



GRAND COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR FOR THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 2026 MESSAGE
SK GEORGE R. SAUNDERS REG

Fraters,

As you read this, fall is upon us – shorter days, cooler temperatures and the end of the New Jersey growing season. I, for one, will greatly miss the end of Jersey tomatoes and corn. The transition from summer to winter is in full swing. By the end of the month, the leaves will have changed color, the skies will begin to turn gray, and harvest will be mostly completed. The Halloween stores, which have been open since the beginning of August, are at their peak of business.

The origins of Halloween can be traced back to the Celtic festival of Samhain, which was the celebration of the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter. This evolution was not only seasonal but spiritual as well. The Celts believed the night before this transition, the border between the worlds of the living and the dead became weakened, allowing spirits to cross over and roam the earth. Some spirits may have been harmless, but some could be prankish or even dangerous. For protection, people would light bonfires, wear disguises, sometimes made for animal skins and feathers, and offer food to placate the spirits. The Roman conquest of the Celts resulted in the blending of two Roman holidays, Felalia, the day to honor the dead, and Pomona, the holiday of the goddess of orchards and fruit, into Samhain.

Hundreds of years later, Christianity's expansion throughout Europe caused the Church to adapt pagan festivals to Christian based celebrations. In the 7th century, All Saints Day, on November 1, and All Souls Day, on November 2, were created and the people were urged to attend church, pray for the dead and participate in community gatherings. The night of October 31 became known as All Hallows' Eve, later shortened to Halloween.

The traditions of Halloween came to America in the 19th century with Irish and Scottish immigrants. Their customs of dressing in costumes, telling ghost stories and carving turnips (changed to pumpkins in America, larger and easier to carve) blended easily into American culture. As with many religious holidays, Halloween has become highly commercialized. Only Christmas outranks it in terms of money spent to celebrate the holiday. Very few of us attend church on All Saints Day.

Trick-or-treating and parties notwithstanding, Halloween still contains the vestiges of its origins: recognizing the thin line between life and death. It promotes contemplation of mortality, remembrance of loved ones and respect for that which is beyond human understanding.



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Halloween can offer an excellent opportunity to participate in community activities such as community parties or Trunk-or-Treating events.

This is a last call for commanderies to confer the Order of the Red Cross and Order of Malta, in preparation for the Knighting Festival in November. Please remember to advise the Grand Recorder and me at least two weeks prior to you giving these orders. Also, please make sure your candidates are entered into MMS system so that they and your Commandery are credited.

I encourage all Sir Knights to attend your commandery's conclaves and events. Membership without participation is nonproductive. James 2:17 "So too, faith by itself, if it does not result in action, is dead." I urge you to reach out to a Sir Knight you haven't seen at Commandery for a while to make sure they are OK. If they need something, advise your Commander. Also, take care of yourself. If you are in need, please contact your commandery, we are here to help you.

I look forward to seeing you as I travel around to the commanderies.

Yours in Christ

SK George R. Saunders
Right Eminent Grand Commander

