



RIGHT EMINENT GRAND COMMANDER'S MESSAGE



Grand Commandery Of Knights Templar Of The State Of California

SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWS

SK Joseph Dongo, Grand Commander

****Restoring Our Ranks: A Call to Action****

Sir Knights,

Freemasonry, at its heart, is about people. It is about men drawn together by Light, bound in fraternity, and united in a holy cause. Our strength has never been in buildings or titles, but in the living stones of our brotherhood, our members. Without them, we are but an echo of history; with them, we are a movement of faith and chivalry.

This is why membership must be at the center of our work. Our Grand Commandery Strategic Plan calls us to be "*Faithful Stewards of Chivalry and Community*". Stewardship means not only welcoming new Knights but also reclaiming those who once knelt at our altar and pledged themselves to this sacred cause.

The Challenge Before Us

The membership survey paints a sobering picture:

Grand Chapter	Active	2,975	
	Suspended	904	30.4%
	Demitted	873	29.3%
	Total Inactive	1,777	59.7%

Grand Council	Active	2,168	
	Suspended	666	30.7%
	Demitted	589	27.2%
	Total Inactive	1,255	57.9%

Grand Commandery	Active	1,922	
	Suspended	1,539	80.1%
	Demitted	1,542	80.2%
	Total Inactive	3,081	160.3%

Consider this: the Grand Commandery has nearly as many suspended members as active ones. When combined with demits, the imbalance becomes staggering: 1,922 active members versus 3,081 inactive.

These are not just statistics. They are names, faces, and stories; Sir Knights who once marched beside us. Some may have passed away, others relocated, but many remain within reach. To lose them is not merely

unfortunate; it is unacceptable.

Why Restoration Matters?

Recruiting a new member is difficult. It requires introductions, trust, education, mentorship, and often years of patient guidance. And we must continue that work, relentlessly, to bring in new Knights to experience the glory of the Templar way.

But restoring a suspended member begins on familiar ground. These men already know the Order. They already swore the vows. They already carry the Cross upon their breast. What they may lack is not knowledge, but connection. And that, Sir Knights, we can rebuild.

Our first General Order this year established the **Restoration Campaign** - a joint York Rite effort across Chapter, Council, and Commandery. Every Commandery will be provided with the names and contact information of their suspended and demitted members. We should not leave this to the Recorder alone, nor to the Commander in isolation. Let's make it the charge of a committee - or better yet, of the whole Commandery. Call them. Write them. Visit them. Listen to them. Invite them back not with guilt, but with grace.

The Restoration Campaign

Here are its key points:

- **Duration:** Now through **May 15, 2026**.
- **Fee:** Any member suspended solely for non-payment of dues may be reinstated for a one-time **\$20 fee per body** (maximum \$60 if all three York Rite bodies). Past arrears are forgiven.
- **Process:** Commanderies vote once to participate. Restoration of individuals is immediate upon payment—no further vote required.
- **Communication:** Each Commandery is tasked to diligently reach out to every suspended member with the terms of this campaign, using the sample letter provided.
- **Reporting:** Record-keeping and results must be reported to the Grand Recorder by May 1, 2026.

This program is simple, merciful, and effective. It removes financial obstacles, opens the door wide, and allows us to welcome back hundreds of Sir Knights who may only need a kind word and a second chance.

An Action Plan for Every Commandery

1. **Form a Restoration Committee** – assign members to personally contact suspended Knights.
2. **Verify Information** – reconcile your list with Grand Lodge records.
3. **Reach Out Personally** – not with a cold letter, but a warm call, visit, or invitation. Share fellowship, not formality.
4. **Offer Flexible Paths** – payment plans, grace, and patience as needed.
5. **Report Progress** – share your results with the Grand Recorder and through the Cross and Crown program.
6. **Celebrate Restorations** – welcome returning members with dignity, making their homecoming a moment of joy for the whole Commandery.

If each of our 30 Commanderies restored just 10 members this year, nearly 300 Sir Knights would return to our ranks. Imagine the impact!

A Season to Act

As autumn approaches and our Commanderies return from summer darkness, let us renew our light. The time

for hesitation is gone. The numbers are staggering. The task is great. But our cause is greater. Restoration is not optional—it is essential.

A Note from Honolulu

As I write these words in Honolulu, I am reminded of the power of fellowship. Over a century ago, California Commandery No. 1 and Honolulu Commandery No. 1 began a tradition of mutual visitation. This year, more than 40 Sir Knights and ladies journeyed across the Pacific, where California No. 1 conferred an exemplary Order of the Temple on August 23rd.

The hospitality of REGC Roberto Sanchez, EC Rudy Alvarado, and Honolulu No. 1 was beyond compare, and the fellowship was rich and inspiring. On behalf of the Grand Commandery, I extend heartfelt thanks to Eminent Commander Francis Feliciano and the Sir Knights of California No. 1 for carrying our banner with honor in Hawaii. You showed us once again that when Knights gather, whether in Eureka or Honolulu, bonds are strengthened, and the light of our Order shines brighter.

The Charge

Sir Knights, our path is clear. The vineyard is vast, and the laborers are few, but together we can reverse decline, rekindle brotherhood, and secure the future of our Order. Let us act with resolve. Let us restore with compassion. And let us remember always the words of our forebears:

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

In the Bonds of the Order!

Joseph Dongo, KYGCH, KTCH, KCT
Grand Commander

