



VIRGINIA SUPPLEMENT
Carry the shield forward.



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Knightly Greetings,

President John F. Kennedy’s Thanksgiving Proclamation on November 5, 1963, stated that “Over three centuries ago, our forefathers in Virginia and Massachusetts, far from home, in a lonely wilderness set aside a time of Thanksgiving. They gave thanks for their safety, the health of their children, the fertility of their fields, for the love which bound them together and for the faith which united them with their God.”

That proclamation applies to all and recognizes blessings that God has bestowed upon us. We do have a lot to be thankful for even during these challenging times. We, as Knights Templar, were founded in honor of our ancient brothers who realized their blessings and took all challenges to task.

Taking a moment to reflect on President Kennedy’s reference to Virginia. It is based on an event of historical fact that occurred on November 30, 1619. By 1610 only sixty of the four hundred ninety original settlers of Jamestown had survived through the “Starving Time”. This did not stop Captain John Woodlief, a survivor of the “Starving Time”, and thirty-five settlers from setting sail from England aboard the “Good Ship Margaret” on September 16, 1619 to found a town at Berkeley, named “The Berkeley Hundred” in the Virginia colony. The voyage took two and a half months to cross the stormy Atlantic Ocean.

On December 4, 1619 as noted in the ships journal. *“The men were rowed ashore, placed their personal luggage on the hard ground, gazed at the woods enclosing them and listened to the complete silence. Then, at a command from Captain Woodlief, with which they were profoundly stirred to comply, the homesick men knelt on the dried grass to pray”.*

Captain Woodlief prayed: *“We ordaine that this day of our ships arrival, at the place assigned for plantacon, in the land of Virginia, shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God.”*

America’s first official English-speaking Thanksgiving had just occurred as a solemn religious experience, focused entirely on prayer, not a festival of food.

The event took place as the expeditions sponsoring company had given a specific list of ten instructions to the settlers. The very first instruction was to *“Upon landing you give a prayer of Thanksgiving for the safe voyage and do so annually and perpetually thereafter.”*

The settlers hardships continued when in the Indian Massacre of 1622, nine of them were killed. The survivors abandoned the Berkeley Hundred site and withdrew to the security of Jamestown. The settlers at Berkeley Hundred have been buried in history but not forgotten. Nor has their Thanksgiving.

The lesson is the same for the settlers as it was for our ancient brothers and our present-day Order. Perseverance, fellowship, unity, and a steadfast faith in God saw the settlers and our ancient brothers through as they will our Order.

It is heartening to see commanderies conducting virtual conclaves, holding elections, participating in the Drill Corp, recruiting, balloting on petitions, and constituting a new commandery. Not doing that. Mount up and join those that are despite all challenges.

“Life is God’s gift to us. What we do with it, is our gift to Him.”

Until our “in person” Conclaves resume, exercise care and stay well.

“Carry the shield forward.”

With All Knightly Courtesy,

J. Jeffrey McClelland, KCT
Grand Commander