

District of Columbia Supplement

Sir Knight Kevin S. Matthews

Right Eminent Grand Commander

Editor: Carter L. Diggs Jr., EPC, GSwB

From the Grand Commander's Apartment

Sir Knights, writing to you as I am at the onset of Christmas as well as the 850th anniversary of the martyrdom of St. Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, but knowing this will be printed as we enter the season of Lent, I am struck by the connection between these two extremes. Never more than this year are we reminded that the shadow of the Cross stretches even over the Nativity of Our Blessed Lord. In a few days from this writing we will have this foreshadowing again when the three Wise Men or Magi arrive to see the Christ Child and deliver gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh. What is often lost on a modern audience, is the ritual significance of these goods. These were the three things necessary for a traditional and correct burial in the Levant – Myrrh particularly was used in preparing a corpse for burial. So it must have been a complex experience for the Blessed Mother of God, knowing she had given birth to the Savior of Mankind but that he was born to die as both High Priest and sacrificial lamb for us and for all time.

Traditionally in Advent, we prepare both for the remembrance of the Nativity of Our Lord on Christmas Day but also pray in preparation for His coming again in power and great glory. In this way too we are called to a deeper life in Christ not just to celebrate a real birth in a real point in time at a real city but also to think of our own afterlife and the end of all things. As recalled in the Craft degrees, man is not too oft reminded that he was born to die. This carries particular poignancy for us today while our land is stalked by this dread pandemic. We all long know what we must do for love of our neighbor by adopting various methods to reduce transmission of COVID-19. What we additionally are called to do in this season is to go deeper into ourselves while we cannot gather in person. This is the time to focus on the monastic element of the “warrior monks” that were the historical Knights Templar.

They were fierce warriors but they were also deeply devoted to a life of prayer and contemplation. So too must we follow their example by leading little quiet lives and turning inward for that deeper seat of prayer and inner communion with the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Only by developing a rhythm of prayer – whether it be spontaneous prayers of a line or two, or a formalized praying of the monastic hours – can we live out our knightly covenant in this troubled time while paying due homage to our Savior and Lord.

What strikes me most about the martyrdom of St. Thomas Becket were his killers – four knights. St. Thomas had been preaching for the supremacy of the Church over secular rulers such as King Henry II of England as well as for a total reliance on God. Hearing King Henry complain about his archbishop's actions and refusal to obey him, the four knights rode in haste to Canterbury cathedral where after accosting this holy man and threatening his life, St. Thomas refused and was assassinated by them. This tale serves as a caution that Knights Templar were not particularly good or holier people by virtue of their knighthood. Indeed, many knights roamed Europe entirely without virtue. Rather, it was their calling to channel their fervor on the battlefield to a higher purpose: serving God, his angels, and his saints. So should we ever strive not to be as the murderous knights of King Henry's court, but rather the more exalted Knights Templar who are called in this life to help, aid, and assist all the poor and the oppressed, particularly fellow Christians in need. Our mission, in so many words and particularly in this troublesome time, is to help defend and grow the Holy Church of God on Earth.

Yours in the Service of Christ,

JK *Elijah C. Mills* *KTCH*

Grand Junior Warden Elect 2021 – 2022

**Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the
District of Columbia**

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