

## **So Different - But the Same**

A Guest Message from:  
**Joe R. Manning, Jr.**  
Most Eminent Grand Preceptor  
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Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests

Recently I attended a district meeting for the blue lodges in my area which was held in the lodge building of a small rural town. The Grand Master, who led the evening's program, began by profusely complimenting the host lodge for the new signage on their building. While my Grand Master did an excellent job that evening, and I heartily agree with his praise for the new signage, I could not help but compare this thought process to a recent experience I had a long way from this rural Oklahoma community of 350 people.

On June 10-12, 2010, Most Eminent Gerald A. Ford, Past Grand Preceptor, and I traveled to Birmingham, England to attend their Grand College of The Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests or Order of Holy Wisdom. Our meetings were to be held at the Warwickshire Provincial Grand Lodge building. Accommodations were provided for us within easy walking distance. We were told, "Just go down the street, and it's on the left." On the left was a modern, well maintained building marked The Clarendon Suites, containing absolutely no Masonic markings via signage, stones, or emblems.

Inside we found an 88,500 square foot Masonic center with 26 employees, a restaurant, and in-house banquet facilities. Its six lodge rooms are home to some 75 symbolic Lodges and 12 Mark Master lodges. A visible difference was that each symbolic Lodge had a beautiful multi-color banner adorned with words and symbols depicting the name and history of the Lodge. These banners surrounding the lodge rooms made a beautiful sight.

A difference was also noted in the age of Masonry in England which was vividly pointed out in their wonderful museum containing jewels, porcelain, and glass memorabilia dating back toward the beginning of their Provincial Grand Lodge over 280 years ago. (My Grand Lodge just celebrated its 100th anniversary last year). As an avid Masonic collector, I thought I had died and gone to that great museum above. As we attended the meetings, numerous other differences emerged in titles, procedures, dress (we wear black tuxedo with jewels, they wear a miter and mantle), and terms of office (we rotate officers annually, they serve numerous years).

However, for all the differences between English and American Freemasonry - we felt like instant brothers. Not only were we warmly received as American Freemasons representing the same organization, but it was special to know we were associating with English citizens who have stepped forward and taken the same obligations of Masonry. We felt instant camaraderie with men who have pledged themselves to toleration and respect for others. We had communion with men who strive for truth in all their dealings.

We shared brotherhood with men who believe in a supreme being and are concerned with moral and spiritual values. These are the comparisons that really count.

That is why, in the end, for all our differences - we are the same!

Fraternally,

Joe R. Manning, Jr.

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