



## Digital Missouri Message

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## Changing of the Guard!

### GRAND COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Greetings Sir Knights,

This is my last article as your Grand Commander. If not for the grace of God, I would not be here to write this article. From the bottom of my heart, I thank everyone who has helped me through this year.

I thank everyone for their thoughts and prayers. May God bless each and everyone of you.

### Walking with Christ in a Return to Normalcy!

Sir Knight Harry L. Tripp, Jr., Grand Commander

### DEPUTY GRAND COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

I would like to begin by saying thank you for your "ministry of presence" during my time of loss when my mother passed away earlier this year. Your messages and gestures meant the world to me and my family during that very difficult time.

Should I be elected to the position of Grand Commander, I will work to recover the ground that we lost due to the pandemic. While it is true that many Commanderies continue to do great work, we have Commanderies that are struggling to open and close. It is my goal that by June of 2023 every Commandery in Missouri will be able to open and close in due form. When I visit your Commandery, don't be afraid to put me in a chair.

A second initiative that I want to implement is to bolster the framework for strategic planning. In an advancing line it is difficult to execute a strategic plan because the plan changes with each new leader. A significant element of this project is to gather YOUR input regarding how we, the Grand Commandery, are doing at meeting your needs and discover where we can make improvements.

Regardless of what challenges we may face together in the coming year, I look forward to traveling to the all of our Commanderies and meeting together with all of my fellow Sir Knights.

Sir Knights, I humbly offer my services should you so choose.

Sir Knight Michael C. Rohman, Deputy Grand Commander

### OF MEMBERS AND MOTIVATION

Please note that this article was written in 2011. While it is over ten years old, it is just as valid today as it was then. Sir Knight Russell S. Hanson, PGC.

"My Commandery doesn't do anything, so I don't waste my time going any-more!" Have you ever heard this from a fellow Sir Knight? I have. Have you ever said it yourself? I haven't, but I have thought it more than once in my Masonic career. I have entertained the thought of walking away from Masonry and never looking back. Of course, I have also entertained, at various times, the thought of walking away from my job or my family or my lifestyle. Not that I have any intent of actually walking away from any of the people with whom I share my life or the activities that are my life. I use it as a coping strategy when life seems overwhelming. It's fun to fantasize about leaving all of the stress, work, obligations, and relationships behind and starting a new life somewhere else. Of course, that new, better, imaginary life will be perfect in every way.

However, in the real world life is not perfect and can never be so. We can strive to make it better, but only if we participate in living. By the same token, your Commandery and your Templary experience, in general your Masonic way of life, requires your participation. That participation has many levels. In my way of thinking, the first and most personal level is internal. We each use the principles of Templary in our lives to help guide us in our interactions with our fellow human beings. This level of participation does not require us to go any-where or pay any money. It is the statement to ourselves that, "I am a Knight Templar." The next level is external, but from a distance. We pay our dues, read our Masonic publications, and communicate with our fellow members usually also at a distance by phone or email. While this level also does not require us to go anywhere, it does require a monetary commitment. The final and uppermost level is external and direct. It requires going to meetings and events. It requires direct interaction with our fellow members in person. It requires a personal commitment of time and resources. IT IS ACTIVE PARTICIPATION!

"Someone needs to do something or we are going to lose our Commandery!" Again, have you ever heard this statement from a fellow Sir Knight? I have. Have you ever said it yourself? I have and about my own Commandery. I said it about ten years ago, though I am happy to say that today my Commandery is rebuilding, slowly, but steadily. It did not happen over night. It has required the efforts, the sweat and sacrifices, of an ever-growing number of active Sir Knights. And, most importantly, my fellow Templars, we had to accept the fact that the job will never be done. Members do not fall like mana from Heaven, money does not grow on trees, and a Commandery does not lead itself.

"Okay," you might say, "tell us all how to do it." Unfortunately, I cannot. While I cannot tell you how to save your Commandery, I can offer some ideas that might help you find what works for your Commandery.

Before we can successfully recruit new members we must get the current members excited again about Templary and their Commandery. The challenge is getting them to listen again. We need to talk up the Commandery, plan up the year, plan up each month, plan up each and every meeting. Having a period of fellowship or a carry-in potluck dinner before each meeting can help encourage participation. Plus, we need to maintain regular, informative communication with our members. The plans, calendars, and agendas need to be shared with the active members and, more importantly, with the silent majority of members who are not currently active. We need to stop wasting our meetings because meaningless meetings are a waste of everyone's time.

Playing with swords is a big part of Templary. Drilling can be fun, so shake it up. Organize several teams within your Commandery. You can have a Junior team of new members, an Officer team, and a Senior team of Past Commanders. You can hold your own drill competition events. You could even invite nearby Commanderies to participate.

However, there has to be more to Templary than just drilling, so mix it up. Practice/perform the full opening ritual, try out the short form on page 98 in the black book, or review/discuss the opening rituals for the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross and the Order of Malta. Practice/confer the Orders one per meeting instead of using festivals. Provide educational presentations and discussions on historic Templary, modern Knights Templary, elements of the ritual work, and leadership. The bottom line is that we must maintain a positive attitude, stay personally excited, because excitement is contagious. Saving a Commandery involves changing attitudes and opinions.

There is no cookie cutter solution or formula for saving a Commandery. A Commandery is not an object that can be tested, analyzed, diagnosed, and repaired. It is a collection of Sir Knights, of individuals working together in a common cause, and each Commandery has a dynamic character unique to that collection. We can discuss possible ways of creating motivation so strong that it could shake a Commandery back to life. We can describe the potential solution sets in terms of emotional states such as focus, desire, commitment, decision, and disgust. We can illustrate the challenges with wise quotations from iconic, historical individuals with whom we can all relate. But in the end, I would hope that we would all come to the realization that what is required to save our Commanderies lies within each of us. So long as we stay resolute in our dedication to Templary it will never disappear from the face of the Earth.

## **FINDING HAPPINESS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES**

The Beatitudes, found in the Gospel of St. Matthew, are very familiar to us as they are presented in the third lesson during the Order of Malta (Chapter 5, verses 3 through 11). Jesus used them in his Sermon on the Mount and they can be viewed as a commentary on happiness. Most of us think of happiness in material terms – the stuff we have – or relationships – the people we love. However, Jesus indicates that we actually find happiness in unexpected places.

Jesus begins the Sermon with a list of the places where happiness may be found. Each beatitude begins with the familiar words “Blessed are ...” Some translations of the Bible use the words “Happy are ...” or “Fortunate are ...” to express the term used by the original author. This substitution can help us understand the paradoxical nature of what Jesus describes as happiness. For example, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” indicates that the gifts of God are not received based on our merit, but on our faith. It is this humble reliance upon God’s goodness that is prerequisite for us to become true Christians. We are poor in spirit, but our faith in God brings us spiritual happiness – in other words the blessing promised by Jesus.

While the beatitudes are not a list of commandments, they do describe the blessings and the promises of spiritual happiness with which the faithful will be rewarded. Jesus describes the humanistic qualities that can result in true happiness – the blessings of God. His teaching helps us to look in the right places.

## **STORMS AND SALVATION**

Many times during our life we find ourselves in the midst of problems and difficulties. Let us think about the story of Jesus who proposed to his disciples a trip across the sea of Galilee as related to us by Mark (Mark 4: 35-41, RSV).

Jesus didn’t state, “Let us go into the midst of the sea and drown in a storm.” He simply said, “Let us go over to the other side.” However, the disciples failed to trust Jesus when they were caught up in a

storm during the crossing. The disciples still didn't understand the authority of Jesus. While they were committed to Him as their Messiah, they had yet to realize that Jesus was more. He was Lord over even the physical elements. The disciples, overwhelmed with the situation and drawing on what they knew about sailing, weren't thinking about what Jesus had told them. While they were seeking a natural solution, they failed to take into account that Jesus was on board and had forgotten His words. They needed to trust the word of God even in the midst of a storm.

In the second book of Peter (2 Peter 1: 16-19, RSV) we witness the glory of Jesus, "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." Peter's assessment of the Holy Scripture declares it more dependable than a voice from heaven heard with our own ears.

Many of us desire a word from God. We pray, "Oh God, speak to me." However the Bible is already there in our hands. God has spoken to us with a written word more sure than any audible voice. The Bible is God speaking to us. It is God's word. We need to listen to it.