

In Hoc Signo Vincas!

by **Sir Knight Jonathan Horvath**

Are you familiar with the phrase *In Hoc Signo Vincas*? I certainly hope so as it is the motto of our valiant and magnanimous order. However, prior to receiving the Order of the Temple I really knew nothing about it. Sure I had heard it quoted from time to time, but I never studied it and therefore never really understood it.

However, while receiving the Order of the Temple, during the second lesson, I experienced something relating to this phrase that was perhaps the most powerful thing I have experienced thus far in Masonry if not in my entire life. So I set off to do a little research, because what I experienced is somewhat different than the traditional interpretation. Personal experiences and thoughts are uniquely subjective, and I offer this not as the be all and end all of analysis, but rather only as another way of understanding our motto. Perhaps something in it will ring true with you, or cause you to think anew about our Order and Savior, and if so, I will have been blessed and our Father glorified.

There are a couple versions to the story, but basically legend tells us that Constantine, prior to the battle of Milvian Bridge, saw the chi-rho symbol in a vision, accompanied by "?? ????? ????", "with this as your standard you shall have victory," which translates to Latin as *In Hoc Signo Vincas*. We are also told that Constantine did not understand this vision until Christ appeared to him in a dream, telling him that he should use this sign against his enemies - thus in this sign you shall conquer. Within two days, Constantine had won the battle decisively, giving him complete control of the western Roman Empire and thus paving the way for Christianity to become the dominant religion of the Roman Empire and ultimately of Europe.

During the Order, I experienced a different interpretation - in this seal [is] victory. After reading the etymology of "signo" I believe this is a more accurate translation. *Signo* comes from the Latin *signum* or sign?, which is a mark or a sign such as one used to seal a document or a covenant. Taken in this context, our motto may have a more profound meaning, and this is how it struck me during the second lesson of the Order.

Taken in this context, I believe the phrase represents the sacrifice of God's own son on the cross; a final seal, a final covenant ("a new and everlasting covenant" in Jesus' own words) through which we can achieve victory, not against our mortal human enemies, but against sin, evil, and death. It is God's last call to our faith.

That is - God saying "for man to be faithful unto me, I must make this sacrifice now, that I spared Abraham from." At one point Jesus says something; "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt." Man is weak, forgetful, sinful, and ignorant as evidenced by his subsequent words to his disciples that followed him into Gethsemane. But it is God's ultimate expression of his faith in us and love for us; this is what allows us to have faith in Him. This is the seal that allows us to conquer our own imperfections and be victorious over sin, evil, and death.

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