


ILLINOIS SUPPLEMENT

Editor: John T. Riedas, Sr. REPGC
john-olyr@att.net



Auston E. Smith
Grand Commander

Greetings Sir Knights,

Humans have five basic senses, touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. This month I want to direct your thoughts to one of the five, sight! Scientists agree that people without eyesight may compensate with enhanced hearing, taste, touch and smell, and some may have better memory and language skills than those born with sight; however, it is my opinion that nothing can replace God's gift of eyesight.

During the past 10 months of "stay at home" restrictions, I have spent many hours in my sunroom either reading or staring at the lake which is about 25 feet from my window. I have been amazed at the mysteries and miracles of nature that have always been present, but which I never took the time to "be still" and see! I now have a better understanding of the words "be still" and a new appreciation of eyesight which allows me to see God's wonders. Below are a few examples.

My daily routine is to arise early and enjoy a pot of coffee as I watch the wildlife around the lake. From my window there are woods on my left and a neighbor on my right who has several White Oak trees in his back yard. Each morning, starting about one hour after sunup I see anywhere from 10 to 15 Gray Squirrels travel one-at-a-time along the same path from the woods, around the point of the lake, through my back yard and into the neighbor's yard to have breakfast on the acorns. Not unusual, right? Well, I also see about same number of Fox Squirrels travel the same path, for the same reason, but they don't start until about 10:00 AM. A mystery of nature that only a person with eyesight can fully appreciate.

We also have a pair of Bald Eagles living near the lake and feeding around my house. Most mornings about 10:30, one of the eagles flies about 20 feet from my house over the lake looking for an easy catch. On a particularly cold day this winter I noticed one of the eagles alight on top of my neighbor's furnace vent on the roof (with steam coming out) so he could perhaps warm his talons; he would stand on one talon for a while and then rotate to the other! After about 10 minutes he went

on his way. Another mystery of nature that requires sight to fully enjoy!

We have an Osprey that hunts over the lake in the summer months. The Osprey's method when it spots a fish is to hover about 75 feet over the lake and then fold its wings back and dive at 30-40 MPH into the water, fully submerge, and come out with a fish! Amazing to watch but requires eyesight and learning to be still!

I could continue with numerous examples of how simply being still and watching nature is so enlightening and good for the soul. I found being still is even mentioned about 7 times in the Bible. In Psalm 46-10, God said "Be still, and know that I am God." Perhaps God is encouraging us to stop worrying, to stop trying to control things we cannot control and to find contentment in the simple things with which he has blessed us, like good eyesight! Too often we rush from meeting to meeting or sit in front of the television watching the same depressing news stories over and over and fail to take advantage of God's gift of sight; we fail to be still and observe his wonders. Did you know that while a number of men performed healing miracles in the Bible, ONLY Jesus healed the blind?

So why am I talking about eyesight? Sir Knights, we have the ability to help save someone's eyesight by supporting our Knights Templar Eye Foundation. One of the easiest ways is to become a Life Sponsor which also benefits your local Commandery.

I made a large donation to the Eye Foundation's Grand Master's Club, thinking I had done my part for our philanthropy, but my Commandery still had to pay \$1.00 each year on my behalf. I didn't realize that Commanderies must pay \$1.00 per member each year to help fund the Eye Foundation. Some Commanderies include the \$1.00 in membership dues, others include a one-time \$30 fee in their initial membership fees. Life Sponsors are exempt from the annual payments and the Commandery saves \$1.00 per year for each Life Sponsor.

As you may recall, on 8 Sep 2020 I sent a letter to all Sir Knights in our Grand Commandery asking those **1,370** who were not then Life Sponsors of our Knights Templar Eye Foundation to consider becoming one by paying the \$30 one-time fee. As of 31 Dec 2020, **38** had answered my challenge, leaving us **1332** short of my goal of 100%.

There are only nine (9) Grand Commanderies in the Grand Encampment who have achieved 100% Life Sponsors, and with your help Illinois can become the tenth (10th)! I hope you will make a tax-deductible \$30 donation this month and become a Life Sponsor. Imagine life without eyesight!

Make your donation to: Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc., 1033 Long Prairie Rd, Suite 5, Flower Mound, TX 75022-4230.

AUSTON EUGENE SMITH, Grand Commander