



ILLINOIS SUPPLEMENT

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Auston E. Smith
Grand Commander

Pro Deo et Patria

Greetings Sir Knights,

I hope this finds you and your family safe, healthy, and rich in the enjoyment of life. Too often we take for granted the blessings afforded to us by our Creator and we fail to “pay forward” those blessings to the less fortunate who are struggling and need a hand to lift them up.

Whose job is it to lend a hand? Why is it that we, as individuals, seem to always be the one expected to step forward and donate our time, money, and personal efforts to those in need? Why are we always the person who has to pick up the discarded paper cup or beer can in the parking lot? Why are we always the one who feeds the hungry dog or cat that shows up at our back door, ribs showing and eyes that express the loss of hope? Why, because that is who we are and what we do as Christian Knights Templar! Those in need do not normally beg, it is up to you to recognize the need and offer help without them asking.

One of my frustrations is driving up to an intersection where there is a traffic signal requiring me to stop, and there stands a panhandler begging for my money. Too often these appear to be healthy individuals holding a cardboard sign reading something like “Homeless” or “Hungry” or some other plea for money. I suppose many have made bad decisions in life and now want me to bail them out! Nothing is free!

I always wonder why these beggars cannot find work doing something productive to earn money, so I never donate. Sometimes I am tempted to jump out of my truck, grab them by the shirt and yell, get a job! Luckily my commonsense kicks in and instead I just look away, ignoring them as they walk past my window and drive on. I noticed the vehicle behind me rarely stops, I guess they followed my lead.

A few years ago, I drove up to a busy intersection and had to stop as the first vehicle in line at the light. It was storming, raining hard, very windy and the temperature was probably in the 35-degree range. Sure enough there stood a young man in his early 20s holding a cardboard sign that read “Will work for food.” This caught my attention; he was

not asking for money! No rational person would stand in this rain and cold and beg unless they truly needed help, so I rolled the window down and gave the man \$20. As I drove away, I notice the car behind me stopped and gave the young man money, I guess they followed my lead.

Why did I donate? I actually do not know! Was it my ability to recognize true need that day or was it that small, quiet voice I heard telling me to pay it forward? I do know that as I drove away, I felt I had done the right thing, and I have never missed that \$20.

Sometimes when paying it forward you may wonder why it is always you are doing the good deed; yet you never seem to be the recipient of such rewards. Sure, the old folks say it is better to give than receive, but is it really? It only cost me \$20 to find out that the answer is YES.

You can be assured people notice when you step forward and do the right thing! As Templars we are leaders in our community whether we recognize that or not. As leaders we are always expected to go above and beyond. When we pay it forward, we may cause the person watching from the vehicle behind us to also step up and do the right thing.

Leaders have a duty to pay it forward. In my military career I enjoyed being an enlisted man, my fellow Airmen called me “Smitty” and I always had friends who wanted to hang out together, go hunting or fishing or just cook out on the grill. However, by the time I was a colonel, I found those same friends would no longer call me Smitty but addressed me as Colonel Smith and they were never comfortable “hanging out” together. I know they acted this way out of respect for my rank. I have no doubt they would have followed me up the hill because they knew I would always do the right thing as a leader, not just as a friend! I was always thrilled when I had a chance to promote someone who worked for me, it was my way of paying it forward.

As we begin to reopen our Commanderies and welcome candidates who have waited patiently for the health restrictions to be lifted so they can join our ranks, we must remember we are perceived as having made it to the top by becoming a Knight Templar! Hopefully, each of us can remember one or two Knights who helped us in our journey. Now it is our duty to turn around and offer a hand to those climbing the ladder. Step outside your comfort zone and go talk to candidates and make them feel welcome. Be a mentor who knows the full meaning of paying it forward. If you don’t do it, who will? Strive to recognize those who need a hand up and try to make a positive impact on someone’s life. Persevere without expecting a reward - those come in the next life.

Always be the last Knight to leave the battlefield!

AUSTON EUGENE SMITH, Grand Commander