

District of Columbia Supplement

Sir Knight Kevin S. Matthews

Right Eminent Grand Commander

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From the Grand Commander's Apartment

"Tell me ... and I forget; teach me ... and I learn; involve me ... and I remember." - Ben Franklin

Sir Knights,

The infamous date was Friday Oct 13, 1307. Surprised Knights Templars were arrested in Paris, including the Grand Master, Sir Knight Jacques de Molay. In great financial difficulty from unwise foreign wars and a living a lifestyle well beyond his means, King Philip IV of France wanted to wipe out his enormous debt to the Templars and seize their vast treasure that he believed resided in the vaults of Preceptories in Paris and nearby Templar strongholds. This last chapter of the downfall of the most revered of the Christian Military Orders born out of the First Crusade teaches us a lesson that is useful today.

King Philip was able to cancel his debt, but the Templar treasure was not where he believed. The vaults of the Preceptories located in Paris and throughout France were nearly empty. He had seen treasure there previously on a friendly tour the year before. The Preceptory vaults were a temporary storage location upon the path of the "River of Gold," a term coined by Grand Master de Molay for the gold and silver that moved swiftly from Western Europe to the East for the use of funding the Templar Knights waging battle against the enemies of Christianity. The source of the River of Gold was the profit from vast agricultural lands that were gifted to the Templars over time, many from the recruiting tour of the first Grand Master Hugh de Payens in 1128, within a decade of the founding of the Order in 1119.

King Philip attempted to coordinate the arrest of Knights Templar across Europe. To his frustration, arrests in France in October were followed shortly after in other realms after an order by Pope Clement V in November, including January 1308 in England and February in Scotland. Other regions, including Portugal, Castile in ignored the Papal order. Of the thousands of Knights Templar present in France, England and Scotland, only 600 were arrested in France, about 50 in England, and 2 in Scotland.

Why so few? One of the Templar strengths was superior intelligence, which they used to hide their brethren before arrest by royal authorities. We believe hundreds of knights escaped from France north to England and Scotland in the few critical months and were successfully hidden by their brethren.

Another strength was the strategic shift in the River of Gold, the money trail. Instead of funding foreign wars, the vast funds of the Knights Templar from agricultural lands were firstly hidden and next diverted towards funding the hiding members of the Templar Order. To protect its members, the Order closed many vulnerable Preceptories and estates, depending on the local political climate, but kept many open to continue the funding operations. This effort was mostly successful. Many of the arrests outside France were the last remaining protectors of local Preceptories and the administrators of agricultural estates. Dozens of Templars in France were executed by 1314, including the Grand Master, but no Templars were convicted outside of France.

The protection of the innocent has happened at other times in history. Notably during the Holocaust of World War II, countless acts of personal sacrifice took place by many heroic people to hide innocent people from arrest by the Nazis.

Thankfully, we are not in this situation now. We are not hiding innocent people from arrest. But we are protecting innocent people from the COVID virus. We must diligently adhere to the lessons of the past and protect our fellow members and their families. The healthy among us must not hide. We must be out front and pursue the vaccine in earnest for our tough members and ourselves. We must continue to recruit and strive to perform our Orders as soon as possible. We must continue to grow our membership and emerge from this pandemic stronger than before.

GOD bless our members, families, and our military, law enforcement, first responders and medical personnel that work diligently every day in support of this great country.

In the Service of Christ,

PK Robb Mitchell

Grand Commander - Elect 2021 – 2022

**Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the
District of Columbia** [Send any queries to gcktdc@gmail.com](mailto:gcktdc@gmail.com)