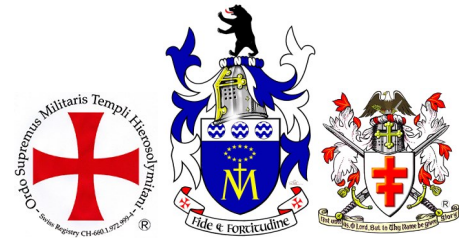


confreere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 3 March 2024

Prior's Post

Happy Spring Knights and Dames! I was going to write this month with words of inspiration from the SMOTJ website, but it actually looks like most of our Knights and Dames have logged on and been active on the new SMOTJ site. That's very encouraging as it's often difficult to determine if our messages reach everyone. In terms of active readership and participation, our Priory members are way more active than national standards.



Last month I asked Brother Peter if he could give us some statistics on messages. He quickly responded with these results:

February Priory Newsletter

Number of Recipients who Opened: 43 (66.2%)

January 25 Prayer Request for Larry Carr

Number of Recipients who Opened: 45 (69.2%)

January Templar Monthly Day of Prayer

Number of Recipients who Opened: 36 (60.0%)

Templar Anniversary – Pastoralis Praeeminentiae – November 2023

Number of Recipients who Opened: 44 (67.7%)

EMAIL MARKETING STATISTICS AND

BENCHMARKS reports: The average email open rate for all industries we analyzed is **21.33%**. Open rates are one of the best ways to tell whether your email strategy is working. This number shows what percentage of your audience opens the emails you send them.

There are about 30% that don't open the emails that we send and that's disheartening, but when you consider we are 40% above industry standards, I'm excited. That level of participation is far greater than participation in zoom call meetings.

We do try to make our monthly messages meaningful. I hope you're finding the "What it means to be a Templar" articles interesting and allowing you to personally reflect on your participation and representation of the Templars. Brother Russ brings words of comfort and inspiration. Brother Peter keeps us informed of important Grand Priory activities. We try to bring this information to you in a format you can review at your leisure--in your comfortable reading chair, in bed, on the back porch--just not while you are driving!

There are things that do suggest a need for personal, virtual meetings and Brother (Father) Garron will be leading the March 4 zoom meeting and I'm hoping for a large attendance to discuss upcoming events. Spend 45 minutes with us on this call--you can even count this toward your one hour of service.

I do think we have a Dame who is working on her article for next month, but I would encourage each of you to submit your thoughts on being a Templar--there is no limit to the number of contributors.

Finally, if you have not paid your obligations by check or on the website, please do so. Remember contribution to our Priory is optional, but beneficial, as is the contribution to Mites. If there is a cause you think we should support, let us know as well.

Until next month!

✠ *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America



The Pories of Region I are pleased to announce that registration is open for GPUSA's 2024 Grand Convent and Investiture to be held in Hartford, CT June 6-9. The Hartford Marriott Downtown will serve as our host hotel, and is conveniently located to several of the weekend's venues. The Convent Ceremony will be held at Center Church, a faith community with roots in the city's founding in 1636. Register now for the best rates.

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

Chaplain's Corner

March 1 is St. David's Day. St. David is the patron Saint of Wales and died on March 1, 589 A.D. David was a monk who lived a simple Celtic monastic tradition and connected the people of Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, and France by building many monasteries and spreading the Christian faith.



David often challenged people to "Do the little things that you have heard and seen me do." He led by example, and when necessary, by word.

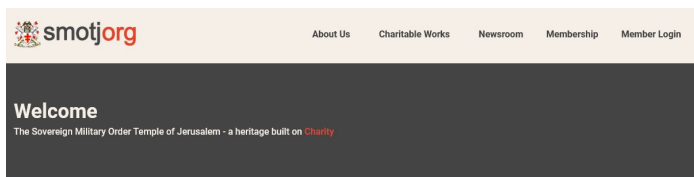
I believe we, as Templars, are challenged to lead by example in doing the "little things" that St. David wants us to do, that Jesus wants us to do, that we are called to do.

What are we called to do? I think we can find some of them in our call to ministry in our Baptismal vows that we made or were made for us: "Proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ; seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself; and strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

How do we do this individually and as a Priory?



Chev. Russ Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain



Have you checked out the new GPUSA website? Why not?

You will use the same website URL that you have always used at www.smotj.org and the same User ID and your previous Password should work.

If you have any problems logging in, please select the option to "Reset Your Password". If you are still having a problem with the Log In, please select the "Support" option under the "Community" tab at the top of the screen. Then select "Contact Us" and complete the email message. A Help Desk member will respond to you.

Why I Became a Templar

Chev. Michael Ryan Burke, KTJ

My voyage into the sanctified embrace of the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem was not merely a divergence from my path of valor within the Marines Special Operations community but rather a harmonious continuation of my quest for excellence and service. My service to my country in combat arms taught me that physical and spiritual strength is the fulcrum upon which the fate of humanity pivots. Each trial, each triumph, etched upon my soul the immutable truth that valor and virtue are not mere aspirations but the essence of our existence.



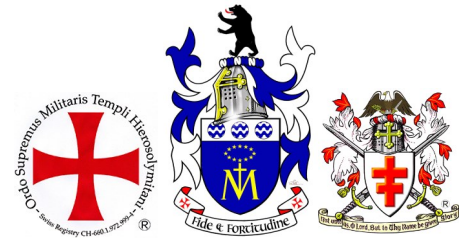
As I surveyed the most recent legacy of our modern Order, I was enraptured by the echoes of chivalry and the fragrance of merit that permeated its sacred precincts. Here, amidst the noble men and women adorned with medals of charity and the murmurs of ancient oaths, I found solace in the knowledge that my journey was not solitary but part of a grand tapestry woven by the hands of God himself. In the Templar mission, I discovered the melody of my soul, resonating with the harmonious chords of faith, courage, and compassion.

In the crucible of my prior military vocation, I earned medals as a testament to the arduous journey traversed and the sacrifices made in service to a broken humanity. Yet, in the embrace of the Templar Order, I realized the true significance of these accolades. They were not mere trinkets of valor but beacons of inspiration, illuminating the path for future generations of Christian warriors. For in each medal lay a story of courage, sacrifice, and unwavering devotion to a cause greater than oneself.

And so, as I rise amidst my predecessors of the Templar Order, I do not downplay my achievements but embrace them as symbols of hope, guiding lights for those who tread the path of righteousness and service. My journey, marked by trials overcome and sacrifices made, serves as a testament to the transformative power of faith and dedication, inspiring others to embark on their own divine odyssey for valor and virtue. "*Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed Nomini Tuo da gloriam*".

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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 4 April 2024

Prior's Post

The first day of Spring is behind us and we now are arrive at April, and you know what that means! Only a few more days until the tax man comes knocking! In 1139, Pope Innocent III gave the Knights Templar special privileges; they were no longer required to pay a tithe (tax to the Church and clergy). The Knights were effectively answerable only to the pope which meant that they didn't pay very many other taxes either as they weren't under the authority of local bishops or archbishops, and that they could own property and place themselves in multiple jurisdictions without being truly answerable to the local king or lord or whoever was ruling a particular area.



Unlike those Knights before us, we seem to be answerable to almost everyone—the IRS, the state departments of revenue, the county collector, the special assessor and the city treasurer. But there is a way to lighten that burden. THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM is classified as a 501(c)(10) non-profit organization by the standards of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The GENERAL RAYMOND G DAVIS TEMPLAR FOUNDATION is classified as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization by the standards of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Therefore, your DONATION to the Jerusalem Mite, the Grand Priory or your local Priory, MAY BE tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law, which means you can help reduce your tax burden by making a donation to our worthy programs. (Of course, consult your tax professional).

If you have not taken a tour of the SMOTJ.org website, you may not have seen the most recent report of charitable works. GPUSA raises funds nationally for the Christian community in the Middle East from American Knights and Dames largely through our Jerusalem Mite program. The Jerusalem Mite primarily targets local programs to help stabilize the Christian population in the Holy Land and re-build a foundation for its continued survival.

Some of the most critical needs of Christians in the Holy Land are:

- **Healthcare** – especially for the dedicated older Christians, because of the critical shortage of doctors and nurses in Christian enclaves outside Israel's barrier wall.

- **Housing** – especially in Gaza, where hundreds of Christian family homes have been decimated, most recently during Israel's 2014 military incursion into Gaza.
- **Education** – the long-term key to a better life for the next generation, as unemployment among young people in Palestine currently stands at 34%.
- **Vocational Training** – a necessity for the better-paying jobs for Christian families in the region.
- **Refugee Relief** – the food, shelter, clothing and care needed by hundreds of thousands of Christians who now live in refugee camps after fleeing the onslaughts of Islamic State and other extremist groups.

GPUSA seeks out trustworthy organizations that have been meeting these needs in the Middle East for many years and assesses their qualifications and transparency. We have found that church leaders of various denominations and church-affiliated programs often are effective in addressing Christian needs, so they receive the majority of our charitable funds at this time.

So how do you help? Simple, go to the SMOTJ.ORG site and sign in with your user information. From there, go to the upper right hand corner and click on your name next to your picture and the pull-down menu will take you to "obligations/donations" where you can pay your obligations, if you have not already done so, and you can also make your donation to one of several worthy causes.

So hurry—make your donation today; help reduce that tax burden; help those in need! Remember, Pope Innocent III is not here to keep you safe from the tax man!

Until next month!

 *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America

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

Chaplain's Corner

“Alleluia! Christ is Risen!”

This simple phrase is yelled out in song and praise in the Church at the Saturday Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday. The response is, “The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!”. These phrases seem so simple, but hold so much joy and hope within them. They acknowledge the joy and celebration of the resurrection and how the crucifixion wasn't the end to Christ's mission and ministry. The response acknowledges that the Lord really is risen and that the faithful present are filled with excitement that the shackles of death, despair, and sin have been trampled down by the risen Lord.

This phrase is quite powerful, but it's not the phrase that is powerful but the resurrection that is sung and celebrated. The Resurrection is where all our hope, joy, happiness, and future lies. It's the Resurrection that affirms the promises of God and that of eternal life with Him. The Resurrection is so powerful that it's hard NOT to shout out in “alleluias” and to sing praises to God!

In this Easter season, may you also be filled with joy of knowing that Christ is risen from the dead and that Christ's work is very much alive and active in our communities and in our Order!

 *Garron Daniels*

The Rev. Chev. Garron Daniels, OCS, KTJ
Chancellor

Why I Became a Templar

Chvse. Alisha Moore Cole, DTJ

Many of you in the Priory of St. Mary's do not know me. I was active in the days of the first three Priors. I was drawn to the Church of St. Mary's as a new member in the community by its rich history and architecture, the stories behind many of its artifacts, and the solemn stillness. Those elements spoke to the historian and historic preservationist in me. When I saw the wall with the gilded fleur de lis another part of me was awakened.

My master's thesis was on Masonic Architecture, including its symbols and history. I found it curious that many architectural historians dismissed the history that dictates the floor plan and design of a masonic structure saying the buildings were merely a product of popular design at the time of their construction. They were completely unaware of the architectural requirements dating to the time of Moses that determined the basic foundation of every masonic building. Elements of architectural design developed and shared down through the centuries incorporated into masonic structures are attributable to the association of Freemasonry and the Knights Templar.

Naturally, my research included the Knights Templar. I was intrigued with the opportunity to become part of this ancient order I had learned so much about in my research, The Prior encouraged my further research into the order, as well, and in time, I completed my application.

The Prior described the Convocation as something akin to a Coronation and I took that description to heart as I planned my attire for this solemn and monumental event in my life. It took hours and hours to make but each stitch was made with anticipation of what lay ahead. A fleur de lis was incorporated into the train and I even found an antique fleur de lis pin to adorn the bodice.

My research turned into a two year series of classes I presented at Unity Temple on the Plaza, exploring Freemasonry and the Knights Templar. The Prior was even in attendance for some.

As this is Women's History Month, I thought I would share a bit about women and the Knights Templar. There are a number of historians who research the role played by women in the Templar story as well as the attitude toward women by the Templar Knights. During the Medieval period women were viewed with hostility by men in monastic communities. Women were seen as being responsible for the casting out from the Garden of Eden. They were deemed wicked and a source of temptation and contamination. The founders dictated that women should not be permitted in religious orders, to prevent any risk to the purity of the men. This was certainly true for military orders like the Templars.

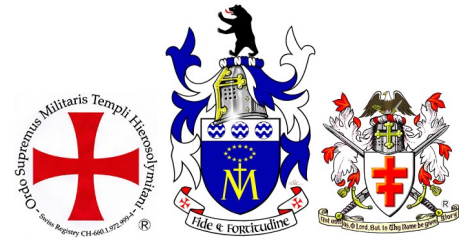
There is evidence of women fighting on foot defending a fortress or supporting the efforts of warriors by providing water but, no evidence of women playing any part in assisting the pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem by providing lodging or food. A role that would have been seen as more natural for women than bearing arms in conflict. It was stated more than once in the latin rule that the company of women was dangerous and because of their role in man's being cast from paradise, women should not even be in the presence of a Templar to prevent contamination.

Although the rule of the Temple may have taken a misogynistic position toward women, research has shown that it was not always practiced. There is evidence of women being granted full membership in the Order, of the assumption of responsibility for an entire nunnery, and even expressions of romance.

In modern times, of course, men and women serve the Order equally with the talents and contributions of each welcomed and appreciated by all. I was thrilled by my invitation to be a part of this Order and join these bold women of old in contributing in some way to the mission of this illustrious organization.

confreere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 5 May 2024

Prior's Post

Lot's of things going on in the world these days and as your Prior (and a lawyer) I have the obligation of reminding everyone that under the Internal Revenue Code, all section 501(c)(3) organizations like the SMOTJ and each Priory are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. Contributions to political campaign funds or public statements of position (verbal or written) made on behalf of the organization in favor of or in opposition to any candidate for public office clearly violate the prohibition against political campaign activity. Violating this prohibition may result in denial or revocation of tax-exempt status and the imposition of certain excise taxes. This would make the folks at SMOTJ really mad at us. That in part is why we make contributions to a "safe harbor", the General Raymond G Davis Templar Foundation.



According to the IRS, certain activities or expenditures may not be prohibited depending on the facts and circumstances. For example, certain voter education activities (including presenting public forums and publishing voter education guides) conducted in a non-partisan manner do not constitute prohibited political campaign activity. In addition, other activities intended to encourage people to participate in the electoral process, such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, would not be prohibited political campaign activity if conducted in a non-partisan manner.

On the other hand, voter education or registration activities with evidence of bias that (a) would favor one candidate over another; (b) oppose a candidate in some manner; or (c) have the effect of favoring a candidate or group of candidates, will constitute prohibited participation or intervention.

The ban on political campaign activity does not restrict leaders of organizations from expressing their views on political matters if they are speaking for themselves as individuals. Nor are leaders prohibited from speaking about important issues of public policy. However, for their organizations to remain tax exempt under section 501(c)(3), leaders cannot make partisan comments in official organization publications or at official functions of the organization.

For example, a Knight or Dame can attend an event for a particular candidate and express their support of the candidate as long as they do not state or otherwise imply that they are speaking on behalf of the Priory or SMOTJ. However, if a member made the same statement at an official Priory function or in an official Priory publication, that statement would be prohibited political campaign activity.

So, that said, as good Knights and Dames, please continue the mission you have been charged with!

 *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI
Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America

Chaplain's Corner



Last month, I was on a tour of Turkey. We explored Ephesus where St. John the Apostle lived and preached and died. St. Paul also spent much time there preaching. I walked where John and Paul walked. I stood at the Great Theater and pondered being there two thousand years ago to hear them preach.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he says, "I... beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." Paul goes on, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry."

What are you called to be? An apostle? Consider being an ambassador for Jesus. A prophet? Consider delivering the message of the Good News. An evangelist? Consider how we live and what we do. A pastor? Consider lay ministry. A teacher? Consider teaching by example.

As Paul begs us, how do we lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called as Christians and as Templars? Prayerfully consider these callings. Write one down and claim it for yourself.

A red cross symbol followed by the name 'Russ' in red cursive script.

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain

Why I Became a Templar

SGM Chev. Thomas K. Marshall Sr., GCTJ, GMTJ

I was approached by a good friend who always wore the Patriarchal cross lapel pin. I asked him about it and received way more information than I expected. Before he told me about SMOTJ he explained that he wore the pin to attract attention so that he could explain SMOTJ to people. Must work because I've been a member for nearly twenty years.

He explained that SMOTJ is a international Christian, Charitable, and Chivalric organization that is patterned after the Knights Templar who fought the enemies of Christianity during the crusades while keeping the road to Jerusalem open. They are modern Christian Knights that stand against evil everywhere in the world. They support charitable endeavors locally, nationally and around the world.

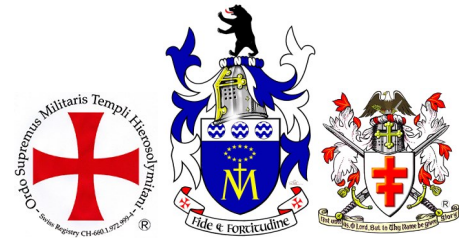
I was intrigued and attended local functions as a guest. The first Convent and Investiture that I attended got me hooked. I knew that the Knight Templars were the 'Real Deal' and that I needed to be a part of them. I submitted an application and went through a period of education where I learned the history of the Knights Templar as well as the goals and principles of the organization. It is fraternity but one based on Christian principles and charity. After almost a year I was Knighted and became a Chevalier.

Why have I stayed a Knight for so long? Helping others is the most rewarding thing a person can do with their life. Being a member of the Knight Templars provided me a way to multiply my meager charitable efforts by combining with sister and brother Knights. Whether locally by feeding the Hungary and homeless or Internationally by supporting Christian students in the holy Land with scholarships. The Jerusalem Knight program supports schools, orphanages, and religious organizations in the Holy Land as well as providing funding in support of the Holy sites in the Holy Land. Individually I could only make a small impact on those efforts but as a Knight Templar my efforts are combined with the many and make a dramatic impact.

On a personal note, I met my wife through the Templars and many of my long time friends are Templars. Each year we induct new members and they become friends also. We are not just a fraternity, we are a family with like minded friends in the local Priory, from across the nation, and around the world.

confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 6 June 2024

Prior's Post

Out of left field, I was hit with a question from one of our Knights asking what we do. My initial thought was that we re-visit our mission during our meetings via the web and through updates by email. You have to take time to log in for a short hour meeting and failing that, I understand that Knights and Dames may not be aware of what we do. As Prior, I try to get monthly newsletters out to the general membership, whether paid or unpaid, current or not current, active or not active. We also share, or re-share important information presented by SMOTJ to both our Priory and our brethren in St Louis.



We are a unique Priory. We have members on the west coast, scattered throughout the Midwest in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and elsewhere. We have more active Knights and Dames outside of Kansas City than in the metropolitan area. In years past my predecessors have attempted to schedule social events at restaurants, bars, dinner theaters and other locations. Regrettably, the RSVP rate revealed any planned event to be unrealistic. I feel we are blessed by the number of Knights and Dames who come faithfully for C&I from outside the area to share friendship, a meal, a drink and to reaffirm their commitment to SMOTJ. Without their support we would be challenged. It's worth noting that the largest recruiting efforts come from outside our metropolitan area and the most active Knights and Dames are again from outside the metro. Their commitment will be publicly recognized later this year .

When I became Prior, I sent out a request to the entire membership, actually the Priors in St Louis, along with St Mary and asked what our projects or missions should be, beyond what we encourage at the national level. Of well over 70 requests, there were 5 responses...

So, who are we and what is it we do? We didn't go to school together; we didn't fight wars together; we don't work together; we don't even live down the street from each other. We are however all Christians who promote honor, courage, compassion and we have committed to uphold these ideas. If those concepts and principles are not important to you, then maybe you're not worthy of being a Knight or Dame.

We, as part of a larger body, serve to protect the faithful at risk in the holy land, providing healthcare, housing, education and vocational training in the holy land and elsewhere throughout the world---Sound somewhat familiar? It should! It's what Knights and Dames have been doing for centuries. If you don't think that is a worthwhile cause, then again you probably are not Knight or Dame material.

I'm actually very pleased that we have had participation through guest articles by our Knights and Dames this past year. This has allowed us to meet members of our Priory who have not been able to attend events and to learn why they became, and remain, in our membership. It's quite frustrating that after the initial set of volunteers, I have had to personally ask for involvement.

You must have some "skin in the game" to make us really believe you want to perpetuate the principles and mission of SMOTJ. It starts with a personal commitment in your heart. We're like one of those states that advertises they are not for everyone. Maybe you're just not right for us.

I've asked that you demonstrate a commitment for being a member by paying your dues and obligations. There are some within our Priory who are financially challenged and although committed to the cause, just can't come up with the \$125 or so that is due annually. Fortunately, there are "Silent Knights" who have stepped in and made the continued good standing status possible for those who want to serve, but are financially unable to pay. Those same Knights have made contributions that make it possible for our Priory to be one of the larger contributors.

Similarly, we are involved in two significant financial commitments and fund-raising projects that are directly related to our cause. From experience, I know that there will be a hand full of Knights and Dames who will make substantial contributions, without any expectation of recognition. I also know that we have Knights and Dames that spend more in one day for meals and drinks, yet fail to contribute financially to our worthy causes. If that is the case, again, maybe you're not in tune with our mission.

Continue next page

One hour a month promoting the SMOTJ---whether it be volunteering your time to a related charity; wearing your lapel pin while at work, writing for our newsletter, going to the SMOTJ webpage and making your information is current. How about those who have time to develop cross-organizational programs where our Knights and Dames could be given the opportunity to see what other charitable organizations do, that might interface with our mission. Where are you?

We have a faithful dozen who take an hour out of their day to be on our zoom calls, where we do talk about programs, events, recognition of those of you who give so much of your time, energy, faith, and funds. Thank you to those of you who do offer your guidance and suggestions. We also value your emails with suggestions when you can't be on the calls. Don't complain, however, that we are doing nothing if you don't jump on the call and volunteer or contribute in any way through service or financially, to the success of the Priory and our programs we have committed to support.

A shout out goes to our lay and ordained clergy—you do embrace the spirit of SMOTJ and I thank you for what you do and your commitment. For those of you that are always answering the call to serve, again thank you. We have so many members who contribute so much on a national and global level who don't seek recognition...but serve because it's who they are. Again, a heartfelt thank you.

Be a Templar in your daily life; recruit; fund; be a steward and volunteer to further our cause. It's the only way we will grow.

 *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI
Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America

Chaplain's Corner

Last month, I was on a tour of Turkey. We explored Ephesus where St. John the Apostle lived and preached and died. St. Paul also spent much time there preaching. I walked where John and Paul walked. I stood at the Great Theater and pondered being there two thousand years ago to hear them preach.

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As Paul begs us, how do we lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called as Christians and as Templars? Prayerfully consider these callings. Write one down and claim it for yourself.

 *Russ*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain



2024 Grand Convent & Investiture

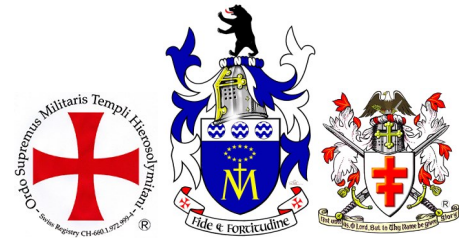
HIGHLIGHTS

The 2024 Grand Convent & Investiture was held in Hartford, CN June 5-9. While every C&I is special, a Grand C&I is...Grand. Here are a few takeaways of note for those unable to attend:

- The 2024 GPUSA Pilgrimage to the Holy Land has been cancelled. An advanced team will travel to the area to visit our recipient organizations and visit with the Patriarchs.
- Because of increases in expenses, e.g. insurance and postage, significant drop in paid membership, increased dues to OSMTH, the 2025 GPUSA mandatory annual oblations will be increased by \$50.
- If you haven't logged in to the GPUSA Community website, please do so. It was noted that 40% of the membership still use snail mail which adds to the operating expenses.
 - Our national (GPUSA) numbers are down:
- In 2020, 11,316 Knights and Dames paid their oblations (\$164,500 total), in 2021, that dropped to 1,266 paid members (\$158,000), and as of the Grand C&I, only **845** members had paid (\$105,500).
- The number of scholarship donors through the Raymond Davis Foundation is down for the second year in a row. The Priory of St. Mary has stepped up to fund one High School Scholarship - watch for a special appeal.
- On a more positive note, \$122,365 of Jerusalem Mite dollars (the total available) were allocated.

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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 7 July 2024

Prior's Post

So, being the Prior is not as easy as it might appear. There are reports, and more reports that come due. There are events that have to be planned for. There are requests for Knights and Dames to write guest articles for our monthly newsletter, that sometimes don't materialize. There is no feedback on information sent by SMOTJ to us and forwarded along.



That said, it gives me great pleasure to report that last night, I ordered SIX COOL SMOTJ BALL CAPS, as my personal thank you for those sponsoring students as part of our national initiative with the Raymond James Foundation. According to the armory, there are still a few more hats available, so get your check into us for \$250 or more and you'll be getting that special gift. Can't come up with \$250--I understand, but how about sending us \$10, \$20 or some amount so that if we go outside and ask for funding, we can report 100% financial support from within.

That's it for this month.

Have a great fourth of July!

 *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America

Chaplain's Corner

Prayer. Christian prayer is a means of communicating with God. I think of it as a conversation with God: talking and listening. Listening requires being quiet.

Intercessory prayer is communicating with God on behalf of another person. Jesus is the ultimate intercessor. But we can also be intercessors for other people. I have a prayer card on my bathroom mirror with a list of people that I hold up to God in my morning prayer. I visualize an equilateral triangle with God at the top, me on the bottom left and the other person on the bottom right. All three are connected through prayer.

Before I put someone on my prayer list, I ask them, "Would you like me to put you on my morning prayer list?" When they say yes, I feel they become more of a part of the prayer process since they know I will be praying for them to God.

When I hold people up to God in prayer it brings me closer to the other person, the other person closer to God and me also closer to God. Often my intercessory prayers elicit a thought or a feeling of a call to do something that I call lay ministry. Sometimes it is as simple as calling, emailing, texting or even visiting the other person to let them know they are not alone, and that God loves them.

I invite you to start a prayer list and follow Jesus as an intercessor.

 *Russ*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain



At the June virtual meeting, the Priory Council proposed and approved unanimously to sponsor one High School student supported by the Raymond Davis Foundation; **Tia Tarek Abo Gharfeh** who is attending **College des Frères-New Gate** in Jerusalem.

This is a three-year financial commitment by the Priory at \$1,500/year for a total of \$4,500. To ensure the Priory can meet its obligation, we are appealing to all Knights and Dames to contribute to this Scholarship Drive; **no amount is too small** and all contributions are welcome.

Make your checks payable to:

The Priory of St. Mary the Virgin - SMOTJ.
Note: 'Scholarship Drive' in the memo line.

Mail your contribution to:

Brian Haupt, Treasurer
403 west Lawrence
Spring Hill, KS 66083



We hope to see all of you at the 2025 GPUSA Grand C&I, June 5-8 in Phoenix, AZ at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort and Villas. Room rates are amazingly low!

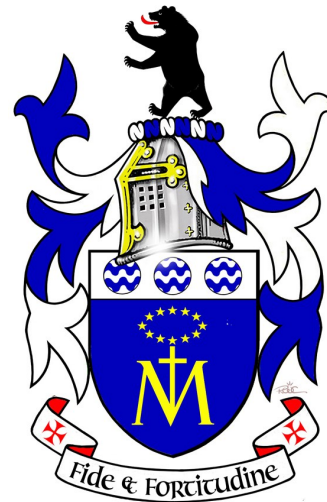
Visit SMOTJGrandCandI.com for more information.

Priory Arms

You may have noticed a set of arms on the cover of the newsletter. If you didn't know, The Priory, in collaboration with the GPUSA Grand Herald, designed and registered an armorial achievement for St. Mary the Virgin.

The goal was to create arms that were clean, simple, easily recognizable, and distinctive; incorporating elements representing St. Mary the Virgin, Kansas City, MO, and the Priory's relationship with the Priory of St. Louis the Crusader.

Blue (Azure) is the heraldic color of the Virgin Mary. The "M" with a cross and 12 stars representing the 12 Apostles is the monogram of the Virgin Mary. Kansas City, MO is known as the *City of Fountains*. A fountain in heraldry is depicted as a circle containing alternating horizontal wavy bands of blue and white. The black bear was chosen as the crest to show the Priory's relationship with the Priory, St. Louis the Crusader; whose crest is also the black bear. The motto—Faith and Fortitude—speaks to the member's commitment to the Order.



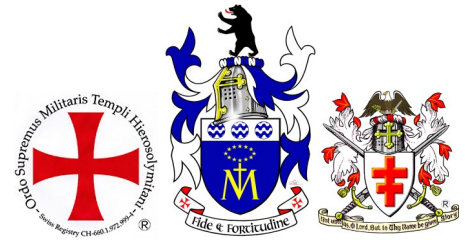
BLAZON

Arms: Azure issuing from the center base of a Roman capital M a Latin cross the whole ensigned by a Vesica Piscis of twelve Mulletts fesswise Or on a Chief Argent three Fountains. **Crest:** Upon a helm a Bear rampant Sable langued Gules mantled Azure and Argent.

Motto: Fide et Fortitudine

confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 8 August 2024

Prior's Post

Like many Templars, I'm also a "descendant of the heroes of the American Revolution"--a member of the SAR. I have been an SAR member for well over 30 years serving as the Ambassador to the Caribbean Region and having also been the Chancellor General. Like SMOTJ, it has a proud tradition and a vast membership. National and local officers have a sense of pride and tradition. Templars have a sense of pride, honor, service and tradition.



I bring up the SAR connection because one of my good friends in the SAR is running to be the President General and he recently sent out quite a thought-provoking message to the membership. He said "As our organization fails to grow at a time where the environment should be favorable to growth, we must ask ourselves, "Why?" I suggest it is because the next generation of potential SAR members is looking for something a bit different before committing time, money and skills to an organization." I believe that applies to all volunteer organizations, including our own SMOTJ.

The Postmaster General of the United States often talks of great organizations that have lost their way. Kodak, Motorola, Blockbuster---all run by smart, hard-working individuals who "failed because they pursued the strategy that made them successful even when the world had moved on; they failed to see the trends of the future; they failed to evolve." We should not be content with merely being a group of like-minded people who show up once or twice a year, parade down the aisle and then go home. Our calling has to be more! It's not just about tradition; it's about the future.

The SMOTJ web home page says "SMOTJ embodies the values of chivalry – honor, courage, compassion, and service. We strive to uphold these ideals in our daily lives while carrying forward the rich history and legacy of the Knights Templar." The values are what caused many of us to become Templars, but the important words for growth have to be "carrying forward" a legacy in a way that makes sense in a modern world. These are times when many in an age group we would seek, have no national pride, no sense of belonging, no calling. It is up to each of us to find those, who still share these values and get them involved.

"SMOTJ offers a unique path for combining your faith with a passion for serving others. We leverage the diverse talents of our growing volunteer base to create a powerful force for good in the world." Right now, we have a campaign where we have adopted a student in the Holy Land for educational purposes, with the continued hope that this individual will serve their faith and their community. I put out a challenge to each of our members to contribute something---anything. Everyone in our Priory can afford to contribute \$10. Many have the ability to contribute \$100 or even \$1000. Hey, \$250 even got you a really cool hat.

Unfortunately, only a small number accepted this challenge. If I were to go to a potential donor and ask for a donation, the first thing they might ask is how many in our Priory have given. I'd be embarrassed to answer that question. So please---if you have not already given--get your checkbook out and send a donation in--"Priory of St Mary the Virgin--SMOTJ" and refer to "scholarship". Don't use tax treatment as an excuse---\$10 or \$100 won't make a difference to your tax return---it will make a difference to a student in need.

If we are to grow, we need new committed talented members. Thanks to the Kogermans and Michael Ryan Burke we have 5 new Postulants joining our Priory at the next C & I---I have seen their resumes and their applications and I believe they will all bring a new spirit of transformation to the SMOTJ, while not forgetting our heritage. Please seek out individuals who are like minded, and yes, younger, who can bring fresh ideas and new direction to SMOTJ as we move forward with the values of chivalry.

Finally, to the 5 of you that are now wearing a cool hat --Tom, Bill, Michael, Don, and Russ--wear it proudly and thank you for your financial or personal commitment. Barbara and Marilyn, I hope you like the bracelets and continue to never give up. Thank you as well for all you do to make our Priory and SMOTJ grow.

I am asking for your support and help in transforming our organization so we can realize our full potential in the critical years ahead.

 *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI

Chaplain's Corner

This is a follow up on my message from last month on intercessory prayer as a conversation with God.

“Words without thought never go to heaven.” I recently ran across this quote from William Shakespeare in “Hamlet.” I paraphrased it to “Prayers without the heart never go to heaven.” Mahatma Gandhi said, “In prayer, it is better to have heart without words than words without heart.”

It does not help to say good prayers if you do not mean them with your heart. If you really mean them, I believe you really need to listen for God’s still small voice. The Holy Spirit might prompt you to take action. You then will become part of God’s answer.

Did you pray for someone? Did you listen? What did you hear?

I would like to hear from you.



Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain



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Challenge Coins

A challenge coin is a small token or medallion, bearing an organization's insignia or emblem and carried by the organization's members. Traditionally, they might be given to prove membership when asked and to enhance morale. Having a challenge coin presented to you in appreciation or earning one by being part of a group makes the coin special to the giver and the recipient.

For more information on challenge coins, check out the white paper at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fNjKe6XEyWliiTrnjxiPwlcZgkk_9Ywg/view



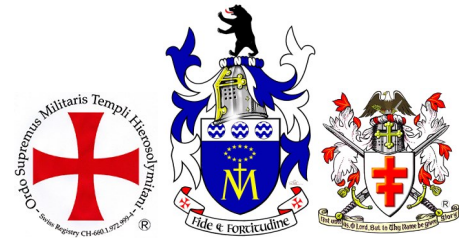
Welcome to our newest Postulants who will be invested on Saturday, October 26th in Kansas City, MO.

- Brian Jackson
- Eugene Johnson
- Christina Johnson
- Frank Romero
- Scott Darby

We are DELIGHTED you are joining us.

confreere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 9 September 2024

Prior's Post

Your Excellencies, Knights and Dames;

I hope you had a wonderful Labor Day weekend. My comments this month are brief.

I ask that you mark your calendars and plan on attending the Priory's Fall Convent & Investiture on Saturday, October 26 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church (1307 Holmes Street, KCMO) beginning at 10 AM – guests are welcome and encouraged. There will be a reception for the five (5) Postulants on Friday, October 25 from 6:30 – 7:30 PM at the church followed by a Vigil. In addition to the investiture of four Knights and one Dame on Saturday, there will be the presentation of awards and promotions. The C&I will be followed by a Grand Luncheon. Details and a formal invitation are forthcoming.

I also draw your attention to the notice in this edition of the upcoming Jerusalem Mite Appeal and encourage ALL members to contribute what they can. No contribution is too small if given with a big heart.



Our fore bearers, the original Knights Templar, were well known and respected as warriors. The Templars were well trained, well equipped, well disciplined, and pious. They were Warrior Monks, and they were intentional in everything they did.

I would like to explore with you the concept of a different warrior – Prayer Warrior. Jesus is our ultimate Prayer Warrior. Jesus is also our ultimate Intercessor.

Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 "pray without ceasing." The Greek literal meaning is "pray constantly." That seems rather difficult for me. I prefer to think about being intentional about my prayers, purposeful and on a daily basis. As Christians and Templars, we are called to follow Jesus. Therefore, we are called to be prayer warriors and intercessors.

How? Set aside a few moments each day to pray. I have a prayer card on my bathroom mirror with names of people that have asked me to pray for them. I see it every day and talk with God, always trying to remember to listen. In listening, I might hear my marching orders.

Am I a prayer warrior? Well, I keep on trying to be a prayer warrior. Will you try with me?

† *Russ*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain

† *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America

Jerusalem Mite Appeal Coming

In January/February when Knights and Dames pay their annual oblations, they also have an opportunity to make additional contributions to GPUSA, the Priory, and the Jerusalem Mite. You can also donate online *at any time* through the GPUSA website under the “Donations” tab in your profile.



<p>GPUSA General Donation</p> <p>Please Donate Today</p> <p>Donations to the Grand Priory can be a general donation, or for specified targets, special charitable contributions, or one of the Grand Priory's supported activities.</p> <p>DONATE</p> <p><small>Have Issues Donating? See Our Dedicated GPUSA Campaign Page</small></p>	<p>PRIORY General Donation</p> <p>Please Donate Today</p> <p>Donations to your Priory can be a general donation, or for specified targets, special charitable contributions, or one of the priory's supported charitable organizations.</p> <p>DONATE</p> <p><small>Have Issues Donating? See Our Dedicated Priory Campaign Page</small></p>	<p>Jerusalem Mite Donation</p> <p>Please Donate Today</p> <p>Donations from GPUSA members and friends, directly funds dozen known, trusted, church-related charitable organizations, based primarily in the Holy Land.</p> <p>DONATE</p> <p><small>Have Issues Donating? See Our Dedicated JM Campaign Page</small></p>
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100% funds collected from the Jerusalem Mite benefit efforts in the Holy Land. International charity provided via the Jerusalem Mite and the Raymond Davis Foundation totaled \$502,000 in 2023.

Each October, there is an *additional* appeal to contribute to the Jerusalem Mite. If you have already contributed, THANK YOU and if you can do more... **THANK YOU AGAIN.**

Like any fund raiser, the target is 100% participation. No amount is too little or too much; all contributions are welcome.

Watch for the appeal from GPUSA and thank you in advance for your contribution.



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- Frank Romero
- Scott Darby

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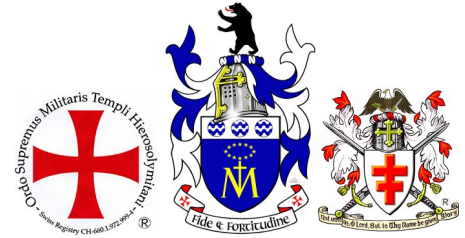


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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 10 October 2024

Prior's Post

Your Excellencies, Knights and Dames;

A few items for your attention this month.

If you have not done so already, PLEASE email Chvse. Clayton at anancyclayton@gmail.com with your intent to attend the Priory Convent & Investiture October 26 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church. We need an accurate headcount.

Also, if you have not done so already, PLEASE contribute to the Jerusalem Mite program; we would like 100% participation. The Apostle Paul taught that when we have charity we are filled with good feelings for all people. We are patient and kind. We are not boastful or proud, selfish or rude. When we have charity we do not remember or rejoice in the evil others have done. Neither do we do good things just because it is to our advantage. Instead, we share the joy of those who live by truth. When we have charity we are loyal, we believe the best of others, and we are kind to them. The scriptures teach that "charity never faileth." (See 1 Corinthians 13:4–8.)

Thank you in advance and I look forward to seeing everyone in Kansas City on the 26th.

 *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America



Jerusalem Mite Appeal

The Jerusalem Mite (JM) funds our primary mission to support Christians in the Holy Land. We accomplish this charge through two avenues. First, the JM is distributed to a variety of organizations in the Holy Land. Second, we aid Christians in the Holy Land through our scholarship awards, providing education and a future for the next generation of Christians.

100% funds collected from the Jerusalem Mite benefit efforts in the Holy Land. International charity provided via the Jerusalem Mite and the Raymond Davis Foundation totaled \$502,000 in 2023.

Our duty and mission as Templars is to support Christians in the Holy Land and throughout the world. Please donate to the Jerusalem Mite campaign. No contribution is too small if given with a big heart.

You can donate online through the GPUSA website under the "Donations" tab in your profile.



GPUSA General Donation	PRIORY General Donation	Jerusalem Mite Donation
Please Donate Today	Please Donate Today	Please Donate Today
<small>Donations to the Grand Priory can be a general donation, or for specified targets, special charitable contributions, or one of the Grand Priory's supported activities.</small>	<small>Donations to your Priory can be a general donation, or for specified targets, special charitable contributions, or one of the priory's supported charitable organizations.</small>	<small>Donations from GPUSA members and friends, directly funds dozen known, trusted, church-related charitable organizations, based primarily in the Holy Land.</small>
DONATE	DONATE	DONATE
<small>Have Issues Donating? See Our Dedicated GPUSA Campaign Page</small>	<small>Have Issues Donating? See Our Dedicated Priory Campaign Page</small>	<small>Have Issues Donating? See Our Dedicated JM Campaign Page</small>

Thank You!

A graphic consisting of several horizontal brushstrokes in various colors (blue, purple, pink, red, orange, yellow) that create a vibrant, multi-colored background for the 'Thank You!' text.

900 years ago, the original Knights Templar protected people with their swords. Today's Templars can protect people with their pens.

The SMOTJ is dedicated to maintaining a Christian presence in the Holy Land, performing acts of charity, aiding Christians at risk, supporting the poor and tending to the sick.

Your Jerusalem Mite helps those in need in the Holy Land through education, refugee relief, housing, healthcare, vocational training, child services and the preservation of Holy Sites.

In 2016 I was fortunate enough to make my pilgrimage to the Holy Land with a group of fellow knights and dames, some of which are members the Priory of St. Louis the Crusader. I was able to see firsthand how we continue to protect people in the Holy Land today. At Bethlehem University I met and visited with nursing students that we help with scholarships. In Ramallah at the Anglican-Episcopal Technical Vocational Training I met and dined with students studying hotel management and other skills. In Bethany at the Orthodox School for Girls I spent the evening with Sister Martha as she explained how grateful she is for all the help the Templars provide. What touched me the most was the Holy Family Children's Home at the Crèche.

The Holy Family Children's Home is an orphanage. In John 14:18 Jesus said to his followers, "I will not leave you as orphans..." When I saw the babies and small children at that orphanage I cried. I was an orphan at birth. But I was adopted.

You might not be able to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but you still can help our ministry there. Take up your sword (pen) and help protect the people Jesus told us to protect. Send in your Jerusalem Mite. Any amount will help.



Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain



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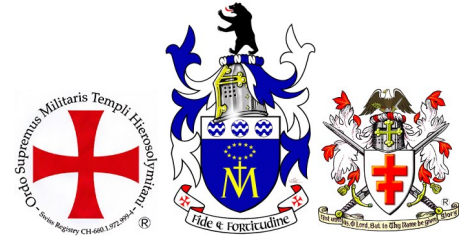


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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 11 November 2024

Prior's Post

We're at the time of year when so many wonderful things are happening. Just recently, we had a fantastic C&I with the investiture of four Knights and one Dame to our ranks and the presentation of awards and promotions to many well-deserving Knights and Dames for their past work on behalf of St Mary the Virgin and SMOTJ. Keep up the good work in finding new Postulants to help us grow into the organization we all committed to support. We also recognized those who personally foster educational opportunities for children in the Holy Land and, thanks to the efforts of many, our Priory was recognized for our support of one student.



It's also the time when we ask that you make your contribution to the Jerusalem Mite Appeal. You can do that on line at SMOTJ.ORG. As I asked at the C&I, I'd love to see 100% participation by our Knights and Dames. You don't have to give \$100 (unless you can), but there is no reason why each of our members can't contribute at least \$5.00. If you go out to lunch at least once a month, skip lunch and donate to this worthy cause. Let's show that our Priory is committed to the purposes of SMOTJ.

Thanksgiving is approaching and each of you have plenty to be thankful for. Remember there are those who are far worse off than we personally could ever imagine. As a Knight or Dame, take a moment to help those in need. Drop off some food to someone confined to their home; donate clothing; volunteer your time. Wear your Templar lapel pin, hat, bracelet if you volunteer, so people will know what you represent.

Be thinking about projects you'd like to see us engage in over the next year and let us know.

Have a great month and Happy Thanksgiving.

 *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., KCTJ
Prior VI

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem
Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America

Chaplain's Corner



One of the most powerful moments of our Convent and Investiture for me is the Friday night Vigil of Arms. This year our Postulants knelt before the Altar in St. George's Chapel with their new swords and meditated. Then we all prayed with them in part:

"Let me always be a beacon unto those in distress; never allow me to forget my obligation unto the homeless nor the poor: let me serve Thee and Thine Eternal Throne all the days of my life. Let me always remember the obligations that I have taken upon me."

This reminds me of our Baptismal Vows which we renew when someone is Baptized. Baptism is God's gift to us. If we accept the gift, then we take on the obligation.

 *Russ*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain

St. Mary's Student

The 2024 School Year has already begun for students not only in the United States, but also within the Holy Land; a more important date needs to be remembered. A year ago on October 7th, the world witnessed the unfolding of a war between Israel and Hezbollah, which is still raging on today, and continues to escalate with no immediate resolve or peace in site. The citizens, schools, homes, businesses, holy sites, hospitals, and so much more have been devastated by this ongoing conflict.

As Templars, we have all vowed to protect those at risk in the Holy Land and around the world. It is within our SMOTJ- DNA to do all we can to help those who need us the most at their most critical moments, and to provide love, support and resources.

Within GPUSA we achieve that in many ways through our MISSION CENTRIC efforts within our Jerusalem Mite, and our Scholarship Programs facilitated by the GEN Raymond Davis Templar Foundation [501c3]. For over a 15 Years our members have stepped up and supported this MISSION, and in such, we have provided \$4.6 Million dollars in Grants and Scholarships. That is proof we are making an impact. We continue to punch well above our weight class in relation to the size of our Order, amidst other similar Chivalric Orders.

Recently, the Raymond Davis Templar Foundation Team put forth a challenge to members across GPUSA in an effort to support the available students that were remaining needing sponsors. The members and the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin stepped forward and proudly answered that call.



Meet **Tia Tarek Abo Gharfeh** who is attending the College Des Freres – New Gate. She is the student that St. Mary the Virgin has agreed to support. Her family has four students within a low income and high expense environment. Her Father Tarek is a Chef and her mother Suzan is an Assistant, both struggling to find ways to support their

family and Tia's tuition. Thankfully for St. Mary's – the worry and stress associated to Tia's critical education has been cared for, and she will be able to remain in school.

When we all wake up each day, and we remind ourselves that we are Templars, we choose to put our faith into action and to be a blessing to those who need us. **We Are Making A Difference** - and the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin and our members are stepping forward and doing just that!

Welcome & Congratulations



Welcome to our newest Knights and Dame:

- Chev. Scott Darby, KTJ
- Chev. Frank Romero, KTJ
- Chvse. Christina Johnson, DTJ
- Chev. Eugene Johnson, KTJ
- Chev. Brian Jackson, KTJ

And congratulations to all those receiving awards and promotions.

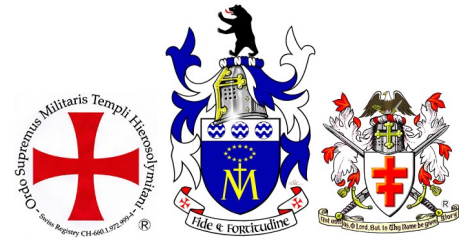


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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 10, Issue 12 December 2024

Advent

*A Season of Hope
& Expectation*

Chancellor's Message

The Advent Season and Christmas are fast approaching. We know this as a time of celebration, giving, and fellowship with friends and family, but it's also a time of serious contemplation as we anticipate the coming of Christ both in the manger and in the second coming. I ask that all our Knights and Dames think and ponder deeply during this season. Do you anticipate the coming of Christ? Does your life and the work you do day in and day out reflect that anticipation? Do we do the work of a Christian with great joy or begrudgingly? These are all questions we face and must ask ourselves.

My hope is that this will be a season of great joy and anticipation for all of you! May you remember all the many blessings of this life and the blessings of our Savior Jesus Christ and his presence with us in the world!

 *Garron Daniels*

The Rev. Chev. Garron Daniels, ACTJ

Chaplain's Corner

December 1 is the first Sunday in Advent. Advent comes from the Latin "adventus" meaning "coming" as in the coming of Christ. The tradition of lighting Advent candles each Sunday in the season of Advent focuses us on the coming of Jesus into our lives.

During Advent we also have three Ember Days (December 18, 20 and 21). These Ember Days are traditional days of prayer, fasting and giving alms. As Templars, how do we focus on the coming of Jesus into our lives? As Templars, how do we focus on time for prayer, fasting and giving alms to the needy?

I ask that we mark December 18, 20 and 21 on our calendars as Templar Ember Days for prayer, fasting and giving alms, and also invite Jesus into your life.

 *Russ*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ
Chaplain



WISHING YOU AND ALL THOSE CLOSE TO YOU A

Joyous and Blessed Christmas

AND A NEW YEAR OF HAPPINESS AND HOPE

for a World of Peace

Christmas Traditions

Some well known modern Christmas traditions have their roots in the Medieval celebrations:

Mince Pies were originally baked in rectangular cases to represent the infant Jesus' crib and the addition of cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg was meant to symbolize the gifts bestowed by the three wise men. Similarly, to the more modern mince pies we see today, these pies were not very large and it was widely believed to be lucky to eat one mince pie on each of the twelve days of Christmas. However, as the name suggests, mince pies were originally made of a variety of shredded meat along with spices and fruit. It was only as recently as the Victorian era that the recipe was amended to include only spices and fruit.

Carol singers. Some of us enjoy the sound of carolers on our doorsteps but the tradition for carol singers going door to door is actually a result of carols being banned in churches in medieval times. Many carolers took the word carol literally (to sing and dance in a circle) which meant that the more serious Christmas masses were being ruined and so the Church decided to send the carol singers outside.

Anyone for humble pie? While the most popular choice for Christmas dinner today is undoubtedly turkey, the bird was not introduced to Europe until after the discovery of the Americas, its natural home, in the 15th century. In medieval times goose was the most common option. Venison was also a popular alternative in medieval Christmas celebrations, although the poor were not allowed to eat the best cuts of meat. However, the Christmas spirit might entice a Lord to donate the unwanted parts of the family's Christmas deer, the offal, which was known as the 'umbles'. To make the meat go further it was often mixed with other ingredients to make a pie, in this case the poor would be eating 'umble pie', an expression we now use today to describe someone who has fallen from their pedestal to a more modest level.

The Christmas crib originated in 1223 in medieval Italy when Saint Francis of Assisi explained the Christmas Nativity story to local people using a crib to symbolize the birth of Jesus.

Boxing Day has traditionally been seen as the reversal of fortunes, where the rich provide gifts for the poor. In medieval times, the gift was generally money and it was provided in a hollow clay pot with a slit in the top which had to be smashed for the money to be taken out. These small clay pots were nicknamed "piggies" and thus became the first version of the piggy banks we use today. Unfortunately Christmas Day was also traditionally a "quarter day", one of the four days in the financial year on which payments such as ground rents were due, meaning many poor tenants had to pay their rent on Christmas Day!

While the excitement and frivolities of Christmas make it easy to forget the more serious aspects of the festival, it can also be argued that the tradition started by the wise men with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh continues today, although with perhaps slightly less exotic gifts!



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