

GRAND COMMANDERY OF GEORGIA  
KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

*“Sword and Banner”*

Official Newsletter

In Hoc Signo Vinces

**APRIL 2026**

Sir Knight  
**Daniel C. Ricketts, KCT**  
Grand Commander



**2026 Easter Sunrise Trip:**

**A Journey of Reflection, Brotherhood, and Light**

The 2026 Right Eminent Grand Commanders Easter Sunrise Trip began in a spirit of reverence and anticipation, setting the stage for a deeply meaningful journey grounded in faith, history, and brotherhood.

**An Unforgettable Beginning**

Under the quiet glow of the evening sky, Sir Knights and companions embarked upon a private moonlight monument tour. The sacred stillness of the night cast the nation’s great landmarks in a new and profound light. As we walked among these illuminated memorials, there was a deep and shared sense of reflection—on faith, sacrifice, brotherhood, and the enduring light that guides us all.



The solemn beauty of the evening created a moment that words can scarcely capture, establishing a powerful and inspiring tone for the days that followed.

## Walking Through History

The journey continued with a rich blend of education, remembrance, and fellowship. Our travels led us to the Eisenhower National Historic Site, where we reflected on leadership, service, and the character of those who shaped our nation.



From there, we stood upon the hallowed grounds of Gettysburg Battlefield, honoring the sacrifices made in one of the most pivotal moments in American history. A particularly meaningful visit to the Friend-to-Friend Masonic Memorial reminded us that even amidst conflict, the bonds of brotherhood endure—transcending division through compassion and unity.

The day concluded at Ford's Theatre, where a stirring performance of "1776" brought to life the courage and conviction of our nation's founding. It was a fitting close to a day that connected past sacrifice with present purpose.

## Honoring Sacrifice and Legacy

Among the most solemn moments of the trip was the wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. In reverent silence, we bore witness to the ultimate sacrifice of those known only to God yet forever remembered by a grateful nation. The precision, dignity, and stillness of the ceremony left a lasting impression on all present.

Equally profound was our visit to Mount Vernon, where we laid a wreath at the tomb of George Washington, our nation's first President and a revered Brother Mason. In that sacred place, we reflected upon his enduring legacy of faith, integrity, and unwavering commitment to duty.

The tribute served as a reminder of the principles he embodied—principles we are called to uphold in our own lives. As Washington himself expressed, "*Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience.*"



## The Light of Easter Morning

The journey culminated in the 96th Annual Grand Encampment Easter Sunrise Service at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. As we approached, dawn broke, and the first rays of sunlight illuminated the Memorial. Sir Knights and companions gathered in the theatre to celebrate the promise of Easter.

In that sacred hour, surrounded by brothers and united in faith, we reflected on the Resurrection and the triumph of light over darkness. The beauty of the morning and the strength of this cherished tradition created a moment both humbling and inspiring.

From the quiet reflections of the first evening to the radiant hope of Easter morning, this journey was a powerful reminder that history is not merely remembered—it is experienced, honored, and lived.

May the light of this Easter season remain with us, guiding our steps as we continue forward in faith, fellowship, and service.



*“He is risen.”*



## A Brother Remembered

### A Tradition Honored

During our visit to Arlington National Cemetery, Sir Knights and companions paused for a deeply personal and meaningful moment as we paid our respects at the grave of our esteemed Brother, **LTC Wade C. Smith**—Past Most Excellent Grand High Priest of Georgia, Past Most Illustrious Grand Master, and a devoted servant to Freemasonry and his country.

In quiet reflection, coins were gently placed upon his headstone—a time-honored military tradition rich with meaning. Each coin tells a story:

- A **penny** signifies a simple visit—that someone came to pay their respects.
- A **nickel** indicates that the visitor trained with the fallen.
- A **dime** shows they served together in some capacity.
- A **quarter** carries the deepest weight—signifying that the visitor was present when the soldier passed.

These small tokens, left in humility, speak volumes without words. They ensure that a Brother is never forgotten and that his service—both to his Nation and to the Craft—continues to be honored by those who follow.

As we stood together, we were reminded that the bonds of brotherhood do not end with this life. They endure—in memory, in tradition, and in the quiet acts of respect that connect us across generations.

*His labors may be complete, His legacy endures.*

## **UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES**

**April 18**

**Grand Master's York Rite Class**

**7:30 AM Grand Chapter Building, Macon, GA**

**April 30 – May 2**

**Grand York Rite Bodies of Georgie Annual Communication**

**April 30 - 11:00 – 5:00 Registration**

**May 1 – 6:30 Registration / 7:30 – Joint Session Begins**

**May 2 – Joint Memorial Service followed by Installation of Officers**



SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL YORK RITE FESTIVAL

# MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER'S CLASS

APRIL 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Grand Chapter Building  
811 Mulberry Street  
Macon, GA 31201

CLASS HELD IN HONOR OF OUR PRESIDING OFFICERS

- ◆ *Most Worshipful Grand Master William F. Shepard*
- ◆ *Most Excellent Grand High Priest Joseph F. Oelgoetz*
  - ◆ *Most Illustrious Grand Master John C. Miller*
  - ◆ *Right Eminent Grand Commander Daniel C. Ricketts*

ALL DEGREES & ORDERS OF THE YORK RITE WILL BE CONFERRED

- ◆ *Pre-Registration Requested*
- ◆ *Registration Fee: \$20:00 for All*
- ◆ *Registration: 6:30 AM – 7:30 AM*
- ◆ *Work Begins Promptly at 7:30 AM*



Scan To Register

## THE YORK RITE

◆ *Your Path to "Pure Ancient Masonry"* ◆

For more information contact John Flener [jtflener1@gmail.com](mailto:jtflener1@gmail.com) 229-425-8770

PETITIONS FOR THE YORK RITE AND TO FIND YOUR NEAREST CHAPTER / COUNCIL / COMMANDERY  
VISIT [YORKRITEOFGA.ORG](http://YORKRITEOFGA.ORG)

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