

Grand Commandery of Massachusetts and Rhode Island

June 2023 News



SK Eugene B. Nichols
Grand Commander

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Greetings Sir Knights;

Saints are usually commemorated on the day of their going to heaven, which in the early times of Christianity often coincided with their martyrdom. However, the feast day of Saint John the Baptist, one of the two eminent Christian patrons in Freemasonry, has had a unique status since the Church's first centuries, with his birth, six months before that of Jesus, also being celebrated. The Church has always known, through Scripture, that the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit when Mary, with the Lord already in her womb, visited her cousin Elizabeth.

We read in Luke 1:10-15: "And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.'"

The mystery of John is still fulfilled in the world today. Anyone destined to believe in Christ must first have the spirit and power of John come into their soul to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (*Luke 1:17*) and so that "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth" (*Luke 3:5*), the roughness of the human heart. Not only was this true in those times, but also today the spirit and strength of John precedes the coming of our Lord and Savior.

Every Christian is called to continue the mission of John the Baptist, preparing people for the encounter with Christ: "How beautiful is the conduct of John the Baptist!" Saint Josemaría wrote. "How clean, how noble, how disinterested! He truly prepared the way for the Lord. His disciples only knew Christ by hearsay. And he encourages them to dialogue with the Master; he urges them to look closely at Him and get to know Him; he gives them the opportunity to admire

the wonders Christ is working.” The life of Saint John the Baptist was disciplined and penitent, in keeping with the message of conversion that he preached. His preaching was a bold announcement of God’s truth, to which he bore witness even to the point of death. Like him, we too are called to take Christ to the places where our lives unfold. Therefore, like John and his disciples, we will set our eyes on Jesus so that, filled with his life, we can invite those by our side to do the same.

As the activities of our Templar year subside during the summer months, let us be ever mindful of these words and continue to think, speak, and act in accordance with the life of John. Let us reflect on his life and prepare ourselves so that we may guide others toward their encounter with Jesus.

In His Knightly Service,

Eugene B. Nichols
Grand Commander

From the Apartment of the Grand Prelate

Sir Knight & Rev. Matthew J. Wissell, Grand Standard Bearer, Associate Grand Prelate

We are at that time of year when our Commandery activities tend to slow down. Less meetings, less activities take place during the Summer. Many of us will have some time away in the few months. It is a time of rest and refreshment.

Sabbath, derived from the Hebrew word “Shabbat,” means “to cease” or “to rest.” It is a sacred and vital concept that dates back to biblical times. In the Book of Genesis, God rested on the seventh day after creating the universe, thereby establishing a pattern for humanity to follow. The Sabbath serves as a reminder of our need for physical and spiritual rejuvenation, as well as our trust in God’s provision.

In our modern society, the idea of setting aside a whole day for rest may seem impractical or even impossible. However, the essence of Sabbath time lies not only in a specific day but also in the intentional practice of setting aside regular periods for rest and reconnection. It is about creating space in our lives to detach from our daily worries and engage in activities that bring us joy, peace, and a sense of holiness.

Sabbath time offers us a chance to realign our priorities and find balance in our lives. It allows us to step away from the demands of our work and responsibilities, giving us room to breathe, reflect, and nurture our relationships. By embracing Sabbath time, we acknowledge that we are more than just our roles and tasks. We are beloved children of God, deserving of rest and restoration.

There are various ways to incorporate Sabbath time into our lives. It can be as simple as taking a leisurely walk in nature, reading a book that nourishes our souls, spending quality time with loved ones, engaging in a hobby, or participating in worship and prayer. The key is to intentionally set aside time for these activities, treating them as sacred moments dedicated to our spiritual well-being.

Let us remember that Sabbath time is not a luxury but a necessity for our well-being. It is a divine gift, a chance to recharge our spirits, and a means to deepen our connection with God and one another. May we find the courage to prioritize rest, and in doing so, may we discover a renewed sense of purpose and a greater capacity to serve.

Enjoy the Summer....

In His Service,

SK and Rev. Matthew J. Wissell
Grand Standard Bearer
Associate Grand Prelate



Fraternal Visit with Narragansett Commandery No. 27