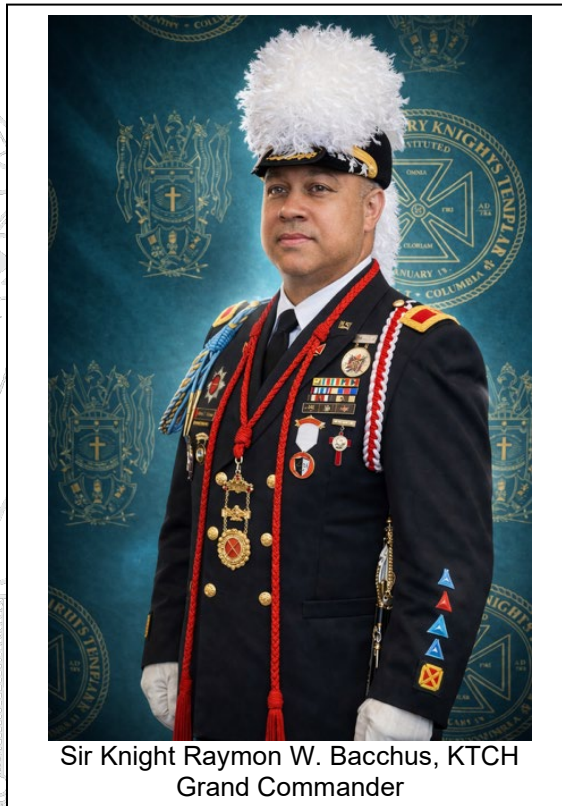


Grand Commandery Knights Templar of the District of Columbia

Monthly Knight Templar Magazine Supplement Message – July 2026

Editor: Sir Knight Carter L. Diggs, REPGC



Sir Knight Raymon W. Bacchus, KTCH
Grand Commander

Greetings Sir Knights,

July presents us with a season of patriotic celebration, restorative fellowship, and quiet yet meaningful labor. As we commemorate Independence Day and the 250th anniversary of our Nation's independence, we are reminded that the freedoms we cherish were secured through sacrifice, courage, and steadfast devotion. These virtues resonate deeply within our Order and challenge us to demonstrate the same fidelity to principle that guided those who forged the path of liberty.

Although the visible pace of activity often slows during the summer months, the responsibilities of the Grand Commandery continue uninterrupted. Our Grand Officers remain committed to quarterly outreach and are preparing for the next cycle of Commandery visitations. These efforts help ensure that our Sir Knights remain informed, supported, and connected throughout the jurisdiction. Such quiet diligence sustains our strength and lays the foundation for the busier months ahead.

I am especially pleased to share that Washington Commandery No. 1 and Columbia Commandery No. 2 have each voted to purchase the necessary Knight Templar Eye Foundation Life Sponsorships for any of their members who have not yet attained two Life Sponsorships. Their generous commitment represents a significant step toward our goal of bringing the Grand Commandery of the District of Columbia to 200 percent Life Sponsorship during this Chivalric Year. I commend the Sir Knights of both Commanderies for demonstrating

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through their actions the spirit of charity, unity, and service that defines our Order. Their leadership brings our jurisdiction closer to fulfilling this important goal and advancing the sight saving work of the Knight Templar Eye Foundation.

July is also the month in which two of our Masonic youth organizations, Job's Daughters International and the International Order of DeMolay, conduct their annual sessions. The International Order of the Rainbow for Girls held its annual session in June. These gatherings remind us of the importance of nurturing the next generation of leaders within the Masonic family. Our support of these organizations reflects our belief in the transformative power of mentorship, moral development, leadership, and fraternal unity.

Important Reminder

The deadline for the submission of constitutional amendments, reports, and other business for consideration at the Semiannual Grand Conclave is August 1, 2026. Please ensure that all required materials are submitted by the deadline.

I was honored to accept the kind invitation of the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Missouri to attend its Grand Conclave in St. Louis from June 10 through June 12. I was accompanied by our Deputy Grand Marshal, Sir Knight Douglas C. Rose, Jr., KTCH, who was elected to the Missouri progressive Grand Line as Grand Standard Bearer.

Our time in Missouri was marked by warm hospitality, joyful fellowship, outstanding entertainment, excellent food, and stimulating education. I was also deeply honored to receive Honorary Membership in the Grand Commandery of Missouri. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Sir Knights of Missouri for their generous welcome and many courtesies. During the visit, we also received a gracious invitation to attend the Grand Conclave of the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Louisiana.

While summer offers welcome opportunities for rest and reflection, it also provides occasions for informal fellowship. Whether through gatherings with family, private conversations with Brothers and Sir Knights, or time devoted to personal study, these moments help strengthen the bonds that unite us. They also prepare our hearts and minds for the renewed labors that await us in the fall.

As we enjoy the blessings of this season, let us remain mindful of our duty as Knights to act with integrity, uphold the virtues of our Order, strengthen the bonds of our fellowship, and prepare ourselves faithfully for the work ahead.

With all Knightly Courtesy, sincerely and fraternally yours in friendship and service,

Ray

Raymon W. Bacchus

Grand Commander (2026-2027)

Direct Line: 1-703-899-8590

Motto: Dux Servit (A Leader Serves)

Theme: Building Bonds

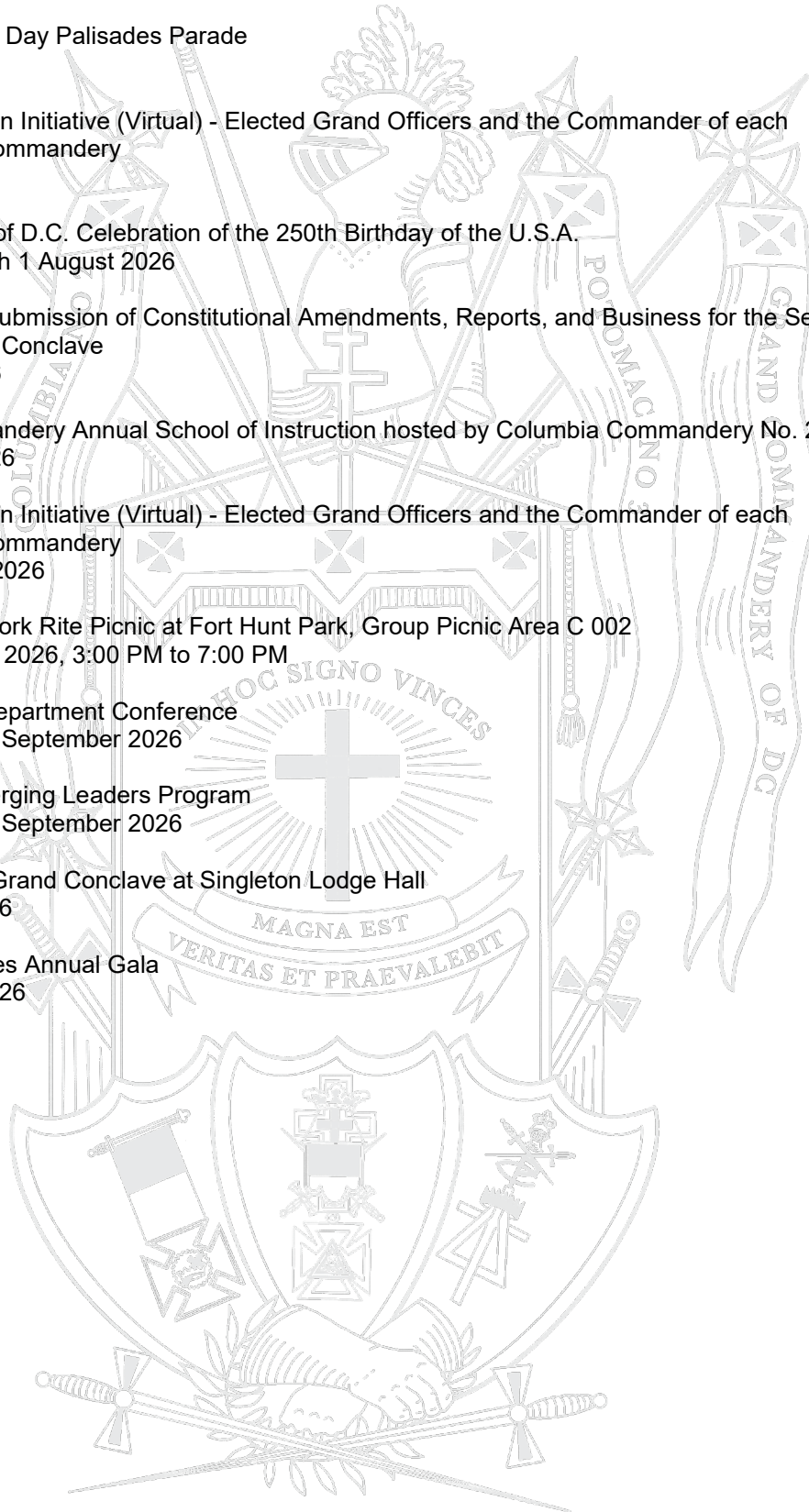
Guide: FAITH · VIRTUE · HONOR · COURAGE · CHARITY

A year grounded in Faith, guided by Virtue, lived with Honor, strengthened by Courage, and expressed through Charity.

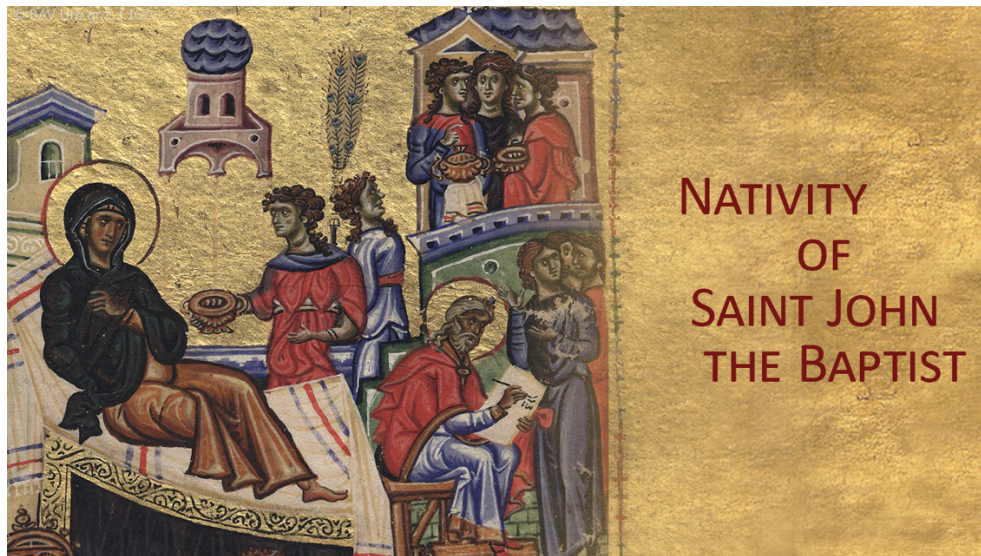
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Upcoming Events:

- Summer Uniform Authorized
1 June through 30 September 2026
- Independence Day Palisades Parade
4 July 2026
- Communication Initiative (Virtual) - Elected Grand Officers and the Commander of each
Constituent Commandery
7 July 2026
- Grand Lodge of D.C. Celebration of the 250th Birthday of the U.S.A.
29 July through 1 August 2026
- **Deadline for Submission of Constitutional Amendments, Reports, and Business for the Semi-
Annual Grand Conclave**
1 August 2026
- Grand Commandery Annual School of Instruction hosted by Columbia Commandery No. 2
17 August 2026
- Communication Initiative (Virtual) - Elected Grand Officers and the Commander of each
Constituent Commandery
8 September 2026
- Annual D.C. York Rite Picnic at Fort Hunt Park, Group Picnic Area C 002
12 September 2026, 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM
- Mid Atlantic Department Conference
25 through 26 September 2026
- York Rite Emerging Leaders Program
25 through 26 September 2026
- Semi Annual Grand Conclave at Singleton Lodge Hall
3 October 2026
- MESH Charities Annual Gala
17 October 2026



From: Our Grand Prelate



The Nativity of St. John the Baptist
June 24, 2026

My dear Sir Knights,

On this day, the Holy Church remembers the birth of John the Baptist, cousin of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The story of John appears in the New Testament in all four of the canonical Gospels, as well as in The Acts of the Apostles. Even the Roman historian, Flavius Josephus, wrote about John in his books, Antiquities of the Jews. John also is mentioned in religious texts for many of the world's great religions, including Islam, Druze, and Ba'hai.

We Templars know John as one of the two patron saints of American Freemasonry, and as the patron saint of the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller. The Freemasons of enlightenment era England left us no written records explaining why they chose John the Baptist and John the Evangelist as their patron saints. Perhaps they were just following the customs of the other trade and craft guilds of the time. Nonetheless, John the Baptist was important enough to them that when the four original London lodges met together to form the Premier Grand Lodge of England, that meeting occurred specifically on St. John the Baptist's Day 1717.

Masonic educator, historian, and author John L. Cooper, a past grand master of Masons of California, points out that in Masonry, Fellowcrafts building King Solomon's Temple very much wanted to receive the secret word of a Master Mason, and being given that word was a very important secret for newly obligated Masons in 17th and 18th century England. We certainly know from our York Rite ritual the importance in the Royal Arch of learning the true word of a Master Mason. That word gave access to work to operative stonemasons, and access to all of the privileges of our fraternity to us modern speculative Masons. Cooper points out that the opening words of the Gospel according to John (the Evangelist) are "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and he suggests that John the Evangelist was chosen because of the symbolic connection between the Mason's word and the "word" in the opening verse of the Gospel.

Association with John the Baptist came later. As early speculative Freemasonry was essentially a Christian organization, we are reminded that John the Baptist was the “forerunner” of Jesus—the prophet who prepared the way of the Lord. We can also note that the feast days of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist closely correspond to the summer and winter solstices, events which had far greater importance to the European people of 400 years ago. The summer solstice, being the day with the most hours of light in the year, gives John the Baptist superintendence over daylight—and, thus, Masonic light.

Both Johns are closely associated with Christ. The two Johns together represent two sides of a coin: the passionate zeal of the Baptist and the knowledge of faith of the apostle. This instructs us as Masons and Templars to reflect upon and channel our passions, as we seek a well-balanced path towards enlightenment.

During the period of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther wrote a hymn extolling how Christ came to John the Baptist at the Jordan River to be baptized, “Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam” (in English, Christ our Savior to Jordan came). This Renaissance hymn has persisted over the centuries in the Lutheran faith, and in the past 50 years or so, has grown greatly in popularity in other Christian liturgical denominations, because it sets forth so well the theology and biblical basis for the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

A copy of the hymn from the American Lutheran Hymnal is attached, and you may wish to listen to a recording of the hymn on YouTube, with the link below.

Baptism is the outward act that makes us Christian. Baptism is so important. Being baptized is in essence our “Christianity degree”—our rite of Christian initiation.

Something that has always bothered me over the years when talking to men who are Masons or who are seeking to become Masons is when I ask them about their faith, their religion, and their denomination, many of them demur and say that they don’t really “do church,” or believe in any particular denomination, considering themselves just to be “spiritual.” Now, in American Freemasonry, we don’t require any particular religion or denomination, and certainly we have a lot of good Masons who are not Christians. I do like to know, though, that a man believes in God, or a monotheistic supreme being, however he sees and defines that. Does being spiritual meet that burden?

We Templars, however, presumptively are Christians. As Christians, we should recall the Great Commission of Jesus, which he gave to his disciples on a mountain in Galilee, saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This summer, we have many more opportunities to interact with our Masonic brethren in casual and informal settings. While respecting our brothers’ right to their own faith and beliefs, I encourage you to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, and, if a brother is just “spiritual,” help him to seek and find a specific religious faith in which to believe and to practice.

Meanwhile, let us examine our own religious practices and see if we are following the rules and recommendations of our own denominations. When was the last time that you darkened the door of your church? God doesn’t take summer vacations, you know. Our

summertime travels give us great opportunities to visit other churches in other states, countries, or even denominations. If one is outdoors on a camping trip, one can take along a prayer book to read the office of morning prayer, or other devotional texts. One time, I attended a Catholic Mass in an airport with a room full of people of every creed and color and nationality, and it was a wonderful respite amidst the hustle and bustle of my travel. Then on my connecting flight, there were two people from that service also travelling, and we had a warm moment of friendship and Christian connection....and, as it turned out, none of us were actually Roman Catholic!

Our duty as Christians is to spread the word. That doesn't mean to be obnoxious and annoying by preaching and screaming at strangers who aren't prepared or interested in hearing us. Sometimes the best way we can evangelize is by living our Christian faith, loving *all* of our neighbors as ourselves, and letting the example of our daily life influence those around us.

As a musician, John the Baptist always reminds me of Richard Strauss' opera Salome, which tells the story of the last days and execution of John. John had been imprisoned for spreading the word of God perhaps a little too zealously to King Herod and his household, and yet knowing the risks of offending an absolute monarch, John continued to preach and to attempt to remind Herod of the ways of the Lord. We needn't lose our heads, as John did, in our mission, but we can look to John for his zealous example and devotion to God.

When I was a boy, a show came out that told the story of Jesus and John the Baptist in the rock music genre of the time, which even had a try-out at Ford's Theater here in Washington from 1972-73 before becoming a movie in 1973 and then a Broadway musical in 1976. One of the most "earworm" songs from *Godspell* is "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord," sung by John and then the entire cast. The link to it is below.

Whether we prefer the serious Renaissance tones of Martin Luther's "Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam," or the joyous abandon of *Godspell*, they both remind us of John's role in the life of our Savior: prepare the way of the Lord. Let us make disciples of all nations and of all peoples and, yes, even of all Freemasons wheresoever dispersed.

Happy St. John's Day in Summer, and may we all be filled with John's zeal and love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the name of Christ,



Mark A. Wright, P. C.
Grand Prelate, Grand Commandery
of the District of Columbia

To listen:

"Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam," Martin Luther
https://youtu.be/gmDzL03cs_E?si=w8rG9ZZG1FWzYoli

"Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord," *Godspell*
https://youtu.be/wSIs1MHdFQY?si=uUDx5OHk_iyrlwZm&t=11

OUR SAVIOR TO THE JORDAN CAME

Martin Luther, 1541

Baptizein 878787877

Of Secular Origin

Tr. H. Brueckner

Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam

Ad. by Martin Luther

and Johann Walther, 1524

1. Our Sav - ior to the Jor - dan came, The Fa - ther's will o -
 2. So hear ye all and pon - der well What God Him - self in -
 3. To show us this with am - ple proof, Both words and signs are

bey - ing, And there by John was He bap - tized, His work no
 stall - eth, What He would have us all be - lieve, What He a
 giv - en. At Jor - dan's brink was plain - ly heard The Fa - ther's

more de - lay - ing. He there vouch-safed a cleans - ing breath To
 wash - ing call - eth. That wa - ter at the font be used, Is
 voice from heav - en: This is my well be - lov - ed Son, In

free from sin's pos - ses - sion, To res - cue us from bit - ter death
 sure - ly His good pleas - ure, But with it go His - ho - ly Word
 whom my soul de - light - eth; O hear ye Him when ev - 'ry - one

And wash a - way trans - gres - sion, New life in us cre - at - ing.
 And Spir - it with - out meas - ure; He is the true Bap - tiz - er.
 He to Him - self in - vit - eth; O - bey His will and teach - ing.

4 The Son of God is also here,
 In tender manhood bending,
 And we behold the Spirit, too,
 In dove-like form descending.
 Thus are we strengthened in our faith,
 Which nevermore should waver,
 That Father, Son and Holy Ghost
 Are present at the laver,
 To make our hearts their dwelling.

5 He who rejects this wondrous grace,
 The Scripture disbelieving,
 Shall have his sins abide with him,
 In hell his place receiving.
 His outward deeds avail him naught,
 His holiness must vanish;
 His inborn sin all works annuls,
 God such a one must banish:
 Himself he cannot rescue.

6 To His disciples Jesus saith:
 Go, teach ye every nation:
 Man, lost in sin, must needs repent,
 To flee from condemnation.
 Baptized and having faith in Me,
 He shall be saved forever;
 A new-born man shall he be called,
 Whom naught from Me can sever;
 My Kingdom He inherits.

7 Blind sense but water sees and asks:
 Pray, how can water save us?
 But faith the blood of Christ beholds
 That here in truth doth lave us.
 It sees this fountain colored red
 That here for us is flowing.
 To purge us from our inborn sin
 And, every grace bestowing,
 From all misdeeds to free us.