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**2020-2021 TEXAS SUPPLEMENT****Greetings, Sir Knights!**

As we enter upon the holiday season, let us explore some of the opportunities that have been presented to us as a result of the changes that have taken place this year in our daily lives.

I would reiterate how important reinstatements are to our membership in the face of current restrictions on meetings and the conferring of our Templar orders. While we should never lose focus on our current and past brethren, we are now presented with an excellent opportunity to reconnect with those Sir Knights with whom we have lost touch, and those who have gone suspended or demitted.

Lacking the ability to confer the Orders, we should re-double our normal efforts in communicating with those who, for various reasons, have departed from the Commandery. A simple friendly phone call or visit to these Sir Knights could rekindle that spark for York Rite masonry. So, pull out your contact lists, and get in touch with our members who may feel they have been left by the wayside. Let them know they are still wanted and welcome in our commanderies and our lives.

Although in-person commandery meetings are still in waiting, certain public services and appearances are fully authorized, provided safety precautions are strictly adhered to. Veteran's Day is coming up very quickly, and provided we are not forced back into the tight restrictions that will no doubt be required by a dangerous resurgence of the pandemic, there will be many opportunities across Texas for us to show our communities how much we care about our veterans and active duty military. Volunteer at a veteran's memorial service, perform flag presentations, attend church services, all while setting an example for our fellow citizens by exhibiting those chivalric characteristics that define the good Templar. Let us show our communities that we care enough to show them the way.

This also provides us with several opportunities to dip into that pool of returning veterans who are likely looking for an admirable way to fill the void in their lives created from separating from the service. It is hard to describe this feeling of emptiness, but I think we have all felt it at some point in our lives, and while difficult, it can be overcome.

For many veterans, I believe that Christian masonry is the salve that will fill their souls with the Holy Spirit, and lift them up out of the void. Talk to them, offer them the rewards of Christian brotherhood, and explain to them why you are a Mason and a Templar. Perhaps they will be inspired by your story and accomplishments, and desire to join you in your quest to be better men.

The Thanksgiving holiday is normally an opportunity for us to gather together in fellowship and food, and to give thanks for those things that we hold dearest to us. While a damper may have been put on our ability to feed our brethren and families mass quantities of turkey and stuffing, we should not lose sight of the real meaning of this holiday.

Modeled after the first celebration of the year's harvest between the Wampanoag people and the Pilgrims, Thanksgiving should be observed as a time for us to give thanks for the blessings we have received over the past year. What blessings, you may ask, might we be thankful for in the year of COVID-19? Over 17,000 Texans, 220,000 Americans, and 1 million people worldwide have lost their lives due to this pandemic – what is there to be thankful for this year?

I am thankful for my wife, who takes care of me, encourages me when I'm down, and who is always there when I need her most. I am thankful that the Lord has seen fit to bring our son safely through two months of testing positive for the virus during a deployment, and for keeping our daughter safe in her travels. I am thankful for the men and women of our armed forces, who have sacrificed so that we may live our lives in this great country. I am thankful for our law enforcement officers, first responders, and all of the nurses and doctors who keep us safe and protect our lives, all the while putting their lives at risk in order to preserve our own. I am thankful those who preserve our Constitution.

I am thankful for my brethren and fellow sir knights, who have given us support and encouragement through this difficult year. I am thankful for the millions of Americans who have led by example, and shown us how they care for and protect their fellow citizens, in order to safely navigate the waters of these difficult times. I am thankful for all of the scientists world-wide who have dedicated themselves to finding a vaccine, and for those who are brave enough to undergo potentially life-threatening testing, so that one day in the near future, the rest of us may reap the benefits of their sacrifice to defeat this pestilence.

I thank Jesus for watching over us through it all. Sir Knights, what are you truly thankful for this year? While you contemplate this question, I wish to all a Happy Thanksgiving. God bless!

***In His Service,******Gary H. Freedman, Grand Commander***