



RIGHT EMINENT GRAND COMMANDER'S MESSAGE



Grand Commandery Of Knights Templar Of The State Of California

JUNE 2025 NEWS

SK Joseph Dongo, Grand Commander

****Installation Remarks****

Praise be to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, we gather before You today with humble hearts and grateful spirits. We acknowledge You as the Author of our lives, the Light of our path, and the Strength of our Order. Thank You, Lord, for bringing us to this sacred moment. You have called us not for glory, but for service; not for honor, but for duty; not for our own names, but for the name above all names.

Bless this assembly. Strengthen our hands for the work ahead. Guard our hearts with Your truth and lead us in the footsteps of those Knights who came before us - men of courage, conviction, and Christian charity. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Most Eminent Grand Master, Ladies and Gentlemen, Sir Knights, Companions, Brethren, family, and friends, standing before you as Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of California is both a profound honor and a sacred responsibility. I thank Almighty God for making this day possible - for orchestrating each step, each encounter, each lesson that led me to this moment.

I want to begin by offering my heartfelt thanks to my installing team. You have shaped this journey in ways you may not even realize. You didn't just install me - you inspired me. Your example has been a lamp to my feet and a compass to my purpose.

To my Masonic father and mother, Bill and Leslie McBroome, who - on that sunny day in Red Bluff - 9 years ago offered me the chance to join your family's Masonic lineage as Grand Standard Bearer: you lit a fire in me that day. Claudette and I didn't quite know what we were signing up for, but hey - we didn't know how to say no. So, we said yes. Looking back, maybe we secretly hoped someone would fire me before it got too serious. But here we are. Still standing. Still serving. Still smiling, maybe crying too.

To Mitt Abbot and Myron Tisdell, my great grandfather and my grandfather - you are my Masonic brothers, my mentors, and with Naomi and Kay now forever my family. I am a reflection of your guidance, your example, and your faith in me. The honor is mine.

There are too many thank-yous to fit into one speech, and if I tried, we'd be here until the next triennial.

To those who organized this celebration with diligence and resolve - particularly Sir Knight Michael Sekera for fixing every problem before it even existed, my deepest thanks.

Bro. Blake Green, our photographer - capturing moments is an art, and I thank you for preserving this one.

To the guards from my Sacramento home Commandery - thank you for standing with me. I wanted you to be part of this journey because this isn't my story alone - it's our story.

To my Grand Officers and their amazing ladies who agreed I don't know why to serve, heartfelt thank you -

may our journey together be one of purpose, laughter, and faithful labor.

To the Past Grand Commanders - thank you for the shoulders upon which we now stand. Your sacrifice, your stewardship, your love of this Order is what carried the light forward to this moment. We will not let that light dim.

To my partners, Most Excellent Grand High Priest, David Rathgeber and your lady Nancy, to the most Illustrious Grand Master Andy Pippin, and your lady Juli, we have talked so much, and now we must act. Thanks for your friendship to me and Claudette as we look forward to more laughter and comradery in our travels across this great state to represent California York Rite.

To the most Eminent Grand Master, Sir Knight David Kussman and your gracious lady Kim, thank you for honoring us with your presence. Your support, encouragement, and example mean more than words can express.

To the Sir Knights who placed their trust in me, voted me in this morning... I hope you know what you did. And if you don't - well, too late now!

One of the greatest, most beautiful and most guarded secrets of Freemasonry is that we are surrounded by good men - like-minded souls - striving to be better. In such a community, we grow not by imitation, but by inspiration. Each of you has perfected his craft in one or many ways. And by watching you up close or from afar, you have inspired me to emulate your examples. This has not made me the sum of you all - but I carry within me pieces of some of what you each do best. That is a gift beyond words. That's Freemasonry. And I thank you ALL for it and more.

To my family - Steve, my son who traveled from North Carolina to witness history in the making, thank you; To my daughter Cynthia and her husband Astolfo, thanks for all you have done.

To my lovely lady Claudette - your unwavering support has been my refuge, my strength, and my joy. Thank you for your love, your patience, and for pretending to understand all these Masonic titles. I couldn't do this without you.

"You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains..." is a song that marked my early masonic journey when it was sung the first time I was installed as Master.

Sir Knight Mark Harris, thanks for raising me up again. You reminded us that music has the power to lift the soul, to stir the heart, to ignite the imagination - and to sanctify a moment like this one.

Tonight, my friends, I ask that you ****raise each other up****.

Now, let's talk about the path ahead.

To our Junior Past Grand Commander - Sir Knight Jordan, thank you for a year of vision and action. You launched, in concert with our sister bodies, Grand Chapter and Grand Council a membership restoration program. We will carry that torch forward and bring back into the fold more Sir Knights who have drifted away.

You also championed the Eye Foundation Lifetime Sponsorship Program. We will not stop until California becomes a 100% Lifetime Sponsor by the next triennial. That is our pledge, in honor to our own Most Eminent Grand Master.

My verse is Ephesians 5:8

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

And Christ echoes in Matthew 5:14 *"You are the light of the world."*

Is this not the very heartbeat of Freemasonry?

Is this not what Freemasonry being all about?

To be a light in the darkness. A city on a hill. A flame that kindles other flames.

Today, perhaps more than ever, in a world adrift and divided, our light is needed. Not as beacons of pride - but

as lighthouses of service.

In a world struggling to find its moral compass, we, as Knights Templar, as Masons, must be the beacons of light. Not just within our lodges, but in our homes, our workplaces, our communities.

But light is not passive - it must be nurtured, protected, and spread. If we are to be true to the spirit of Masonry, we must take deliberate action.

How do we ensure that our light shines brightly?

We do so through mentorship - by standing beside our brethren and guiding them. We do so by living the principles of Masonry daily, not just within our halls, but in our interactions with the world.

We do so by strengthening our Order.

We must continue building membership - not because numbers matter, but because strength lies in unity.

Looking forward, every Christian Cryptic Mason should know the glory of the Templar way. That is not merely a slogan - it is a vision. But to reach that vision, we must first walk the path backwards: to make every Royal Arch Mason a Cryptic Mason... and every Master Mason a Royal Arch Mason.

Sir Knights, we are a membership organization. The Grand High Priest has spoken of it. The Illustrious Grand Master has spoken of it. And I too must speak of it. Because the best ideas are just ideas - until there are people to live them out. Ideas need hands. Hearts. Time. Energy. That is why I say this with clarity: our future depends on our unity.

We must work hand-in-hand with the Grand Chapter, the Grand Council, and the Grand Lodge. Our future lies in collaboration. Together, not apart. Shoulder to shoulder, not in silos. If we are to see a revival, we must work block by block, brother by brother, lodge by lodge. We must not only stop the decline in our ranks - we must reverse it.

And here is one way we begin: I challenge every Governor of a York Rite Sovereign College in this state to form a degree team. Go out into the craft lodges and support their degrees. Show up in scarlet, in purple, in blue - show up and be seen. Let our colors spark questions. Let our presence spark conversations. Let our example spark transformation.

Sir Knights, some of the most powerful influences in a Mason's life happen during his degrees. Let's be there. Let's be part of it. Let's coach him. Stand with him. Raise him. That's how we change the trajectory—one brother, one lodge, one moment at a time. Let's be that light.

Now, let me speak to you about something close to my heart. Our Grand Commandery now embarks on a new journey guided by a 3–5-year strategic plan.

Sir Knights, we are not wandering in the wilderness. We are Knights - men of vision and purpose. And vision without a plan is just a dream. But *a vision with a plan* - that becomes a **movement**.

Our strategic plan isn't just a document to be filed - it's a **roadmap**. A sacred charter of our commitment to one another and to the generations of Knights yet to come. It is the how and the why behind everything we will do over the next three to five years.

And it begins with this vision:

"Faithful Stewards of Chivalry and Community."

This vision calls us to action. It reminds us that we are not owners of this Order - we are **stewards**. Caretakers of a sacred trust passed down by valiant Knights who knelt at this altar long before we did. We must preserve the dignity of our chivalric tradition, not in isolation, but through real engagement with our communities, our churches, our lodges, and each other.

Our mission statement is equally powerful:

"Serving Christian Masons through Chivalry, Faith, and Community."

These are not just words - they are our marching orders.

- **Chivalry** is not some outdated code - it is how we treat one another in a world that has forgotten how to be kind. It is courtesy, courage, honor, and above all, service.
- **Faith** is our foundation. It is what makes us not just Masons, but *Christian* Masons. It reminds us that our first loyalty is to God, and all our work must glorify Him.
- **Community** is our field of action. If we are only Knights in title but not in presence, we fail our charge. This mission compels us to be visible, engaged, and impactful.

The benefit of this plan, my Sir Knights, is that it gives us unity of purpose. It aligns our actions across commanderies. It helps us recruit, retain, and re-engage members with clarity and excitement. It gives every Sir Knight a sense of direction. Whether you're new to the Commandery or a seasoned Past Commander, this plan invites you to contribute, to lead, and to serve in your own unique way.

With this vision and mission, we won't just be Knights - we will be **Knights with direction**. Knights who know not only where we're going, but *why* we are going there.

Under the fatherhood of God, our timeless chivalric values and goals are guided by the principal tenets of Masonry. These core values will be explored throughout the year, ensuring that each of us understands and embodies them.

And let us never forget the words that we heard in the installation:

"Non Nobis Domine, Non Nobis, Sed Nomini Tuo Da Gloriam."

This Psalm 115 was so beautifully sung by bro. John Minagro that I had goose bumps. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

These were the words, the motto of our ancient forebears - the noble Knights Templar. Today, these words adorn our banners, echo in our rituals, and find life in our deeds.

They remind us that our service is not about self - it is about the Savior. Our glory is not ours - it is God's. And if we serve faithfully, then when we pass through the portals of the grave, we shall receive from His hands the crown of victory. And we shall exclaim, as our forefathers did: "Non Nobis Domine, Non Nobis, Sed Nomini Tuo Da Gloriam" – "Not unto us, oh, Lord not unto us, but unto Thy name, give glory".

The Knights Templar did not act for glory but for the name of the Lord. Their merit belongs to Him alone. May we embody the same courage, devotion, and humility.

So, I close by sharing with you the motto that guides my own soul:

*Always, pray to have eyes that see the best in people,
A heart that forgives the worst,
A mind that forgets the bad,
And a soul that never ever loses faith in God.*

May we be those men.

May we be those Knights.

May we serve - not unto ourselves - but unto Him be all the glory.

If we live like this, Sir Knights, we will not only be Knights - we will be lights. Living lights. Healing lights. Let us go forward in humility, in courage, and in faith.

Let us serve not for applause, but for purpose. Not for titles, but for testimony. Not for ourselves - but always, always for Him.

To the glory of God, to the service of man, and to the eternal light of our beloved Craft.

God bless you all. God bless this Grand Commandery. And may God bless our sacred journey ahead.

Let the journey begin!

Amen!

In the Bonds of the Order,

Joseph Dongo, KYGCH, KTCH, KCT
Grand Commander

