

Reflections of a Knight Templar

by Sir Knight **Tom Janyssek**

I was recently given a business card from Sir Knight Frederick H. Whitty, the R.E. Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of North Carolina. On the back of his card is this formula: the Christian Cross plus the Square and Compass equals Knights Templar. I really took to heart the message that the card displayed and its general intent.

Knights Templar are Freemasons who practice a belief in Christianity. In the eighteenth century Commanderies were formed specifically for Christian Masons and were founded upon the legends of the Medieval Knights Templar of the twelfth century.

All of this reminds me of many years ago when I took the Orders and my time in the room of reflection. We answered the question, "If called upon to draw your sword in a religious cause, will you give preference to the Christian Religion?" And in the conferring of the Knight of Malta, we are told, "Awake! Be not asleep to your duty, but watchful in the faith of Jesus Christ" and of course, the most prominent question of all, "My Brother, do you believe that the Savior died on the Cross for the remission of sin?" These are questions I took seriously, and while taking the Orders, I remember proudly hearing during the course of the day the title "Christian Knight." These were just a few of the inspirational memories of all I encountered that day.

So what is a Christian? Webster's dictionary says that a Christian is a believer in Christianity. Christianity is a religion founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ. A Christian is someone who gives his or her life over to Christ and practices His teachings from God's inspired Word. You were created to become like Christ. From the very beginning God's plan has been to make you like his Son, Jesus. So are we a reflection of Christ in our actions and practices, or is being a Knight Templar a vain attempt to satisfy our egos and to be socially accepted in recognition alone? Do our actions in public mirror those of Christ?

T. W. Hunt has devoted his life to such studies. In his book, *The Mind of Christ*, he discusses what the characteristics of a Christ-like mind should contain. He said "the natural spiritual state-one that is filled with God's Spirit and growing in Christ - is difficult to maintain. One reason is the constant assault of information on our senses. Tempters have opportunities to take us into realms of thought never known before." Has this happened to us?

As a whole society of friends and Brothers, we seem to have a tendency to look away when it comes to the very existence of our fraternal responsibilities. We start by compromising that our input at a meeting or our time spent at the lodge is sufficient. We hear that Masonry is a way of life, but is it really or have we turned it into our own personal and private club?

We are accountable to a higher level because we chose to be Knights Templar. The Orders have built a bridge between man and his Savior. The title of Sir Knight is one of privilege and should not be taken lightly. The practice of the Christian virtues, as well as the moral and spiritual lessons, pave the way for our lives.

I think back to the life of Jacques DeMolay who was the 23rd Grand Master of the Order of the Temple or Knights Templar. The order was created in the aftermath of the First Crusade of the year 1096 to ensure safe passage of European pilgrims to Jerusalem, and here was a man who was tortured for years and finally burned at the stake for his beliefs and actions in the name of Christ. Reports say Jacques requested that his hands were not to be bound so that he could pray in his final moments as they burned him at the stake. This was a true servant of Christ who represents what being a true Knight is all about.

Rick Warren in his book, A Purpose Driven Life, says "We serve God by serving others." He says "The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige, and position. If you can demand service from others, you've arrived. In our self-serving culture with its me-first mentality, acting like a servant is not a popular concept. Jesus, however, measured greatness in terms of service, not status." How do you measure on the scale of being a servant? Better yet, do you show a "humble" servant spirit? Is it one that is serving our fraternity or one that is only looking for acolytes and awards?

Staying focused on what the true meaning of being a Knight Templar is about is entirely up to you! We can stand by with plausibility that we represent Knights Templar and continue to carry on as we have, or we can make a decision that we want and need to practice Christ's teachings and uphold our obligation. The actions, attitudes, and our mannerisms will prevail in our lives if we just embrace Christianity. By the way we live, we have so many opportunities as Knights Templar to show our fellow neighbors and friends just what makes us different.

We have something in Masonry that no other organization can offer. As Knights Templar, we have something no other Masonic organization can offer, and it is up to us to live up to what it represents and the challenges that lie ahead.

Reference:

Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life, 2002

T. W. Hunt and Claude V. King, The Mind of Christ, 1994

Webster's II Dictionary, 1984

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