

MARTYRS AND VETERANS

By
Richard F. Muth

November 8th is the Catholic feast day of the Quatuor Coronati, or Four Crowned Martyrs. This name may be familiar due to Quatuor Coronati Lodge in London, considered to be the premier lodge of Masonic research. It publishes research papers submitted by Masonic scholars from around the globe in its annual publication, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, or *AQC*.

Who were the Quatuor Coronati? What is their significance to Freemasonry and more specifically to us as Knights Templar? The Four Crowned Martyrs were really two related groups totaling nine. Their legend is part of both church histories and early Masonic texts, including the 12th century work known as the *Arundel Manuscript*, and the more famous *Regis Manuscript* of the 14th century. The Four Crowned Martyrs were also held as the patron saints of German operative Masons in the middle ages. What follows is a brief summary of their story.

The first group is composed of four artificers and one apprentice who are described as having been skilled in the “art of stone-squaring” or that of sculpting stone. (In Hebrew, they would be known as Giblites or Giblim, a word which holds some significance for many Freemasons.) In the year 298 AD, the Roman Emperor Diocletian built a temple to Æsculapius, the god of health, and directed these four sculptors and their apprentice to carve a statue of that god. Being Christians, they would not do so. The Emperor, a great persecutor of Christians, was not to be refused, and he

ordered them put to death. On the 8th day of November, they were executed, their bodies placed in leaden coffins and thrown into the Tiber River.

Other sculptors were then engaged to complete the work, and two years later, in 300 AD, Diocletian dedicated his temple. He ordered his soldiers to pay homage to the statue of Æsculapius, but four officers of the city militia, being Christians, refused to do so. The Emperor ordered that they be scourged to death and their bodies cast upon the street, where they lay for five days. Tradition tells us that these four also died on November 8th, two years after the previous five.

Like our ancient Grand Master, these nine martyrs sacrificed their lives rather than forfeit their integrity. They died rather than compromise their allegiance to the one living and true God and their faith in Christ. It can be said that they died for religious freedom. The freedom to worship God as each man sees fit is a landmark of Freemasonry and a fundamental liberty of the United States. These Masons and soldiers lost their lives because they did not have that freedom.

In November we also commemorate a day set aside to honor our military Veterans who have served, in part, to ensure such freedoms, not only for us but for many others around the world. The date selected for this remembrance is the anniversary of the Armistice of the “War to End All Wars.” The cessation of hostilities was set for the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918 and is still commemorated throughout

much of the world.

The end of that war also brought about the birth of an organization that has contributed much to our military, and to Masonry, the Masonic Service Association of North America or MSA. It was founded because American Grand Lodges wanted to do something to help our military personnel, both at home and abroad. The federal government, however, would not deal with all the individual Grand Lodges and said, "If you can have one organization to represent Freemasonry, we will be more than glad to work with you." Thus the MSA was founded in 1919. Like our troops, the MSA provides several vital services: hospital visitation to veterans, disaster relief,

public and media relations about Freemasonry, and Masonic education and publications. With regard to the latter, they may be best known for their monthly *Short Talk Bulletins*, which views *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* as a premier publication of Masonic research.

We should remain mindful of the sacrifice of these ancient Christian Brethren and martyrs as well as of the sacrifice and services provided by our Masonic Brethren and others who are military veterans. Let us always remain grateful for their contribution to our liberties.

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You may be a Knight Templar if your sword is a vivid reminder of your four vows for its use.

You may be just a member if you believe that the cost of the sword is too much to own one.

You may be a Knight Templar if you proudly wear your uniform at public events and are willing and able to explain what it is and why.

You may be just a member if you believe that it's childish for grown men to dress up in public.

Submitted by L. Edward Villiaume, III