

# The Hoosier Templar

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*Grand Prelate's Easter Message*

## The Crown of Life

**By SK Dan Patterson**  
Grand Prelate

As we celebrate another Easter season, we can't help but reflect upon the terrible suffering our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ endured during the events leading up to His crucifixion. We read that Jesus was stripped of his garments and dressed in a scarlet robe. His captors then platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head, to do nothing more than to cause him pain, humiliation and to mock his claim of authority. A crown is defined as a circular ornamental headdress worn by a monarch as a symbol of authority, usually made of or decorated with precious metals and jewels. This crown of thorns, therefore, was obviously intended to only shame our Lord and Savior in his final hours. Thorns are generally very long and sharp and inflict painful wounds and when sharply jabbed into the skin they sometime break off below the surface causing bleeding and infection.

Scripture continues to teach us that they put a reed in His right hand and they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! They spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. After they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put his own raiment on him and led Him away to crucify Him.

A Roman statesman named Magnus Cassiodorus once spoke of the crown of thorns calling it "the glory" of the city of Jerusalem. "There", he says, "we may behold the thorny crown, which was only set upon the head of Our Redeemer in order that all of the thorns of the world might be gathered together and broken."

In the ancient world, a green leafy crown or wreath, usually of fragrant laurel leaves was often given to the winners of contests and battles. Laurel wreaths adorned the images of kings and emperors.

In Capernaum, a fishing village established in biblical times located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, there is a green leafy tree there called the "crown of thorns" tree. It is believed that from this variety of tree our Saviors crown was made.

The crown is mentioned in several locations in the Bible, but one of my favorites comes from Revelations 2:10 – "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

We all hope and pray that one day we will be worthy to wear the crown, to join our Lord and Savior in the realms of eternal life.

As my term serving as your Grand Prelate quickly comes to an end, I was blessed with the opportunity to have been invited to several Commanderies throughout our state to perform the Prelate's part in the **Order of**

**the Temple.** It was truly an honor to have been invited and a privilege to perform such a beautiful Commandery Order. I thank my Companions and Sir Knights for their confidence in allowing me to be part of their ceremony.

I want to thank every Grand Commandery Officer and Past Grand Commanders for the support they have given me over the last 21 months. It was truly an honor to serve with such a fine group of officers. I would especially like to thank our Right Eminent Grand Commander Sir Knight Edward E. Fodrea for allowing me this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not only serve under his leadership but to also allow me to follow in my grandfather's footsteps to serve as Grand Prelate of the Grand Commandery of the Knights Templar of the State of Indiana. I am proud to have served our Indiana Grand Commandery and hope that I performed my duties to your satisfaction.

Now may the God of Peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. – **1 Thessalonians 5:23**

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# Grand Commander's Farewell

By SK Ed Fodrea KCT  
Grand Commander

It's hard to believe I am writing this article to say good-bye to being the Right Eminent Grand Commander of Indiana and Hello to being in the honored ranks of the Past Grand Commanders. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the Sir Knights of Indiana as your leader. I hope I have brought messages of hope and encouragement during these two difficult years. We certainly have had an adventure!

We began these two years under the severe restrictions of COVID. We tried every way we could to meet and safely enjoy Templar relationships without putting anyone in harm's way. We missed being able to have regular meetings, inspections, educational offerings, outings, and they even cancelled Easter on us! We DID celebrate Christmas and began reviving Indiana's Templar activities with a much quieter Newby-Avery celebration than was originally planned. We were able to meet at regular intervals through creativity and perseverance with technology some of us had never dreamed we could use. However, with open minds, and the can-do spirit our Templars have always had, we were able to conquer the unknown. We were able to engineer a blended conclave, getting back a taste of normal though masked and sanitized repeatedly. We began to emerge from the uncertainty COVID had brought into our asylums as we vaccinated, learned to protect ourselves with social distancing and were as careful as we could be giving each other options to attend in person or via an electronic device.

We have returned to inspections, educational offerings, outings, and we even get to have Easter this year! We have returned changed, but I believe stronger. We have lost members, that we will miss forever, good men whose legacies we will not forget. We have gained new members to mentor and grow into men whose legacies, when they pass this earth will not be forgotten. Each of us has had a part in these two difficult, but wonderful years.

There are no words to express how precious each and every one of you are to myself and Lady Christine. We thank you all for allowing us these two years to enter your lives, drive you crazy, laugh just a little bit and have some fun. We certainly have had an adventure.



FODREA

# Old Words on Restored Old Velum

By SK Edward L. Sebring KCT, KTCH, GPE  
Editor

FORT WAYNE — Almost exactly 169 years ago, Fort Wayne Commandery No. 4 received its charter.

Since then, it has hung on the walls of three different Masonic Temples, surviving a fire in one of them and suffered water damage, said Grand Commander Ed Fodrea, KCT, who is also a Past Commander of the commandery. Not only could it seem miraculous that it survived at all, Fodrea said, but the document has been conserved by an expert of national renown and now, in late April, it will be moved to Muncie, there to permit Fort Wayne Commandery's officers to open on the Order of the Temple, after which the Grand Officers of the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar, of the State of Indiana, will open and conduct this year's Grand Conclave.

And it will be that old document, those words printed on velum, a thin form of untanned calfskin, that will authorize that to happen.

Fort Wayne "Encampment" No. 4 was chartered on May 13, 1853, by the "General Grand Encampment" Knights Templar of the United States. In those days, the state-level bodies were known as Grand Encampments, to which "General" was added to the title of the national governing body, as is still true of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, and the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons.

Beginning about a year after Fort Wayne was chartered, national leaders saw the need for a change and named local bodies Commanderies, and state bodies Grand Commanderies, but retained the "Grand Encampment" wording for the national body, only dropping the "general."



Conserved and matted before framing



Prior to restoration

As said above, velum is treated, but untanned, calfskin. As a natural substance, it is constantly being affected by slight changes in temperature and humidity, shrinking or expanding accordingly — and remember, this particular piece of velum had gone through three building changes, a fire, and water damage. The effect on the Fort Wayne charter was that it acquired a series of wrinkles across the velum. The official seal of authenticity, in the lower left corner, was an embossed paper seal attached to a strip of black ribbon, and the ribbon was attached to the charter by being woven in and out of seven horizontal cuts in the velum. And that is where the worst damage lay: one of those maybe two-inch cuts had ripped to seven inches long.

In 2013, when SK Bobby Roberts KCT was Grand Commander, the charter was deemed too fragile to be moved to the Grand Conclave site, and that charter's authority was conveyed there by a photocopy.

Later in 2013, SK William W. Pond, a physician who was eminent commander at the time, decided that after 160 years the charter was in need of conservation, so he set out to make it happen. A PowerPoint presentation he completed after the restoration explains the whole process.

Pond said he first showed it to a framer in Fort Wayne, then to a binder of rare books in Manchester, and both agreed it needed specialized care, so Pond began a nationwide search for such an expert.

He ultimately found Tahe Zalal, senior paper conservator with Etherington Conservation Services in North Carolina. Zalal found the document had been nailed to a piece of cardboard by 151 small nails. Pond thinks that may have been done to stretch it back into shape after it received water damage.

In any case, Zalal carefully cleaned it, repaired the tear with painter's tape, humidified it, removed the tape, then, four times, put it between sheets of blotter paper and used a press to flatten it out, starting first with light pressure to quickly remove the humidity, letting it rest, then pressing it again with heavier pressure. The tear and other weak spots were then repaired with "Japanese paper and wheat starch paste." The result: the "cockling," as its wrinkled state was technically called, was removed and the charter is flat and full-sized again.

Zalal matted the charter, put it in a new frame and protected it with glass which blocks 99% of ultraviolet light.

And now, all Sir Knights in attendance will be able to see what a charter for a vintage "encampment" looked like 169 years ago.

## ***PGC Irvin L. Bitting Dies At 87***

DEMOTTE – Past Grand Commander Irvin L. Bitting, age 87, DeMotte, passed away March 4, at Franciscan Health Crown Point.

SK Bitting served as Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of the state of Indiana in 2000-2001. In subsequent years, he served several Grand Commanders as Grand Inspector General.

Irvin was born on February 25, 1935 in Pryor, Oklahoma the son of Bill and Delpa Bitting, both deceased. He graduated from Ballard Memorial High School in LaCenter, Kentucky before joining the United States Air Force. He served from 1953-1957.

Irvin was a pipefitter with Inland Steel from 1959-1991 when he retired.

He married Doris Jean Criswell on March 6, 1982 in Lake Village, Indiana. She preceded him in death on January 1, 2012.

Irvin was a dedicated member of the Freemasonry organization holding all officer positions and served as the WM for several years at both the McKinley Lodge #712, Hammond and the Prairie Lodge #125, Rensselaer. His titles include: Master Mason in 1960 and member of Prairie Lodge #125 10x Past Master, Knighted as a Sir Knight 12-15-1984, Past Grand Commander of Knights Templar of the state of Indiana 2000-2001, Past Grand Inspecting General of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the state of Indiana, Past Governor of the York Rite Sovereign College, Past Director of Yeoman of York, Recipient of Order of Purple Cross, Past sovereign Master of AMD, Past Patron of the Order of Eastern Star, Past Prior of KYCH, Full member of Valparaiso York Rite, Grotto Merou Past Monarch, Full Member of Orak Shrine, Full Member of Knight Mason, Legion of Honor Honorary DeMolay, Full Member of Scottish Rite, Member of Red Cross Constantine, and Member of the Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests.

Irvin is survived by his children: Cherryl (Brett) Sneed of Franklin, TN; Bill (Tammy) Bitting of Bellevue, NE; James (Beth) Beam of Montgomery, AL; 8 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren; and 3 sisters: Bertha Eubanks, Zona Phippen, and Billie Gouffer.

He is preceded in death by his parents, wife, daughter Monica Scalf, and son Scott Beam.

There will be a graveside service with honors in early June at the Roselawn Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made in Irvin's name to the Shriners Hospital for Children.



**BITTING**