



Grand Commandery of Minnesota

Knights Templar

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Follow the star in the East, and fear not.

As I sit here trying to write a Christmastide greeting and message to the Sir Knights of Minnesota, I can't help but think on how strange of a year we have soldiered through, separately and as an Order. This has been a year unprecedented by the Order of the Temple in the United States since the time of the World Wars or Spanish Flu, and I know this has been the most difficult year we have faced as a people in my lifetime. We have certainly lost- we have lost our ability to come together under the banner of Christ in fellowship, we have lost the ability to perform the ritual that each of us should always hold close to our minds and hearts. And, most defeating is that some of us have lost loved ones, mentors, friends, and fraters.

As I write this, I listen to old Cathar chants which remind me that we, the Knights of Christ, have seen far more difficult times in the ages following Christ. Our forbearers came through carrying His banner, bruised and battered, but not beaten. From Roman persecution, to schisms of faith, so-called holy wars, and the wrongful use of the Lord's name in the culling of innocents throughout history; the tribulations were legion. Nevertheless, the work and Word of the Lord has continued on, and we as its messengers shall not yield. As a movie quote that I'm quite fond of puts it, we shall "rise and rise again, until lambs become lions."

Much like the gift given to us all by the birth of the Christ, the gifts we have received this year may take time to comprehend as to how fortunate we yet may be. We have learned that the Order is resilient and resourceful. The Grand Commandery of Minnesota, harnessing the unique gifts of our members, has led the country with the use of technology for advancing Templary online, for education, administration, and reinforcing fraternal connections.

We also have been granted time. Time to refocus on what is truly important to each of us as individuals- and as your Grand Prelate, I hope you are taking this gift of time to strengthen your bond with our Ritual, with your respective families, and with the Lord. Use this gift, and use it prudently, because this gift of time properly used within the span of the 24-inch gauge will draw you closer to the gift of Salvation that was brought by the birth of Christ on Earth. In doing so, you not only help

kindle the Divine Spark within yourself, but you become an exemplar and beacon for others to do the same. Let your light so shine...

Sir Knights, as we enter into the Christmas season and we close this challenging and divisive year, your mission – accept it or not – is to read and embody the tenets of our Order, enact the Beatitudes of Christ, walk the paths of the Holy Saints John, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bind the wounds of the afflicted. You are called on to do this for any and all, without consideration of how they live, love, pray, vote, or *uprightly* make their way through the crucible of life. The lessons of Christ are without caveat or a clearance checklist prior to their application. Be the good in the world- show everyone around you that the gift of Christ is alive and well by being a gift to others while living a life in His image. And for heaven's sake, do not let the passing of the New Year allow these precepts to pass from your mind or slip from your practice. Charity, hope, and generosity of spirit... these things require a year-long theater in which to operate and for you to hold the starring role.

In this time, never forget Christ often gave the greatest welcome to the most bereft of character. Do not turn away those that are lost or have chosen to be lost, Christ rejected none and doing any different is to reject Christ. Celebrate the whole of the Lord and the totality of the Christ- not just some convenient snippets. His blessings are for all, and not to be kept from those disparate or different from what we are accustomed or comfortable with. Bear this in mind: two thousand and twenty years ago there was a small birth gathering of a Jewish carpenter, his virgin wife giving birth to his newborn stepson (to oversimplify it) who was the Christ incarnate; which was also attended by three Zoroastrian scholars from Persia, occurring a land under the shadow of a Pagan emperor. Those times, like our own, were far from routine or placid, but it was charity that gave a place for the Holy Family to celebrate the birth of Jesus, it was the hope of the Magi that brought them to the feet of the newborn Christ, and the faith of all in Christ's coming Kingdom that brought the world to Light with the Sacred Flame.

What we do with these lessons is what will make the peace we seek in our age and provide us the template to emulate our Living God.

Semper servitus Christi.

S.K. Br. John E. Helcl, II

Grand Prelate, Knights Templar of Minnesota

Seminarian, Apostolic Johannite Church

Merry Christmas