

GRAND COMMANDERY KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF TENNESSEE

Tennessee Knight Templar News

SIR KNIGHT JOHN W. SIMMONS II, RIGHT EMINENT GRAND COMMANDER

June AD 2024 / AO 906

Edited by: Jesse J. Harper, KYCH



Pictured Above:

Sir Knights from Cyprus Commandery #23 in Maryville participated in a Knight School led by Very Eminent Deputy Grand Commander John Palmer and Grand Instructor/Inspector Robert Peay on Thursday May 23rd. The Sir Knights were instructed in and conducted various sword drills. Cyprus Commandery typically holds a practice on the 4th Thursday of the month.

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Sir Knights,

If you are aware of any members who are not currently receiving this monthly newsletter, then please have them send an email to Steve Guendert with their name, email address, and Commandery number: sguendert@ieec.org

Currently only about half of our membership is receiving this newsletter on a monthly basis. Assist us in getting this newsletter distributed to every Sir Knight on our rolls.



JOHN WISEMAN SIMMONS II
RIGHT EMINENT GRAND COMMANDER
Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Tennessee



June Message from the Grand Commander

Esteemed Sir Knights,

I continue to travel to represent you, the Sir Knights of Tennessee, at the Grand Commandery Sessions of other states. I was on my way to the Grand Conclave in Mississippi when a flat tire stopped me and sent me back home. After the Grand Lodge District Meeting for District 1 today, at the Memphis Scottish Rite Temple, I shall be heading to Florida to represent you there.

During the recent constitution ceremonies for our two newest Commanderies, Appalachia Commandery #45 in Knoxville and Phillip Lacy Commandery #46 in Selmer, I noticed that the ceremony states that we dedicate the Commandery to St. John the Almoner. I found that interesting, as I was not familiar with this saint, so I decided to do some research.

Our ritual states that St. John the Baptist is the patron saint of the Knights of Malta. According to the biography by Norman H. Baynes, however, St. John the Almoner was their original patron. Perhaps this is how he became associated with our order.

He was born in Cyprus around 560 AD. He married and had children, but after his wife and children died, he entered the religious life and became patriarch of Alexandria from 606 to 616. He contended for the Chalcedonian doctrines against the Monophysites. He was a great benefactor to the needy and protected them from corrupt officials. He even gave alms to one clearly not in need, saying, "Give unto him; he may be Our Lord in disguise." When a rich man presented him with a magnificent bed covering, he sold it and gave the money to the poor. The rich man kept buying it again and giving it back to him, and he kept selling it and giving away the money. He protected a monk named Vitalis of Gaza, known for visiting the red-light district of Alexandria. After the death of Vitalis, it became known that he had been doing charitable work there.

Near the end of his life, St. John sent aid to the displaced Christians when Jerusalem was overran by the Sassanid Persians. When the Persians occupied Alexandria itself, he fled to his native country of Cyprus, where he died around 620 AD.

His feast day is on January 23 in the west and November 11 in the east. He is a worthy example of charity for us to consider.

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From the Very Eminent Deputy Grand Commander John L. Palmer, KGC

Sir Knights,

It is interesting to look at the parallels between the Ancient Knights Templar and our current York Rite Templar Order. To put things into perspective, the Grand Encampment Knights Templar of the United States of America has already lasted longer than the original Order which was established around 1118 AD. and was "officially" disbanded by Pope Clement V around 1312 AD. The original Order had a profound and lasting effect on Western Civilization, and we have the potential to do the same.

The ancient Knights took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We as modern Masonic Templars are bound by similar but not identical vows. While the ancient Templar was required to donate all his earthly possessions to the Order, we, as modern Templars, are bound to be charitable to those less fortunate than ourselves, and specifically to destitute widows, helpless orphans, and defenseless maidens. In our society today, there are not so many destitute widows, helpless orphans, and defenseless maidens, but there are countless fellow human beings suffering from diseases of the eye throughout the world that are served by our Knights Templar Eye Foundation. Also, in our everyday lives, there are countless opportunities for us as individuals to come to the aid of those around us, sometimes financially, but also with a kind word or a helpful deed.

The ancient Knights of the Temple were a religious order of monks and; therefore, bound to remain unmarried and chaste. We, on the other hand, are free to marry and have families; however, we are bound to a strict code of morality based on the teachings of the *Holy Scriptures*. Although the world around us may look upon adultery, fornication, and homosexuality as normal and acceptable behavior, we are held to a higher standard as defined in the *Holy Bible*. There is no room among us for the licentious, promiscuous, and lewd.

The original Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ took a vow of obedience to the Order, but we as contemporary Knights are free men who affiliate with the order of our own free will and can disassociate from the Order at any time. We are, however, most solemnly bound to obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ as revealed in His *New Testament*.

As the ancient Templars evolved from guardians of pilgrims to elite soldiers of the Crusades and then to farming and commerce and finally to international banking, their fame and popularity grew. Many wanted to join who were not willing to discipline themselves to the requirements of the Order. They wanted instead, to buy their way into the Order and enjoy its reputation without making the requisite sacrifice and commitment. Eventually, in the late thirteenth century, there evolved a group of these people who represented themselves as Templars while their only true connection or similarity to the real Knights was their willingness to pay monetarily for the title.

Unfortunately, history repeats itself, and we find that over half of our current members only contribute financially to our Order. Perhaps they think that they are buying the reputation of the Order for the price of their fees and dues. Luckily, there is, and always was, a core of Knights who remained faithful to the principles and the mission of the Order, sacrificing their time and efforts together to promote the ideals we hold as truths. Are you one of them?

John L. Palmer, KGC, VEDGC
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From the Eminent Grand Prelate

Sir Knight James O. Weir II

The Testimony

“In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.” (Ephesians 1:5 ESV)

Charles H. Spurgeon served at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for over thirty years and was arguably the most famous pastor of his day. His sermons are still in print today, and he is one of the most quoted believers of all time.

He recalls in his testimony a moment when he was sixteen years old when the Holy Spirit revealed a glimpse of His glory that ended up shaping his life and ministry for the rest of his days. “When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was the one seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received the doctrine of election in my own soul, as John Bunyan says, ‘burnt into my heart as with a hot iron,’ and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown from a babe into a man — that I had made progress in scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, that clue to the truth of God.”

He continues, “One weeknight, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher’s sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, ‘How did you come to be a Christian?’ I sought the Lord, ‘but how did you come to seek the Lord?’ The truth flashed across my mind in a moment — I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my soul to make me seek Him. The Holy Spirit convicted me of the sinfulness of who I am and the holiness of who He is. I prayed, but then I asked myself, ‘How came I to pray?’ I was induced to pray by reading the scriptures. How came I to read the scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, “I ascribe my change wholly to God.”

We all have a testimony, a moment when our eyes are opened to the truth of the gospel so wide that we cannot look away. A moment of being blinded by the glory, perfection, and grace of the Holy Trinity. We do not simply wake up one morning and say to ourselves, “Today is the day I follow Jesus and repent of my sins.” We must first be pricked by the Holy Spirit, whether through a sermon, or devotion, or a simple conversation. We must come to grips with the wickedness and depravity in each of us and confront the holiness of God, knowing that we have nothing to offer Him except the sin in our hearts. While he offers us the righteousness of Christ, while God may lead us all on a different path to redemption through our own personal testimonies, the truth is that once we are redeemed, we all follow one path to Him.

Martin Luther said it best, “The life of a Christian is not a life of perfection but a life of daily repentance.” So, I challenge and encourage each Sir Knight to question himself and his salvation. Put it to the test, read scripture daily, and pray fervently. You, Sir Knight, have you been convicted? Are you repenting? Are you covered in the righteousness of Christ? Do you, like Spurgeon, ascribe your change wholly to God?

Private Animosity Part Two

By: Jesse J. Harper, KYCH

Grand Commandery Membership Committee and *Tennessee Knight Templar News* Editor

Last month, I started a series on examples of private animosities that can, and do, negatively affect our brotherhood. I addressed purposeful avoidance and willful exclusion. In this edition I will broach the subjects of visible disdain along with pettiness and pride.

Visible disdain-

This happens when our members are noticeably scowling at each other from across the room. It can also manifest itself in visible jealousy over being awarded recognition. As much as I would like to say this is not happening, I witnessed it firsthand while attending the Grand Sessions in March. An appointed officer in one of the grand lines was talking to a fellow brother about coming to visit his local body. Instead of approaching the visitation with excitement and welcoming the opportunity to have a grand officer visit, the brother almost immediately questioned his motives for visiting. This kind of reaction is detrimental to our brotherhood, especially when it is done in such a public manner.

I remember my first few years in this fraternity and how exciting it was for a grand officer of any body to be in attendance. Sir Knights, this still holds true for our new members today. I attended a conferral of the Royal Arch Degree in early April for six Companions where there were representatives of each of the three York Rite bodies in attendance, and each candidate was blown away because of how important he felt that grand officers wanted to be in attendance for his degree work. This is one instance where it is especially crucial for us to remember our first days in the Craft and how much of an honor we felt when our grand representatives came to visit. I assure you that excitement and disdain are equally contagious, so which do you want spreading in your local Commandery?

Pettiness and Pride-

This happens when brothers are faced with their mistakes or shortcomings and get their feelings hurt because someone has brought them to light. Even when issues are addressed in the most professional and diplomatic manner possible, some individuals will hold a perpetual grudge against the other person even after necessary apologies are given. This goes back to what I said last month where brothers refuse to attend meetings solely based on someone else being in attendance. Inevitably, we are not always going to get along with everyone or even, on occasion, to like each other, but we still have to find ways to put our differences aside so that we can work in harmony, achieving a common purpose.

If we are truly being honest with ourselves, then we can admit that each of us have experienced animosity with another brother at some point in our Masonic journeys, but as Christians, we are called to forgive others. This is a major reason that we, as Christian Knights, open every Stated Conclave with the Lord's Prayer. We ask God to forgive us for our trespasses, while also praying we forgive others for their trespasses against us. I will be the first to admit that it is not always wise to associate with another brother that you have issues with, but those broken bonds should not encroach on the peace, harmony, and camaraderie that is called for in our stated meetings and Conclaves.

We do not always have to like each other, but we are commanded to love one another. At its core, our Fraternity is comprised of Sir Knights with different temperaments, talents, and convictions. There are no two Sir Knights who are exactly alike; therefore, we have to embrace each other's differences and find ways to utilize these differences to achieve even more as a brotherhood.

I will end with the same question I asked last month.

Can you imagine how unstoppable our Fraternity would be if we were truly cemented in sincere Brotherly Love?

A Perspective on the Wine of Refreshment

by Ian GM Kirkpatrick
Generalissimo, Cyprus Commandery #23

Brethren,

In the Order of the Red Cross, we relate an apocryphal story of King Darius. In it, he asks three princes and rulers, whom we anthropomorphize as Brothers, "which is the greatest: The strength of wine, The power of the King, or The influence of woman?" As we all know, the third Brother argues that "above all things truth beareth away the victory."

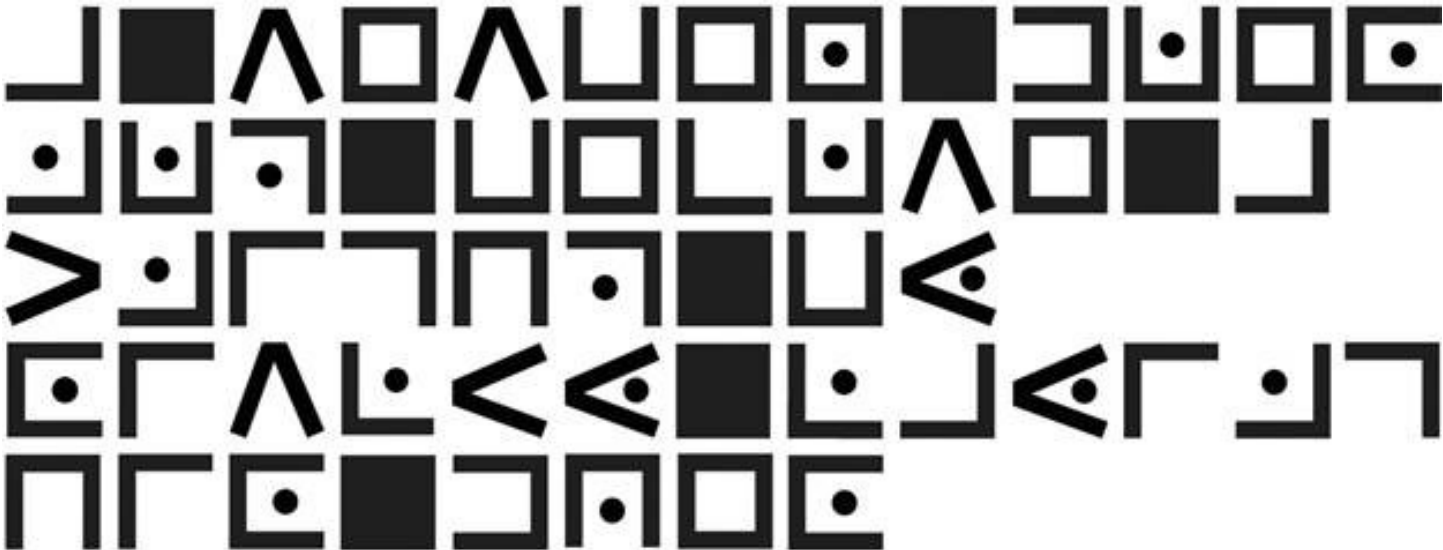
While I do not wish to denigrate the resolution of the story, I thought it would be beneficial for us as a group to examine these four assertions in a little more depth. I would like to start with the strength of wine. Past Grand Commander Robert Beam often quotes a well-known saying, "truth will stand when the world burns." For the sake of argument, I would like to quote another well-known saying, "in vino veritas – in wine, there is truth."

Why is it that this Brother has so emphatically come to the conclusion that wine is the greatest? As in all Masonic bodies, we are building on the foundation of the Blue Lodge. So what does the Blue Lodge have to say about wine? From the Entered Apprentices degree, we are taught of the virtue of temperance. Notably, this word does not mean abstinence. It means all good things in moderation. After all, Jesus drank wine. The sin is getting drunk, not the drink itself.

Later in the Fellowcraft, we are told of the three pillars of wisdom, strength, and beauty. Here we are discussing the strength of wine, the power or wisdom of the King, and the influence or beauty of women. We learn that wine is one of the wages of a Fellowcraft Mason, specifically it is the "wine of refreshment." This is a connection that I really want to emphasize, for we call our Lodges from labor to refreshment and vice versa every month. We often say there are three things needed to make a Masonic body successful: a ritual, a cause or charity, and a time of refreshment with our Brethren. Here at Cyprus Commandery #23, our Easter and Christmas observances have been massively successful. We have also held a Knife and Fork degree for the Chapter. Is it any wonder that this Brother has decided that the wine of refreshment is the best?

I want to make one more connection, and this one is a little bit out there. As a Sir Knight advances through the Order of the Temple and visits the Hermit, he is told "here are bread and pure water, sit thee down and refresh thyself." Our refreshment has now become pure water. For here the wine has another purpose, a ritualistic purpose: the libation. By bringing the wine into the ritual space, are we saying that refreshment has become our labor?

Masonry is at a crux right now. We are trying to be too many things for too many people. Some join Masonry for the social aspect, some for the philosophical, some for the charitable, but many join simply because their grandfather was a member, and they want to be one too. So, I ask the group: the brother who has decided wine is the best, is he misguided? Or is Masonry serving the exact purpose for him of which he is seeking? Does our ritual not lead him on the path to this natural conclusion? Foregoing the ending of the parable, why, to you, is the wine of refreshment important? How, if needed, can we continue to improve this aspect of Masonry without overindulging in intemperance and diluting the almighty force of truth?



Request for Submissions!

Sir Knights – We need submissions for the *Tennessee Knight Templar News*. Is your Commandery going to confer any of the orders soon? Did you have some sort of unusual or fun event? Send us an article to share with the other Tennessee Knights and include photos if you have them.

We would also like to have your thoughts and ideas about how we can make Tennessee Templary more fun and exciting. Send us an article!
Please send news and events going on in your Commandery to:

TNKTNewsEditor@gmail.com