

**THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COLLAR OF
SAINT AGATHA OF PATERNÒ
GRAND MASTER
H.R.H. Don Francesco, Duke of Perpignan**

A HANDBOOK FOR CANDIDATES FOR ADMISSION

"A Knight is a man who intends to place himself at the service of a noble and difficult cause, a pure and arduous ideal; fighting evil, promoting good, defending the weak and the oppressed against injustice.

Becoming a Knight does not merely mean receiving a title of honour, even though it is well deserved, it presupposes a solemn commitment."

Agostino Cardinal Casaroli
Secretary of State

These words were written as recently as 1984 but they usefully summarise the inspiration, which gave rise to the earliest Orders of Knighthood. Moreover, these words, which so accurately capture the spirit of the past, are also a pertinent and succinct definition of the role of the Knight in our present times. What follows is intended to be a brief introduction to one of those Orders which continues to support and to proclaim those values cited by the Cardinal: the Military Order of the Collar of Saint Agatha of Paternò.

INTRODUCTION

The Military Order of the Collar of Saint Agatha of Paternò, also called the Military Order of the Collar (M.O.C.), is an Order of chivalry of the Cross, subject to international law, belonging to the Head of Name and Arms of the Royal House of Aragon of the dynasty of Paternò Castello e Guttadauro Ayerbe Aragona of the Dukes of Carcaci and of the Princes of Emmanuel under its Grand Master H.R.H. Don Francesco, Duke of Perpignan.

The Order was founded in the 12th Century by the Aragonese Kings of Majorca and restored in 1851. It is a non-national Order as defined by the Law of the 3rd March 1951 of the Republic of Italy. .

The Protectress and Patron of the Order is Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr, whose Feast is celebrated as that of the Order on 5th February. Saint Agatha's heroic defence of Christian principle makes her a very appropriate Protectress for an Order of Knights.

The principal aim of the Order as restored is to propagate in the modern world the tradition of chivalry as a way of life and the defence of Throne and Altar. It practices good works principally through its Hospitaller Service.

The object of this present booklet is to give a brief background for Candidates for Admission to the Order on the following subjects:

- The Royal House of Aragon
- The History of the Military Order of the Collar
- Admission to the Order, its Categories and its Government
- Its Uniform, Dress and Insignia
- The Ceremony of Investiture and its Significance
- The Hospitaller Service.

Anyone seeking further information or reading matter is encouraged to contact any of the persons whose addresses are given at the end. They will be pleased to assist.

THE ROYAL HOUSE OF ARAGON

The Kingdom of Aragon was one of the small Christian kingdoms which arose in the Iberian Peninsula during the lengthy campaign for the expulsion of the Moors who had held sway over the Peninsula and its Christian inhabitants for about seven hundred years. The dogged and piecemeal defeat of the Moors is one of the most heroic episodes in the history of Christendom and was achieved largely through the efforts of various Orders of knights recently founded by the Christian Princes in their efforts to establish rule over their kingdoms. The Counts and then Kings of Aragon were prominent in this struggle to throw off the Arab yoke.

At various times there accrued to the Aragonese realms, in addition to its extensive and important territories on the Spanish mainland, the kingdoms of the Two Sicilies, Sardinia,

Corsica, Majorca, the County of Provence, Malta, the Lordship of Montpellier and the Duchies of Athens and Neopatras. It has been written that such extensive domains were the expression of the enterprising commercial energy of the Catalans and the aristocratic militarism of the Aragonese.

Aragon itself lies in the Northeast of the Iberian Peninsula. Its earliest ruler of note was Aznar Galíndez Count of Aragon from about 809 AD. The first of his successors to call himself King of Aragon was Ramiro I, the illegitimate son of Sancho King of Navarre and Castille who left Aragon to Ramiro in his will. Ramiro reigned from 1035 to 1063 during which time he considerably extended the territories and importance of his kingdom. He may be said to have founded the dynasty which continued until 1150 when his great-granddaughter, Petronella Queen of Aragon married Ramon Berengar IV Count of Barcelona, uniting the land-locked territories of Aragon with the economically more significant lands of Catalonia and beyond into modern-day France. By 1179 the importance of Aragon was such that with Castille it divided those parts of Spain still in Moslem hands into two zones, one each for them to conquer. The Aragonese rose to this challenge with zest and conquered their allotted lands.

The great-grandson of Petronella and Ramon, James I The Conqueror, succeeded to the throne in his turn in 1213. Until his death in 1276, his long and brilliant reign laid the foundations of the Aragonese Empire, most notably with the seizure from the Moors of Majorca in 1228 and Valencia in 1238. One of his daughters married Phillip III of France from whom the Royal House of France descends. After the death of his second wife, James had two sons, James of Xerica and Peter of Ayerbe Lord of Paternò, by Teresa Gil de Vidaure, whom he later married and these sons were legitimised by the Pope. By his will these male heirs were to take precedence over his daughter by his previous marriage. The House of Xerica became extinct in 1309 but the House of Ayerbe continues today in the House of Paternò. James' son, Peter III the Great ruled after his father's death and it was he who was invited by the people of Sicily to become their king after the expulsion of the French at the Sicilian Vespers in 1282.

The death of Martin I in 1410 without a male heir and no clear provision as to his successor led to a fierce struggle between no fewer than six contestants for his throne. Finally it was agreed that the matter be resolved by a commission of noblemen from the lands of Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia. The result of this was the so-called Compromise of Caspe, the legitimacy of whose decision causes controversy to this day. It awarded the throne to Ferdinand of Antequera, a nephew of Martin I but only in the female line, passing over the claims of the House of Ayerbe, by this time resident in Sicily, itself directly descended in the male line from James I by whose Will they were to take precedence over claimants descended in the female line. Ferdinand of Antequera reinforced the decision of the Compromise by success in the field against his opponents. His line continued down to Ferdinand the Catholic by whose marriage in 1469 to Isabella of Castille a united Spain was created.

The House of Ayerbe continued over the centuries to reside in Sicily where its members were prominent in Society, the Church and the Catholic Orders of Chivalry. They were also conspicuous in the service of the various Kings who ruled over them and from whom they received a dazzling variety of titles in recognition. Down the years the family threw off various branches: some became connected by intermarriage, some became extinct. By the time of the death of the last of the Princes of Cassano, the head of one of the senior branches, it was no

longer clear to which single individual the dynastic rights of the Lands of the Crown of Aragon were descended. The Duke of Carcaci, head of another more junior branch of the family, was a devoted student of the family's history and it was his research that made possible the revival of the Military Order of the Collar in 1851. With the express approval of Ferdinand II of the Two Sicilies, the Duke of Carcaci convened a family conclave in 1853 in the palace in Palermo of the Marchese di Spedalotto, himself head of a senior branch of the family. All existing branches were present in person or by proxy. The Prince of Biscari the head of yet another branch, who presided, summarised their aim as being to decide which of the many branches of the Paternò family was most closely descended from its Founder James I the Conqueror. The unanimous decision of the assembly was taken to approve the conclusion of the genealogical researches of the Duke of Carcaci, namely that those rights should pass to the infant Don Mario, the son of his own younger brother, who alone inherited the blood of the Conqueror through his father of the Dukes of Carcaci as well as through his mother of the Princes of Emmanuel and who was herself heiress of the House of Guttadauro. This decision was conveyed to Ferdinand II who approved it. Sadly from that event, happy in itself, the dynastic rights have continued to descend in the House of Paternò Castello Guttadauro. Don Mario's father Don Giovanni was appointed Regent during his son's minority and he immediately began to work vigorously to assert his son's rights. This campaign was strenuously continued by Don Mario himself from his father's death and subsequently by his son Don Francesco Mario II and in turn by his son Don Roberto II. Don Francesco, Duke of Perpignan and the present Head of the Royal House, succeeded his father in 1997.

THE HISTORY OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COLLAR

As has been the case with many other chivalric bodies, the Order of Saint Agatha originally had a military objective. Founded around the year 1200 AD by the Aragonese Kings of the Balearic Islands, its aim was to subdue the Moorish pirates of North Africa at that time marauding in the Mediterranean and to extirpate the Moslem faith from the area. Like so many of these very earliest Orders that were founded for a specific purpose, the Order's initial period of activity was probably relatively brief. It was common at the time that an order identified with a specific mission was allowed to lapse, once the original purpose for its foundation had been fulfilled. It is an accepted tenet of international law that, unless a dynastic order is formally and legitimately abolished, it may be deemed to continue in the person of its hereditary Grand Master, even if no conferments are made for a period of time. This is the case with the Military Order of the Collar, just as it was the case with the Order of the Thistle after the rebellion of 1688, for example.

The Military Order of the Collar is a Monarchical Order, that is to say that its presidential office attaches to the person of its founder, a sovereign prince, and is passed by hereditary succession to his descendants and heirs. In addition to any military, charitable or spiritual aims, members of such Orders are bound by an oath of loyalty and service to the Grand Master of their Order. Other such Orders of this category are those of the Garter and the Golden Fleece.

The main historical source for the history of the Order is “L'Ordine del Collare, Patrimonio della Ser.ma Real Casa Paternò”, published in 1851 by the seventh Duke of Carcaci. When reorganising the family archives this distinguished historian had come across a manuscript diary

of his ancestor Don Ignazio II Paternò Prince of Biscari, who had visited the Balearic Islands at the end of the sixteenth century. While there he discovered an original document concerning the Order in the library of the Convent at Fornelle, as well as a contemporary painting showing the badge and the dress of the knights. Fortunately for posterity Don Ignazio recorded these details and two centuries later his notes were discovered by the Duke, who set about the revival of the Order in 1851 after the publication of his book.

As early as 18th May 1851 the Order's legitimacy was recognised by the Bourbon King of the Two Sicilies, whose officials were required to record its conferrals in the Registry Office of the Kingdom. On 30th March 1853 the Governor of the Province of Catania, in the name of the King, allowed only three exceptions to the Royal prohibition on the wearing of orders other than Royal Sicilian Orders, these being Papal Orders, the Order of Malta and the Military Order of the Collar. In 1859 the Royal Commission on Titles of Nobility examined the claims of the House of Paternò to confer titles and bestow Orders and it advised the King that such acts, titles and Orders were legitimate. In 1860 the King approved this decision by Royal Decree and ordered its execution throughout the Kingdom. The King also recognised Don Mario as hereditary Grand Master of the Order and made various provisions to ensure the succession to the Grand Magistracy. For many years the Order remained almost a Family Order, largely restricted in its membership to relatives and close associates.

The Order was reconstituted in 1961 and new Statutes have been issued and revised on a number of occasions. Since his accession Don Francesco has laid great stress on the works of charity which he regards as the principal activity of the Royal House. The development of the Hospitaller Service of the Military Order of the Collar has been the main agency for the achievement of these aims. Over the years members of the Order have raised considerable sums for charity and have performed countless charitable acts for the relief of suffering, in keeping with the highest aims of the Order.

Today the Order is well represented in several countries across Europe, as well as in North America and Australia. It will always be willing to extend its representation yet further to any area where it might find an appropriate welcome.

ADMISSION TO THE ORDER, ITS CATEGORIES AND ITS GOVERNMENT

The members of the Order are divided into four categories as follows:

- **Category of Justice and Devotion**
- **Category of Grace and Devotion**
- **Category of Justice for Merit**
- **Category of Grace for Merit**

The classes of Members within those categories are three, namely:

- **Knights Grand Cross with Collar**
- **Knights and Dames Grand Cross**
- **Knights and Dames**

The minimum age for admission to the Order is normally 21 years. The Order is open to men and women alike. Members of the Categories of Devotion must be Christian, Members of the Categories of Merit may be members of other religions: all must give evidence of a blameless life and must accept the aims and discipline of the Order. Admission to the Categories of Devotion is by petition, admission to the Categories of Merit is made upon recommendation. New members are admitted into the Class of Knight or Dame, promotions thereafter are conferred by the Grand Master *motu proprio*. Each local jurisdiction has a Commission of Admission for consideration of petitions. A candidate for admission to the Categories of Justice shall furnish evidence of his noble or armigerous status to the Kings of Arms of the Royal College of Arms for recognition.

A Knight of Justice and Devotion may swear obedience to the Grand Master to become a Professed Knight. Professed Knights in conclave constitute the Supreme Council of the Order, a consultative body convened by the Grand Master as he deems necessary. It is customary that only Professed Knights are appointed to offices within the Order.

The Grand Magistracy of the Order consists of the Grand Master, the Government and the Supreme Council. The Government consists of the Grand Master, the Grand Chancellor and the Marshal. The Grand Master is the Head of Name and Arms of the House of Paternò Castello e Guttadauro, namely Don Francesco. He personally directs the Order, appoints dignitaries and issues letters of appointment and other decrees. The Grand Chancellor executes the decisions of the Grand Master and supervises the administration of the Order through its various organs and jurisdictions. The Marshal is the chief ceremonial officer of the Order and is responsible for matters of discipline, dress, uniforms and insignia. The Government is assisted by other officials, such as the Visitor, the Grand Hospitaller and the Grand Commander.

Territorially the Order is divided into Grand Priories, Priories and Commanderies each headed by an appropriate officer. They govern the Order within their jurisdiction according to the directions of the Grand Master as transmitted by the Grand Chancellor.

UNIFORM, DRESS AND INSIGNIA

Knights and Dames of the Categories of Devotion are obliged to equip themselves with the appropriate mantle and insignia of the Order.

The gala uniform of a Knight is a white mess jacket of approved design, worn with black trousers, black or white waistcoat, black or white bow tie and white gloves. Alternatively, a Professed Knight may wear a white alb. There is no uniform prescribed for Dames. The head of a jurisdiction may determine, within certain limits, the dress to be worn on particular occasions. When it is not convenient to wear the uniform, dress shall normally be, in day-time, formal morning dress or a dark lounge suit or, in the evening, formal evening dress or a dinner jacket, again at the discretion of the local head of jurisdiction.

Dames of the Order shall on all formal occasions wear a dress suitable to the occasion, preferably of black or some other dark colour, with white gloves and black mantilla.

The insignia of Knights and Dames of the Categories of Devotion consists of the Cross of the Order which is in the formal language of Heraldry: a Cross flory Or tierced Gules in the central tierce of its arms charged with the Inescutcheon of Paternò (Aragon) decorated with a royal Crown. (This approximates in layman's terms to: a gold cross overlaid with a red cross, the ends of the branches of the two finishing in fleur de lis, with at its centre the small shield of Paternò, the whole surmounted by a royal crown). The Cross is worn suspended on the ribbon of the Order, of red edged yellow, worn by Knights as a neck decoration and by Dames suspended by a bow of the ribbon on the left corsage. The Cross of the Category of Justice and Devotion hangs from a trophy of arms attached to the ribbon. The insignia for the Categories of Merit consists of the Cross of the Order without the Crown.

The mantle of the Order is white and descends to a point 20 cm or 8" from the ground. The mantle of Knights of Grace and Devotion has a collar of carmine red. Knights and Dames of Justice and Devotion shall have their collar edged gold. The mantle of a Knight is decorated on the left side with the Cross of the Order made of cloth 2Scm in length and breadth. The mantle of a Dame is to be decorated with the Cross without the red tierce (which is the red cross which is laid over the gold cross).

Insignia may not be worn on the mantle itself.

THE CEREMONY OF INVESTITURE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Knights and Dames must be invested according to the established forms before obtaining promotion or being appointed to any office or dignitary position.

Ceremonies of Investiture may take place on the 5th February, the Feast Day of the Celestial Patron of the Order Saint Agatha, or on such other day as may be directed by the Grand Master. The Grand Master shall preside or such senior dignitary of the Order as he may appoint as his Delegate for that occasion.

Before the beginning of the ceremony the candidate and guests shall already be seated as directed in the church or room in which the ceremony is to be held. The ceremony begins with the formal procession of entrance of the Members of the Order, the clergy and the Officers, in their mantles and insignia and marshalled by the senior Officer present of the Royal College of Arms.

After those in the procession have taken up their allotted places, all those present and all other Members of the Order, absent or deceased, are commended to the protection of the Almighty.

The Grand Master or his Delegate (the President) may then explain the principles and aims of Chivalry and their enduring significance.

Each candidate is then brought forward by an Officer of the College of Arms. He is presented to the President whereupon he kneels and his Style and Title are announced to the Assembly.

The President shall then conduct the Interrogatory whereby the candidate expresses his wish to be admitted to the Order and his readiness to defend God's Holy Church and to adhere to the

Principles of Knighthood. The candidate then touches the sword to signify his acceptance of what is required of him and his readiness to take up this weapon which represents the means by which he will defend God's Church and the Aims of Chivalry.

Still kneeling the candidate shall, with his hand laid upon the Holy Gospels, repeat the Oath of Fealty to the Grand Master of the Order.

The Accolade follows whereby the President gives the candidate three light strokes with the flat of the sword, one to each shoulder and the third on the crown or his head. The sword is to remind him of his duty to defend the poor and the oppressed; its two edges represent Justice and Loyalty. This dubbing or signing under the three-fold protection of the Holy Trinity is the moment of actual Investiture, analogous to the moment of Consecration in the Holy Mass.

The President shall then deliver the Colée which is a slap in the face of the new Knight, thereby enjoining him to put all disgrace behind him from that moment on. This traditional gesture is very much akin to the gentle slap delivered by the Bishop as a token reproof in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The Knight shall then be invested with his insignia as an outward sign of his rank and duties.

He shall then be dressed in his mantle. The white robe signifies the state of cleanliness in which his mind and body should be kept. The deep red of its collar recalls the blood shed for us by Our Blessed Lord and the Knight's own blood which he must be prepared to shed in the service of God and His Church.

The Knight's heels are then struck with the spurs so that from that moment he may be ready to ride forth in the defence of Justice, Righteousness and Truth.

The Knight is then installed by the Officer of the College of Arms in his appropriate place among the other Members of his Category.

Clearly the ceremonial outlined above, redolent with knightly symbolism, would not be fitting for the somewhat different aims of a Dame of the Order or a Knight of Merit. In the case of the Reception of such a candidate a simpler ceremony is substituted. The Dame or Knight of Merit is presented and announced. He or she is then decorated with their insignia and the President places the Mantle of the Order around their shoulders to signify their reception into the bosom of the Order. They are then conducted in similar manner to their place among the Members of the Order.

The ceremony continues in identical form. The Assembly gives thanks for the founding of the Order. God's protection is sought for the Members of the Order and His blessing for their endeavours. At this point if a Chaplain of the Order or member of the clergy is present; a brief sermon may follow and the Blessing may be given. The ceremony may also be conducted in the Holy Mass.

Members of the Order, including the new Knight or Dame, members of the clergy and dignitaries are then, once again, marshalled by the Officer of the Royal College of Arms who directs the formal procession to leave the place of assembly.

THE HOSPITALLER SERVICE

As has been said above, the principal activity of the Royal House and its organs is works of charity, most notably towards the sick. This is the particular obligation laid upon all Members of Dynastic Orders of the Royal House and most particularly members of the Military Order of the Collar. The most significant organ of the House for the achievement of this aim is the Hospitaller Service. By a Decree of the Grand Master dated 10th December 1990, thenceforth the Hospitaller Service would be a charitable association separate from the Order but associated with it. All candidates for admission to the Order must first have been members of the Service for the required period of time. All Knights and Dames of the Categories of Devotion are *ex officio* members of the Service and are obliged to support it physically and financially. The Hospitaller Service is divided into various jurisdictions which reflects the jurisdictions of the Order of the Collar, whose heads are *ex officio* Presidents of the territorial Sections of the Service.