

A Melancholy Memento of Morality

by Sir Knight **Jeff Bennett**, P.C.

As I reflect on our ritual symbolism of the melancholy mementos of morality, I meditate on the teaching of darkness, the fallen nature of this world, and the gleaming hope of immortality. As for the teaching of darkness, the Elements in the Chamber of Reflection and on the Triangle reveal and conceal a very striking theological stance in my mind. Its presentation is stark and looming. This scene overwhelms me by breathing a penetrating fear of Death and of an unknown afterlife. It shows our frailty, our vulnerability, and that Life is given by God and supported by Jesus, built on His Salvation, and communicated through the New Testament and Faith. The Truth of God is the only thing between us and Damnation. In our ritual the Bible holds up this Truth and supports our feeble wasting efforts while holding back eternal judgment. Such dark elements gather the glorious message of God's Grace and Redemption through His Son, Jesus.

As shown in Genesis with summation in the writings of the Apostle Paul, the fallen nature of our world is unmistakable. The Great Architect of the Universe's original plan was tainted by Sin. The Relics in our customs rest upon a divine nature not a created one. Darkness spreads out below it, seemingly without bounds. Yet the Truth needs only to be as wide as needed to support the frail relics. Note, the Bible doesn't cover all the darkness, just that necessary space to save them from the being in darkness. When on the Triangle, it shines from above emblematic of God's Truth, Holiness, Character, Glory. Brilliance shining through the darkness to a terminal being supported by only his Grace. Further in the Rites, we are admonished to hold truth to service to Christ and His Kingdom. The darkened Asylum represents our imperfect world. Dwell your mind here; the further away from the Bible, the lesser the light of God's Truth is shone or penetrates. The further the distance from the Bible, the more the Darkness of Sin surrounds you. This scene when first revealed usually reaches its aim (to strike fear) of the End. How do I know? Because when my eyes first beheld this "memento of morality," I felt shock and unease. My focus was on the darkness, the finality of death not the Bible or the Light. In the chamber, hope is yet a flickering candle. While the sands of our time are wasting, we are charged with duties and questions that must be answered. We assume a pilgrim's garb, one who is in a foreign country, not one just journeying through and not yet to the final destination.

The Darkness is only removed when the Asylum is reached and our final station is reached. The scenes passed through remind us that we are depraved, helpless creatures who journey toward an accolade there to our new title or name. Along the way, much like in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, we are assisted by others with food, teachings, and Truth.

The span of time in the execution of the Order of the Temple ceremony is lengthy, yet I ask you to ponder the depth of its lessons that will strengthen your faith, your hope, and your charity which we have as Sir Knights enlisted under the Banner of our Great Captain of our Salvation, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

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