

Grand Master, Grand Commander, Fellow Grand Priors and Distinguished Members of the Grand Magisterium and the Grand Commander's Staff:

I bring you greetings from the USA. I would like once again express my personal gratitude for your support in selecting San Antonio as the site for the 2012 OSMTH Grand Convent. I have just returned from a weekend in San Antonio where I officiated at the Convent and Investiture for the Priory of St. Matthew who will be our host priory for our June event. We invested 14 new members and had an absolutely fantastic weekend. I used the cab from the airport and had we had someone else who came in for the event use the van service so when we speak of transportation, we have personally utilized it. We stayed in one of the two hotels that we are using and toured the rooms, meeting rooms and dining facilities of both hotels. The C & I itself was held in Travis Park Methodist Church, the same church that we will be using in June. The church is located only two blocks away (one cross street) from the hotel which half the short distance that we walked in Toronto.

I felt very good about the planning that had been done before I addressed you in the Netherlands and now having visited there I feel even better. The hotels are gorgeous properties. They are located across the street from each other, in the heart of old San Antonio, with lots to do in the immediate surrounding area. They are both located on the Riverwalk which is a canal system that flows around the downtown area. A barge trip will be included as part of the Friday night reception and you will be sent on your way by a live Mariachi (Mexican) band playing on the outdoor patio. Below are some of the things that we have already made arrangements for. Please contact me directly if there are additional things that you wish for us to consider.

Registration: In the Netherlands I indicated that we would be establishing a separate OSMTH website where you will be able to learn more about the planned events and be able to register for the Grand Convent. Unfortunately that will take a bit longer than planned due to some licensing issues. We now anticipated that we will have it up by December 1st if not before. I will let you know by email when it is up and working.

Hotel Accommodations: To date we already have 212 members of GPUSA who have registered and we have just about filled the available rooms at the Embassy Suites Hotel, our primary hotel facility which is where GPUSA events will take place. As indicated, we have already contracted with the Hotel Valencia as our second hotel, which will be the primary OSMTH hotel. The two hotels sit across the street from each other and both are located on the Riverwalk. The Valencia is a modern four star boutique hotel, more along European lines, with an exceptionally fine dining room and bar area. There is also a great outdoor restaurant along the Riverwalk for breakfast and lunch. We will need to fill at least 30 rooms in the hotel in order to utilize their meeting and conference rooms at no cost which should not be difficult to do as we have just about filled the Embassy Suites. We have a contingency contract to fill an additional 30 rooms which I certainly hope we can do. Please remember that, should you desire to make reservations at another hotel, you will not be helping this room occupancy requirement which offsets the cost of staging the event. Furthermore, should you decide to select a hotel outside the immediate downtown area, GPUSA will not provide transportation to scheduled events from those locations and parking in the vicinity of either hotel is quite pricey..

To learn more about the Valencia Hotel you can go to their website at: www.hotelvalencia-riverwalk.com/ or by phone at 866-842-0100. Please be advised that our block of rooms will not be up on the hotel's web site until next week, so we recommend that you delay making your reservation until then. When you do make your reservation you will be required to provide a credit card number, however, your credit card will not be charged until the day you arrive at which time you could pay with cash if you desire. If you need to cancel your room you will need to do so at least 48 hours before your scheduled arrive in order to avoid charges to your credit card.

Transportation (Air): There are no direct international flights to or from San Antonio. The following USA hub airports have custom facilities and direct flights from Europe and South America and have direct flights to and from San Antonio (SAT): Atlanta (ATL), Charlotte (CLT), Chicago (ORD), Dallas Fort Worth (DFW),

Detroit (DET), Houston Texas (IAH), JFK New York (JFK), Memphis (MEM), Newark NJ (EWR), Washington Dulles (IAD). They are provided to you in alphabetical order, not in order of preference. The hub airports closest to San Antonio are Dallas Fort Worth or Houston.

Transportation (Ground): As stated in the Netherlands, we will have someone stationed at the San Antonio airport during most arrival times who will guide you to commercial transportation that will take you to the hotel. This is a relatively small airport. There are only three baggage carousels so it will be easy to find the liaison who will be stationed there. The commercial transportation (taxi or van) is right outside the door (25 feet). The transportation prices at present are \$19.00/person USD for the shared van and \$30 USD for cab (up to three people). If you wish to take the van you will need to make a reservation in advance and we will put that information on the registration site when it is provided. It takes approximately 15 minutes to go from the airport to the hotel.

Event Coordination - to include Airport Coordination: As the event gets closer, we will publish cell phone number(s) that will be manned 24 hours a day to answer any problems or transportation questions that may arise.

Grand Convent procedures: We intend to parade the OSMTH Grand Priors into the church as a group and seat you in the altar area. To facilitate our planning, we need for you to tell us you will be coming as soon as possible. It is our intent that each Grand Prior will be led in first by your national flag and then by your Grand Priory's flag or banner. We will supply all flag poles and your national or country flag, but we need to know this early on so that we will have enough poles and can obtain the national flags. We ask that you provide someone to carry your national and grand priory flag. We do not intend to parade your individual priory flags or banners (within your Grand Priory), only the Grand Priory one. However, for those Priors or commanderies who represent a separate country, we hope to have them proceed in also as a group in front of the Grand Priors. They too will be led in by their national flag and that of their priory or commandery (if they have one). Only the US national flag and the flag of the state of Texas will be posted. All other flags will process in with you, cross across the front of the church and then process right back out. Still to be determined is what we will do with the elevation of any new priories or commanderies. I would hope to parade in their national colors plus their priory/commandery flag or banner at the time they are elevated but for the sake of time we will need to keep this to a minimum. It is our intention to display all national flags at the banquet and to raise them individually as toasts are made to each national Grand Priory. Please correspond directly with me if you have some unique situation with these arrangements.

Investiture: GPUSA would like to extend the invitation for you to nominate candidates for investiture at San Antonio with following considerations. For the sake of ceremony time, we will be limiting the total number of candidates to be invested to 20. The priory of St. Matthew of Texas will have priority. We will initially limit OSMTH to a maximum of one per Grand Priory, but will be happy to add alternates if we have room within the initial 20. We will require all, repeat all, candidates for investiture to attend postulant training beginning on Friday, 11 June at 1:30 PM and the Postulant vigil on that same Friday evening. It will be our intention to have the parent grand prior conduct the actual investiture of their candidate in their own language during the Grand C & I – but I request that you limit your remarks to just the words of investiture. Nominations for investiture will close on March 15th, 2012. Shortly after words we will inform you if your additional candidates can be added to the list.

Promotion: We intend to limit promotions to a total of 15 and restrict them to Grand Officer or Grand Croix only, with Grand Croix taking precedent. Once we determine the total number of those who will be nominated for elevation to the dignity of Grand Croix, we will open it to promotion to Grand Officer. The GPUSA Grand Croix Board will not report out until approximately March 1st so we will not know how many of those we have. Once that is known, individuals nominated for promotion to Grand Officer from the priory of St. Matthew will take precedence before all others.

Meeting Rooms: The total number of knights and dames registering from OSMTH will determine the number of conference or business meeting rooms available to OSMTH for meetings during the OSMTH portion of the combined celebration. This information will be promulgated later.

Paper Reproduction: Provided there is sufficient interest, we will contract with a reproduction facility or print house to reproduce items that to pass out for your meetings. Such paper work will need to be on a thumb drive with your name clearly marked on the thumb drive and a listing of which items you wish to have printed and how many copies are desired. Payment will be by credit card unless OSMTH picks up the cost and bills the individual priorities.

Priory Fair: We will have a limited amount of space for you to sell OSMTH items (in USD) unique to your Grand Priory to members of OSMTH (to include GPUSA). Please notify me in advance how much table space and storage space you will require. Please no alcoholic products.

This is an early snapshot of where we are in our planning. Once again I have just been there and I can guarantee you that it will be a fantastic event. I will continue to provide updates as more information becomes available.

We look forward to seeing you in San Antonio in June of 2012.

Most sincerely, nnDnn Keith Larson
SMOTJ-GPUSA, Grand Prior XVII