



Washington Supplement

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Greetings Sir Knights—

By the time this article appears in print, I trust that we will be emerging from the COVID 19 pandemic in good health and good spirits. In our state, a very slow but prudent phasing in of communal activity is occurring. Our constituent conclaves are mostly on hold, but a few have been meeting via Zoom or other teleconferencing method for a virtual get together observing as always the strictures of Grand Encampment General Order No. 12.

As I mentioned in my initial address in the August issue of the Knight Templar Magazine, I want some of our Grand Commandery elected and appointed officers to share this podium. Look for interesting and informative articles in the coming issues. Now, though, share with me again one of my favorite topics – Christian hymns. This time it is: Onward Christian Soldiers.

This hymn, sung by Sir Knights on many different occasions, particularly during Christmas Observances, sounds like a martial call to service for men in uniform. In reality, it is a children's song composed by Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould for a Whitmonday's children's march from one elementary school to another in a nearby village. Whitsunday is Pentecost Sunday in the Christian liturgy and often would be used as a day for baptisms in England. The baptismal candidates would be dressed in white, signifying purity, and would march to the local church (kirk) to be baptized. Whit is short for white. On the Monday following Whitsunday, the children of most schools would participate in a celebratory festival welcoming the new baptisees, so came the name Whitmonday. In 1865 in Yorkshire, England, Whitmonday was a great festival and

in that year the children of Rev. Baring-Gould's school were invited to participate in a Whitmonday festival with the children of a school in a neighboring village. Baring-Gould wanted a marching song to accompany the children as they walked to the next village, but finding nothing appropriate in the local hymnals, sat down the night before and penned this poem. As Baring-Gould would later explain: "It was written in great haste, and I am afraid that some of the rhymes are faulty. I am certain that nothing has surprised me more than its popularity". Six years later, Sir Arthur Sullivan, of Gilbert and Sullivan fame, composed the tune by which we know this hymn today, St. Gertrude. The tune was composed at the home of one Gertrude Clay-Ker-Seymour in Dorchester, England and named after this caring landlady.

The lesson we learn from this hymn's history is that we Sir Knights are all children of God. We march from one event or aspect of our lives to another under His care and guidance with the cross of Jesus going on before. Christ, the Royal Master leads against the foe. Forward into battle, we see His banner go. Thus, as we face our pandemics, our economic troubles and our personal problems, carry this message with you into those "battles". To paraphrase what Jesus said in Mathew Chapter 18: Be ye like little children, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. The meaning of this is to practice humility and trust in Him who gave His life to atone for our failings.

In anticipation of the days when we can all meet together in person, blessings and honor be upon you and your loved ones. In His name, I remain

Yours in Christ,

Sir Knight *Richard M. Kovak*

Right Eminent Grand Commander

Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Washington