



**EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF SAINT SERGIUS
SOVEREIGN IMPERIAL AND ROYAL HOUSE OF GHASSAN**

ARTICLE I

Name of the Order

Saint Sergius (died c. 303, Risafe, Syria; feast day October 7) was among the earliest authenticated and most celebrated Christian martyrs, commemorated in the Eastern and Western churches.

Early martyrologies record that Sergius was an officer in the Roman army on the Syrian frontier. He was supposedly a favorite of the Roman emperor Maximian until he refused to sacrifice to the pagan god Jupiter because he was Christian. Maximian demoted Sergius, ordering him to be costumed in women's dress and marched through the streets. He was then sent to Risafe (now a city in ruins in central Syria), scourged, and boards nailed to Sergius's feet. He was forced to walk to the place of his beheading.

Considerable posthumous homage has been paid to the martyr. In 431, Alexander, metropolitan of Hierapolis, restored the church over Sergius's grave, and shortly afterward, Risafe became a bishopric. The Byzantine emperor Justinian I changed the name of Risafe to Sergiopolis, making it an archdiocese, and in honor of Sergius, he had churches built at Constantinople (now Istanbul) and at Acre in Palestine.

The church at Risafe became famous in the East as a major pilgrimage site. Sergius and his companion in martyrdom, Bacchus, were designated protectors of the Byzantine army, and numerous Eastern sanctuaries and churches were subsequently dedicated to them. Their veneration is old, and a mass ascribed to Pope Gelasius I is assigned to them. Christian desert nomads regard Sergius as their patron saint and the Sovereign Imperial and Royal House of Ghassan.

ARTICLE II

Fount of Honor

The fount of honor is the Head of the Sovereign Imperial and Royal House of Ghassan.

ARTICLE III

Order Defined

The Royal Ghassanids were an Arab dynasty that ruled several realms from the third through the eighteenth centuries of the Common Era. Even though not organized in chivalric orders, *per se*, like their later European counterparts, the Ghassanid knights used to fight under the banners of Christ Pantocrator and Saint Sergius. The Ghassanids were the first defenders of Christianity in history to incorporate what's known today as a "code of chivalry" (originated from the Arab concept of "Muru'a") which means bravery in war, hospitality, respect for women and honor, and protection of the weak and the orphans.ⁱ Thus, Ghassanid chivalry developed in the sixth century of the Common Era and was spiritualized by Christianity, a process that brought it close to the Christian version of chivalry in medieval Europe. Despite being

unknown in Christian chivalry, the Ghassanids' commitment to Christian chivalry is one of the ideals they developed and tried to uphold, especially during war. This Order has thus been created to perpetuate the legacy of Christian chivalry by the Royal Ghassanids.

The Equestrian Order of Saint Sergius is a modern chivalric and international community organized under the Sovereign Imperial and Royal House of Ghassan. The members of the Order support the Sovereign Imperial and Royal House of Ghassan for its charitable and cultural projects.

The Order is non-religious and temporal, sovereign in its affairs, and subjected only to the Head of the Sovereign Imperial and Royal House of Ghassan. It shall not be subject to any religious affiliation, hierarchy, or denomination while maintaining its not-for-profit educational corporate status.

ARTICLE IV

The Guiding Principles for Knights and Dames of the Royal Order

Section 1: The Code of Honor

One seeking to be a member of the Order indicates a wish to further the ancient chivalric code of knighthood. The following principles are presented here as a Code of Honor (Muru'a) for members.

As a member of the Supreme Order of Christ Pantokrator, I commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct in obedience to the Grand Master under the Order's Constitution.

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the ancient and modern chivalric code.

Therefore, I will:

- Abide by the biblical teaching in Leviticus (19:18) and Matthew (22:37-39), "You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself;"
- Practice disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, stewardship, and service;
- Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
- Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring vows;
- Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
- Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my work and volunteerism, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
- Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
- Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
- Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

I will conduct my life reflecting the values of this Order so that nothing needs to be hidden.

Therefore, I will:

- Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
- Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
- Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my membership in the Order, as well as the office and positions of responsibility I hold;
- Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of the Order;

Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of the Order for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct;
Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
Recognize the limits of my gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
Claim only those qualifications attained, give appropriate credit where credit is right and due;
Refrain from decisions, actions, and relationships that might compromise my trustworthiness or the confidence of the Order to uphold its standards and purpose;
Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me; and
Accept discipline and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable.

If a Christian, I will partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal.
Therefore, I will:

Participate in the mission and governance of the Order and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
Show respect and encourage all followers of Christ, as well as other faith traditions;
Recruit members for the Order responsibly, respect existing relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
Cooperate with those working for justice, compassion, and peace worldwide, including partners of other faith traditions.

Whether Christian or not, I will abide by and work for the principles of peaceful coexistence, tolerance, altruism, cooperation, and support for all religions.

ARTICLE V

The Seat of the Order

The seat of the Order is the same as that of the Sovereign Imperial and Royal House of Ghassan.

ARTICLE VI

Governance

Section 1: The Grand Master

The Grand Master is the Head of the Royal House of Ghassan. He shall serve for life or until he retires.

If, because of incapacity, he is unable to serve as Grand Master, the Grand Council may call a Special Chapter General. On the advisement of the Grand Council and the Royal House of Ghassan, the Chapter General may elect a Regent until the Grand Master reassumes duties or the Royal Family elects his successor.

The Grand Master shall appoint all members of the Order's bodies under this Constitution. His approval is required to appoint all officers of the Order named in the Constitution and the Statutes, Rules, and Regulations. He is the sole authority for creating a Knight or dame and bestowing honors of the Order and the Royal House. No member shall be admitted into the Order against the objection of the Grand Master. All members of the Order appointed to any office or dignity within the Order shall serve at the pleasure of the Grand Master.

ARTICLE VII

Members of the Order

Section 1: Admission Protocols

The Order of Saint Sergius is an elite Order. The Petitioner has to have already received the accolade of a knight or dame of the Equestrian Order of Michael Archangel or as a knight or dame of one of the recognized orders of chivalry by the Sovereign Imperial and Royal House of Ghassan.

A person requesting admission to the Order should be aware that he/she will become a part of a dynastic chivalric institution representing the Royal House of Ghassan and be recognized as a member of the Royal House under traditional customs.

Section 2: Qualifications

Acceptance into the Order is based on the assessment of the human values and quality of character of the applicant, without distinction or discrimination based on religious, social class, race, political tendencies, physical disability, or sexual orientation.

I. The following are among the desired qualifications for membership in the Order:

- To be at least 18 years of age for the rank of Member and 21 years or older for the title and rank of Knight/Dame and higher ranks.
- To be a stable person holding dignified and steady employment.
- To be morally and socially well-considered.
- To be practitioners of any learned profession or Armed Forces members.
- To be retired persons or veterans of military service.
- To be socially and professionally considered capable, just, honest, compassionate, and courageous.
- To be persons willing and have the economic capacity to pledge, meeting successfully at least the minimum amount of contribution.

II. The following are impediments for attaining membership:

- To be employed or follow professions or lifestyles that could be viewed as dishonorable by generally accepted standards.
- These are automatic disqualification criteria for candidates with intention to use, mislead, or misrepresent: Falsified or faux royal, aristocrats, or nobility titles; Falsified or faux awards, honors, orders, etc.; Falsified or faux academic titles and academic degrees.

Section 3: The Process of Nomination, Honorarium Passage Fees, and Annual Membership Dues

Any Member of the Royal Order may submit a Petition for Membership for any individual who meets the nomination criteria. The Nominator must be a member in good standing of the Royal House and Orders.

The Petitioner completes a Petition under the Grand Council's Rules and Regulations. If the Grand Council approves the Petition, and the Petition is recommended to the Grand Master by the Grand Chancellor or appointed Officer of the Grand Council, the Honorarium Passage Fee shall be discussed with the petitioner as well as the incoming rank.

Passage Fees are subject to annual revision based on the recommendation of the Grand Council following the Constitution of the Order. In extraordinary cases of need, the Grand Council may waive fee payment.

Advancement within The Royal Order is based upon merit and the individual's activities within the Order, not through a monetary donation, contingent only upon the recommendation of a regional Officer of a Priory, the Grand Council, and the Royal House.

The bestowing of honors, promotions, and awards will occur quarterly, corresponding to the following:

- On or near the Feast of St. Sergius and Bacchus (7 October);
- On or near the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord (6 January);
- On or near the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord; and
- On or near the Feast of the Twelve Apostles (30 June).

Section 4: The Ranks

Of the ranks: Member (MOS); Knight/Dame (Faris/Farisa) (K/DSS); Knight/Dame (Faris/Farisa) Officer (K/DOSS); Knight/Dame (Faris/Farisa) Commander (K/DCSS); Knight/Dame (Faris/Farisa) of the Cross (K/DGCSS); Grand Knight/Dame (Faris/Farisa) of the Collar (GColSS); inheritable Baronet/Baronetess of Risafe (Albarunitaj, البارونيتاج).

Of the Honorary ranks, any of the above ranks may be bestowed by the Grand Master to particular heads of state, heads of royal houses, ecclesiastical leaders, and so on. The honorary members of the Order are not bound to rules and regulations, particularly annual oblations, and are not members of any priory or commandry. There are no styles, titles, or post-nominals for these ranks.

Section 5: Style, Title, and Address of the Knight or Dame

The Style, Title, and Address of the Knight or dame are customary within the Royal House of Ghassan. Style, title, and address may or may not be recognizable under the laws and statutes of the member's place of citizenship, and the customary and lawful practices of said places should guide members.

Letters Patent shall issue the title and honor. A Brevet shall assign rank and office appointments. The Grand Master issues these through the Chancellery.

This Order does not confer nobility upon the member at any rank. The title and honor of the Order are not inheritable unless otherwise noted. Those who bear the Order's Grand Cross, Grand Collar, and inheritable Baronetage, may be awarded by the Grand Master the dynastic noble titles (see Article X, sec. 2).

A knight or dame may use the equivalent titles of Faris and Farisa, such as Sir and Dame.

Knights and Dames (title, Faris, and Farisa) are entitled to the courtesy style, "The Honorable," followed by the title Faris/Farisa or Sir/Dame, the member's name, and the appropriate post-nominals. Therefore, the full name, title, and style of a holder of the knight are "The Honorable, Faris First Name Middle Name Second Middle Name [if any] Surname and post-nominals."

Knights and Dames (title, Faris, and Farisa) of the Cross and Collar ranks are entitled to the courtesy style of "His/Her Excellency," followed by the title of Faris/Farisa or Sir/Dame name, and the appropriate post-nominals. Therefore, the full name, title, and style of a holder of the dame is "Her Excellency, Farisa First Name Middle Name Second Middle Name [if any] Surname and post-nominals."

Baronet/Baronetess, is styled "His/Her Excellency, Faris/Farisa or Sir/Dame [First Name], 1st/ etc Bt/Btss. [Family Name] of Risafe, Royal House of Ghassan".

If the Letters Patent or Brevet for a particular recipient contains a different style, title, and address than the above, the Letters Patent or Brevet will triumph only for that particular recipient.

The courtesy title for the lawful spouse of a member of the Order is Lady or Sir (Farisa or Sayidi) .

Section 6: Degradation

The Grand Master, by his rights and prerogative as Sovereign and on recommendation by the Royal House, may remove a member of any rank or any honors or awards bestowed.

A Knight or Dame who joins any other chivalric order or confraternity without the expressed permission in writing from the Grand Master through the Chancellery may be immediately degraded and removed.

A Knight or Dame who uses titles of nobility or royalty not previously approved by the nobility commission of the Royal House of Ghassan through the Chancellery may be immediately degraded and removed.

A Knight or Dame found by the Court of Chivalry to violate the Code of Honor may be immediately degraded and removed.

ARTICLE VIII

Renunciation of Honor, Title, and Awards

A member may renounce honor, title, and awards at any time and for any cause. The renunciation must be in writing and witnessed by an individual unrelated to the member. The witnesses should sign and date the renunciation with the renouncing member, and the document should be delivered to the Chancellery.

A knight or dame who joins any other chivalric order or confraternity not recognized by the House of Ghassan may be assumed by the Grand Master to have renounced any given honors, titles, and/or awards.

Article IX

Heraldic Privileges

By the right and privileges conferred through Letters Patent, the Knights and Dames of the Order have a Royal Warrant to use particular heraldic devices related to this Order and the Royal House. The Chancellery will provide a heraldry guide.

Like other Royal Houses worldwide, a member shall submit a copy of their arms to the Chancellery for review if the knight or dame seeks to adopt the Royal House and Order's particular heraldry devices. With the Chancellery's approval, the achievement will be registered on the Royal House's Roll of Arms, which may be published and made public.

With the Knight or Dame's achievement recorded by the Chancellery, they may register their arms with any registries.

Members of the second class may use as decorations the likeness of their medal suspended from their escutcheon. Members of the first class may use as decorations the likeness of their medal suspended from their escutcheon, as well as encircle their arms with the Garter of the Order, heraldic supporters, and the coronet of a knight on the helmet instead of a torse, or the coronet of a knight in place of a helmet.

ARTICLE X

Uniforms and Insignia

Section 1: Uniforms and Insignia

The uniform, insignia, and armorial bearings of the Order shall be as prescribed by the Grand Master. It shall be promulgated in the Rules and Regulations of the Order, making allowance for the traditions of regions and national jurisdictions. See Royal House Protocols and Etiquette.

Section 2: Awards

A system of awards for acts of valor, distinguished service, or periods of outstanding service was in existence in the military forces of many ancient peoples. The Grand Master recognized the need for an appropriate awards system apart from promotions. The Grand Master may create and bestow awards and honors to members of the Order for various achievements or to memorialize events. These awards honor members of the Order, and in certain instances, non-members, for single acts of valor, distinguished or meritorious service, or long and faithful service to the Order. The Grand Marshal, with the Chancellery's assistance, shall be the steward of the system of awards.

Those who bear the Order's Grand Cross, Grand Collar, and inheritable Baronetage, may be awarded by the Grand Master the dynastic noble titles: Dhu Sharaf (ذو شرف) or Noble, Non-Peerage; Sayid Alqasr (سيد القصر), Sayidat Alqasr (سيدة القصر) or Lord/Lady of the Palace; Rajol Nabil (رجل نبيل) / Sayidat Sharifa (سيدة شريفة) or Gentleman / Gentlewoman, all which are pre-nominal titles that would replace the aforementioned styles of the Order.

ARTICLE XI

Amendments to the Constitution

The Grand Master may amend the Order's Constitution. If amended, the Constitution shall be published and distributed to all members of the Order, at which time the amendments come into effect. The Amended Constitution shall be posted and distributed by Michaelmas at the latest.

ARTICLE XII

Statutes, Rules, and Regulations of the Order

The Grand Master may promulgate such Statutes, Rules, and Regulations not inconsistent with any provisions of this Constitution as may be necessary or desirable for the government of the Order.

A Statute is a decree made by the Grand Master alone that SHALL be observed. It may be permanent or temporary in nature, declarative and actionable. A Statute is effective across the whole Order and enforced, and transgressions against Statutes may result in a judicial process before the Grand Master.

Acknowledgment of Understanding and Commitment to Abide by the Constitution

I hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand the Constitution of the Equestrian Order of Saint Sergius. By signing below, I affirm my commitment to uphold and abide by the discipline, principles, and regulations outlined in the Constitution. I pledge to act in accordance with the directives and governance of the Grand Master of the Order and to conduct myself in a manner that reflects the values and mission of the Supreme Order of Christ Pantokrator. My signature signifies my dedication to these responsibilities and willingness to contribute faithfully to the Order's purpose and community.

Signature:

Date:

ⁱ See the book *Faris* ("knight" in Arabic) by B. Lewis, C. Pellat and J. Schacht. See also "Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century", pages 304-305, by Prof. Dr. Irfan Shahid, PhD (Princeton University) Professor Emeritus of Georgetown University.