



ILLINOIS SUPPLEMENT

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Pro Deo et Patria

WARNING – BEWARE OF LOWER BAR (Part 2)

Greetings Sir Knights,

Last month I discussed the background on how I believe our Fraternity inherited our standards of excellence from the ancient stone masons and the original Knights Templar. I also discussed my General Order No. 6 (Amended) opening Templary in Illinois for in-person conclaves and conferral of the Orders effective 15 May 2021. My concerns about lowering the bar of excellence continues below.

On Saturday, 24 April 2021, I attended the Grand Commandery of Indiana’s Annual Conclave in Muncie, IN. I was very impressed with the professionalism and appearance of the approximately 200 attendees of all ranks, from SKs to the Right Eminent Grand Commander. Uniforms were worn with pride, with correct insignia and proper fit. I could not help but compare their standards with those of our Grand Commandery.

I admit that my definition of what constitutes proper uniform appearance is greatly influenced by my career as a military officer. I also understand that our members are not in the military. Frequently when I am in a discussion about uniform and appearance standards in our Grand Commandery I am told our Sir Knights are “volunteers” and therefore must be given more leeway for uniform infractions. What most don’t understand is that the U.S. military has also been an all-volunteer force since 1973. The “volunteer” rationale doesn’t hold water, standards are still standards!

On 15 May 2021 we are open for business in Illinois and we have an impressive backlog of candidates in waiting to join our ranks. It is my hope that in our efforts to clear this backlog, we don’t lower the bar on uniform and ritual requirements. While each candidate has their own reason for joining our Fraternity, one of those reasons is most likely our distinctive uniform. We owe it to the tens of thousands of Sir Knights who preceded us in the Grand Commandery of Illinois to maintain the regulation standards of excellence in our uniform appearance.

Too often I have personally seen Commanderies, during the Order of the Temple, place a Chapeau on the head of a new Sir Knight that is an embarrassment to us all. During this era of COVID-19, cleanliness is a necessary prerequisite. If you look at your Commandery’s “candidates Chapeau” and it is not something you would want on your head, it is not appropriate to place it on the candidates’ head.

It is the duty of each Sir Knight in the Grand Commandery of Illinois to maintain the highest standards of personal and uniform appearance. The duty of providing the proper guidance and explaining the standards belongs to the Eminent Commander! If you cannot define what an “officer” is within your Commandery, and you have no clue what the difference is between the rank of a silver-bordered sleeve cross and a gold-bordered sleeve cross, or you can’t describe the difference between a Passion Cross and a Templar Cross, you should read the Grand Encampment Bylaws! If your Commandery is lucky enough to be able to loan the new Sir Knight a Dress Uniform coat, be sure it has the proper sleeve crosses and no shoulder epaulets. Of course, you must set the example by being in correct uniform yourself.

If you don’t know the difference between the color “Emerald Green” and Forest Green when looking at shoulder epaulets, you could be part of the problem. If a new Sir Knight asks you where he can find the Knights Templar “uniform regulations” and your first thought is “I didn’t know we have one” you could be part of the problem. See G.E. Bylaws.

Several years ago, during an open inspection of a Commandery, I was shocked to find a new Sir Knight in full Dress Uniform wearing a red “Chapter” necktie. Years later, I still pay attention to that Sir Knight’s uniform appearance when I visit his Commandery and I can say he is now a good example of meeting our uniform standards; but most impressive, he is an officer in his Commandery and demonstrates excellent ritual recitals. All he needed was someone to explain the standards to him. Commanders, take a personal interest in your candidates’ appearance.

I fully realize that the cost of a full-Dress uniform is an issue. During our last Department Conference for the East Central Department, I expressed my concerns on this issue to Grand Master Nelson. The reality is that if a SK can’t afford a Dress uniform, and the Commandery can’t loan him one, he should not be elected an officer in the Commandery – read the Grand Encampment Uniform Regulations.

Help raise the standards of excellence in our Grand Commandery!

It has been my honor to serve as your Grand Commander during the past year. I wish the best of luck to our incoming Grand Commander and his staff.

Remember, always be the last Knight to leave the battlefield!

AUSTON EUGENE SMITH, GRAND COMMANDER