

A Time for Sacrifice

by **Reverend Sir Knight Donald C. Kerr**

The Fourth of July, as we know, is Independence Day. Going back in history to 1776, we can recount certain events. Fifty-six men met together and signed a new document. That parchment, The Declaration of Independence, would stand forever as a partnership between the living, the dead, and the yet unborn.

The last paragraph reads, "We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, our sacred honor." The fifty-six signatures were kept secret for half a year, because those who signed that document knew that they were risking everything.

The fifty-six men were men of means and well-educated. Twenty-four were lawyers. Eleven were merchants. Nine were farmers and owners of large plantations. One was a surgeon, and one was an ordained clergyman.

In Pennsylvania, the state house is called Independence Hall. The chosen men from each of the colonies sat down together, and on June eleventh, a committee was formed to draw up a Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson finished the draft in seventeen days, and on July 4, 1776, it was adopted. Of the fifty-six men who signed that document, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes looted or destroyed. Nine died in the war from hardships or bullets. One wealthy planter and trader was Carter Braxton of Virginia. He saw his ships swept from the sea in battle. To pay his debts he sold his house and all his properties. He died in rags.

So let us remember the heritage from which we come and remember too that at least nine and perhaps as many as twenty of the fifty-six were Masons. That should make us proud.

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