsteps of this wonderful man and all this work for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta has been acknowledged and rewarded with his promotion today.

On behalf of the members of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard, I want to thank Father Abbot Godfrey, the Abbot of Inkamana Abbey, the Archabbot of St. Ottilien and the Abbot Primate Notker Wolf in Rome for the support which they have given to Father Gérard in his God-given task.

In 1994 Father Gérard was received into the Order of Malta as a Magistral Chaplain. On 21 June 2005, His Most Eminent Highness, the Prince and Grand Master of the Order of Malta, Frà Andrew Bertie and the Sovereign Council of the Order promoted Father Gérard to the rank of Conventual Chaplain ad honorem.

This is indeed a great honour and a wonderful occasion, not only for Father Gérard but for the whole of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard. Father, we, the members, are extremely proud and grateful that you have been given this promotion. We pray that God's grace will surround you, keep you safe, that you may complete the work given you by God. We, the members, hereby

pledge our undying support and help for you as we live out our motto *tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum*, as we care for "Our Lords the Sick".

We thank God that you are who you are, we thank God that he has sent you to Mandeni and we thank God that you have brought the Order of Malta and its special spirituality to South Africa."



The Administrator of the Diocese of Eshowe, Fr. Ndaba, blessed the new vestments (cassock & mozetta) and insignia (cross) of the Conventual chaplain ad honorem and invested Fr. Gérard with the new cassock of a Conventual

chaplain ad honorem.

The ambassador of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to Lithuania and Latvia, Dr. Peter Freiherr von Fürstenberg, invested Fr. Gérard with the new mozetta of a Conventual chaplain ad honorem.



The Vice-President of the South African Relief Organisation of the Order of Malta, Mrs Clare Kalkwarf D.M. presented Fr. Gérard with the cross of

a Conventual chaplain ad honorem.



Abbot Godfrey blessed the medals for the new members of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard.

The Dedicated Members of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard conferred the medals to the new members.



Father Gérard blessed the new members.

The celebration continued on the patio of Blessed Gérard's Care Centre

A large crowd of members and friends was congregated



His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Peter Freiherr von Fürstenberg delivered the keynote address reporting on the work of the Order of Malta in Lithuania and Latvia.



The children of Blessed Gérard's Children's Home and of Blessed Gérard's



Pre-Primary School and Crèche sang and danced to everybody's great delight.



Joyous applause from the guests of honour.



**The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order
of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta**

tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum
Protection of faith and service to the poor