



The Florida Knight

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Right Eminent Grand Commander 2020

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Greetings Sir Knights,

As we enter the month of March, we find that Spring is now upon us. For us Floridians, we might only realize it is Springtime because we must move our clocks forward one hour during the middle of the month. Unlike our northern Fraters, we have no visual clues such as the snow melting, flowers and trees budding, and of course it is perpetually hot in Florida so we certainly cannot look to the temperature to tell us we have transitioned into a new season. Therefore, as Floridians, we miss the various visual indicators of change regarding how we should interact with our environment. While living in Kansas to attend university (ROCK CHALK, JAY HAWK, KU!!), I remember how great it was to see the indications that winter had finally ended. Though a minor snowstorm or cold spell might happen, the signs of nature let all of us know that we could begin to prepare for the wonders of Spring and ultimately the joys of Summer.

Just like the seasons we experience in nature, so too do we experience seasons within our beloved fraternity. Recent decades have shown a decline in membership and the increased age of our members. In years past, everyone knew the great works our fraternity performed and great men of all walks of life knocked at our doors to gain admission. Currently, most of the general public is unaware of what we stand for and do in society and in many cases, we are viewed as irrelevant in this modern era.

Interestingly, however, the seasons seems to be changing in Masonry. We are finding that our sacred temples are being visited more and more by young men seeking out their place in the changing world we live in. They are searching for the Rites of Passage into Manhood that have somehow disappeared in modern society where everyone should be viewed as the same, and individuality is viewed with contempt and disdain. Masonry provides that experience which excites the individual into an exploration of himself, while at the same time bringing him into a collective of others of like mind and purpose. Templar Masonry goes one step beyond and provides an experience that all men can relate and yearn to achieve – that of being a Knight, in a noble cause, defending honor and virtue.

While any good student of history will understand that knights of the Middle Ages were not chivalrous and not even honorable, the literature which sprang from that period developed a mystique around them which persists to this day. This mystique has inspired middle school boys to play with sticks in their backyards pretending to be knights in shining armor and women to quote the phrase, “I guess chivalry isn’t dead” when a man opens a car door for them. In my own Lodge I see how this mystique is alive and well, as over half of the candidates ask how they can join the Knights Templar before they even complete their Entered Apprentice degree.

My Fraters, this is the sign that change is upon us and that Masonry is moving from the Winter into the Spring and eventually into the joys of Summer. However, just as the

winter athlete must change from snow skiing to water skiing, we need to figure out how to change the way we have operated our Fraternity in times of decreased membership with a largely older population to one of a growing younger membership. Our newer members do not want to leave their families after a long day at work to eat a meal away from home that is served on a paper plate. They do not want to come to a Lodge or Commandery after attending meetings all day at work to hear the minutes being read to them. Why is it that I attend a Scottish Rite meeting each month and the General Secretary asks if there are any changes to the minutes that have been “previously sent the membership,” but we cannot do the same in our Commanderies and Lodges? If your answer is that Grand Lodge or Grand Commandery will not let us, then why aren’t you preparing legislation to change that outdated rule. There is not one logical reason that minutes from a previous meeting cannot be distributed well ahead of a current meeting or at the very least prior to the start of a meeting. Why is it that we are still providing meals that are less than \$10 per person, but that we could eat at the local restaurant near the Lodge for \$20 and eat with proper utensils, have no clean up, and frankly have a variety of food to choose?

I am not advocating that these little things will radically change Masonry or suddenly boost our membership, but I bring these to your attention to demonstrate that maybe the things we did (and still do) during times of low membership, etc. might not be serving us well as we move into the next era. Those of us that are Past Masters take obligations of not allowing innovation or changes into Masonry. This, however, does not mean Masonry itself does not change. In a previous Knight Templar Magazine, I asked why we were continuing to do weekend Festivals. Was it because we were doing the same thing as Scottish Rite does with their Reunions? Was it because it worked for us in the past? Does it still work today with our busy lives? I am happy to say that since posing that question many of the York Rite bodies in Florida have been performing “slow classes” and conducting a degree or two at their Stated meetings. While this might not seem like a drastic change, it does demonstrate that we can do things differently and still obtain the desired results.

Another question I will ask you to ponder is why we are required in our ritual to perform the “marching” parts of the opening ceremony, but that the declaration of duties is considered optional? In EVERY Masonic body the opening ceremony requires the officers to state what their official duties are to that specific organization. Is it important to form lines to march around the room, or is it more important that each member should hear the duties required of a Knight as he progresses through the Commandery line of officers? I am not saying that we should not march or that we should not strive to perform the entire ritual, but what is it that we are trying to say by our ritual? What is it that we are trying to project to the new Mason that is interested in joining our ranks? Is it that we can march in a formation, or it is that we have something in our ritual that can add extra meaning to his life? For me, I am inspired when we communicate the Words and when we discuss our duties as officers, and this can be accomplished without the marching around the room. Spring is upon Sir Knights in both a physical as well as a metaphorical sense, and I ask you to think about how we as Templars can change with the seasons, so we are ready to enjoy all the gifts Summer has to offer us. I look forward to seeing many of you at the Festivals taking place this month but until then, please be safe and God Bless.

Donec Totem Impleat Orbem,

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