

# confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 1 January 2025

## Prior's Post

As we enter the dawn of a new year, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for the dedication, hard work, and enthusiasm you've brought to our Priory and the Order. This past year has been full of challenges, growth, and accomplishments, and each one of you has contributed to our success in meaningful ways. Your commitment and resilience have been truly inspiring, and together, we've achieved things that were once just ideas. Let's carry this momentum into the new year, embracing fresh opportunities and setting even higher goals.



Looking ahead, 2025 promises to be a year of new beginnings, exciting challenges, and further accomplishments. I am confident that, with your continued passion and teamwork, we will build on our success and reach even greater heights. Let's stay united, focused, and motivated, supporting each other every step of the way.

Wishing you all a prosperous and fulfilling New Year filled with personal and professional growth, happiness, and good health. Here's to an amazing year ahead!

**Richard T. Bryant**

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



## Chaplain's Corner

As the Twelve Days of Christmas wind down, we come to the church season of Epiphany on January 6 when we celebrate The Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Epiphany can be seen as a manifestation, revealed, and made known as in the appearance of God to the Gentiles (not Jewish) in the presence of the Three Kings, Wise Men or Magi. How are we as Templars made known? We do not wear our mantles or other insignia out in public. How do we reveal who we are? How are we seen?

Pastor Paddy Rooney wrote in the December Templar Voices that the original Templars were known for their charity to others. By charity, I mean the highest form of love, the reciprocal love between God and man that is made manifest in unselfish love of one's fellow men.

Jesus told us to give food to the hungry, shelter those who have none, give clothes to the needy, visit the sick and in prison (lonely). I believe this is how we will be made known as Templars.

**Russ**

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain

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 [SMOTJGrandCndl.com](http://SMOTJGrandCndl.com) for more information.

# Celebrating the New Year, Medieval Style

When Roman law was revived in the Middle Ages, in some places, January 1st was selected to signal the beginning of the New Year, but it wasn't standard. In fact, many New Year's celebrations were held on March 25th, The Feast of the Annunciation; a religious holiday that celebrated the coming of the Angel Gabriel to Mary with news that she would bear God a son. The streets would be filled with processions, and people would make offerings to Mary. In some places, like Venice, the New Year began on March 1st, and in others, it began on Christmas or Easter. The Anglo-Saxons celebrated December 25th as the New Year, but this switched to March 25th in the later Middle Ages, and then to January 1st in the 18th century.

## Traditions Near and Far

In England, it was customary to exchange gifts on New Year's, since it was considered to bring good fortune for the coming year.

In Scotland and Ireland, the physical appearance of the "First Foot" (the first person to enter the house after midnight) mattered. It was said that this entrant could make or break a family's fortunes for the rest of the year. Some people believed a light haired person would bring good luck, for others, it had to be a dark complexioned man or boy, or someone who was flat footed. Are you a red head? Sorry, but you wouldn't have received a very warm welcome on New Year's Eve; red heads were thought to bring bad luck and grief.

In Ireland, New Year's Eve was known as *Oíche Chinn Bliana* (Year's End Night). People banged on the walls and doors of their home to chase out the evil spirits before ringing in the New Year. Irish homes were also spotless to start the New Year off fresh. It was also a time to remember the dead; candles were lit in the windows, an empty place was set at the table, and the door was left unlocked to welcome the spirits of deceased family members who had passed on that year.

In Poland, (as well as several other Eastern European countries) New year's Eve is known as *Sylvester* after St. Sylvester (†335), whose Feast Day is December 31st (and the date of his death). Legend has it that St. Sylvester imprisoned and then slew a dragon named Leviathan, who had escaped at the beginning of 1,000 AD. Leviathan's defeat was a cause of celebration, and was called St. Sylvester's Eve. In Poland, young boys would dress up as devils, and play pranks. One New Year's Day, bread was baked with a ring or cross hidden inside; if the lucky recipient found a ring, it would herald marriage, if they found a cross, it could mean a life in the clergy.

Russia is one of these places where they also had a multitude of different dates for ringing in the New Year. From 1348, New Year's was celebrated on September 1st. Prior to that, New Year's was celebrated March 1st, and in some places, March 22nd. It wasn't moved officially to January 1st until 1699, by Peter The Great (1672-1725). Russians also celebrate with a New Year's Tree, *Novogodnyaya Yolka*, that remains up until January 14th, when Russians celebrate a second New Year's based on the old Julian calendar, called Old New Year's, *Staryj Novyj God*. It's a much smaller affair with family and friends, but hey, it's a second celebration nonetheless! New Year's is also the time that Russia's version of Santa, *Ded Moroz*, Grandfather Frost, passes out gifts to children with the help of his granddaughter, *Snegurochka*, the Snow Maiden. Although she is a nineteenth century addition, her story has been traced back to medieval fabliaux and medieval folk tales about a "snow-child".

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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 2 February 2025

## Prior's Post

It's been an interesting time as Prior. We've seen substantial growth to our membership through the efforts of outstanding members. Those new Knights and Dames are young, enthusiastic and will move the Priory forward in directions consistent with the goals and philosophies of the Grand Priory. I'm told that we have the potential of yet five more new Postulants for the upcoming year---how exciting!



Our Chancellor Garron Daniels, who will follow as the next Prior with the approval of our members, has been named as the Rector at the Episcopal Parish in Alton Illinois, and overcoming some unwarranted resistance (bureaucracy) has become the youngest member of the SMOTJ Chaplain Corp. Our Education/Learning Officer continues to bring teachings and prayers to our membership each month. There is no doubt that without the guidance and institutional knowledge brought to us by Peter Heineman, we'd struggle to meet the report requirements of SMOTJ and the splendor of the C&I celebrations. Our Deputy Grand Prior Tom Marshall is our strong ally in advancing the membership of our Priory.

What is interesting about St Mary is our diversity. Most Priories have a focused, centralized membership. We are in many ways an "at-large" Priory with strong advocacy from Bill and Barbara Kogerman in their locale. We have Knights and Dames north, south, east and west. I've been told we will have two more potential Postulants from the Springfield area and some that have been recruited by Michael Ryan Burke will again come from around the world. This is not a traditional Priory, with an ability of our members to meet weekly for services. Rather, we are a distinguished collective of individuals who have pledged to follow the purposes and mission of SMOTJ. At a time where organization are struggling to enlist members and retain members, our Priory is building. This because of your commitment to the Mission! I commend you and give you my sincere thanks.

A reminder, it is time to renew your commitment by submitting your annual contributions. There has been a modest increase in dues but nothing that should be a hindrance in renewing. While you are at it, please make a contribution to Jerusalem Mites, and to our Priory. Contributions to St Mary's allows us to make financial donations to causes which are consistent with our Mission. It's not to late to pay on line, or by check!

We will have a zoom call over the next month to bring everyone up to speed; to discuss and confirm our commitment for our student Tia Tarek Abo Gharfeh who we support her education, and start planning for the fall transfer of leadership, as well as any new programs which may be consistent with our cause.

Thanks for your ongoing support!

 *Richard T. Bryant*

Chev. Richard T. Bryant, Esq., GOTJ  
Prior VI  
Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem  
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## Chaplain's Corner

In our prayers during our night Vigil of Arms we pray, "Let me always remember the obligation that I have taken upon me." An obligation can be defined as an act to which a person is bound, a duty or commitment.

Part of the obligation we take on as Templars is to make our annual Oblation. Some words that come to mind with Oblation are: Offering to God, Sacrifice to God, Thanksgiving to God, Devotion to God and Gift to God. We make these offerings to God to maintain a right relationship to the sacred order as Christians and as Templars.

Please contact a Priory Officer if you are unable to meet your obligation payment and thank you in advance for helping ensure a continued Templar presence in the Kansas City area.



Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain



### A Light in Haiti

Mission Reflections from  
Pastors Michael Ryan Burke, KCTJ,  
and Frank Romero, KTJ

From January 2nd to 8th, Pastors Michael Ryan Burke, KCTJ, and Frank Romero, KTJ, of the Priory of Saint Mary the Virgin, embarked on a mission to Haiti. Their story will be featured in a future edition of the Templar Times.



## Where do your oblations and donations go?

Oblations constitute the annual financial obligations of active membership in the Order. Like other organizations, SMOTJ-GPUSA relies on timely payment of oblations and additional donations to operate.

The mandatory oblations for active membership are \$175 to GPUSA and \$25 to the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin.

Here's how the funds are used:

- The \$175 GPUSA obligation covers national expenses, including membership dues to the International Order (OSMTH), insurance, legal fees, accounting, and more.
- The \$25 Priory obligation is deposited into the Priory's account by GPUSA. This supports local charitable activities and the Fall Convent & Investiture. The Priory keeps just enough funds to cover the cost of one C&I each year.

In addition to mandatory oblations, you can make voluntary donations to GPUSA, the Jerusalem Mite Program, or the Priory at any time. You can also sponsor a student or join the Raymond Davis Bequest Society.

Your timely payment of oblations and additional donations helps ensure the Priory and Order can continue their work.



### PRIORY OF ST. LOUIS THE CRUSADER

March 29, 2025  
St. Paul Episcopal Church  
Alton, Illinois

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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 3 March 2025

## Chancellor's Corner

Recently I had the honor to be seated as the 21<sup>st</sup> Rector of the Episcopal Parish of Alton in Alton, IL. As this huge milestone in my life as a Priest drew near, many people asked me what exactly is a Rector and why is it such a big deal? Before becoming Rector, I was called the "Priest in Charge". While being in this role gave me all the same responsibilities and duties as a Rector, the Bishop had more say and oversight over what I did and didn't do. It's almost like a probationary period where the people of God and I see if this will work out and if we are getting along. When the congregation feels like this is a good fit and they want to keep the priest for long term, they vote and ask the Bishop to seat the priest as their Rector.



The best way to describe a Rector is like a professor or teacher with tenure in the sense that I will hopefully be at the Church for the long term! The Bishop still has authority over the Rector, but the Rector is given more independence in their work and duties with the supporting guidance of the Bishop and Diocesan staff. The seating service is a special liturgy of the Church that involves the Bishop and clergy across the Diocese. They come together to pray over the Priest and help introduce him/her as the new Rector of the Church and celebrate the occasion.

It's hard to believe that I've been able to become a Rector at such a young age. Most people at my age (27) are associates or minister to very small or rural parishes. It's uncommon for a priest my age to take charge of a Church this size with a nearly 190-year history behind it. I am blessed and honored to be the Rector and I'm looking forward to the years ahead with this wonderful congregation. If you ever find yourself in the Alton area, please stop by and pray with us for a while! Or better yet, come to the Spring C&I that will be held at St Paul's and you will see why this place is so special and why I feel blessed to be the Rector there!

## Chaplain's Corner

Tuesday, March 4, is Shrove Tuesday. Shrove is an old word that refers to confessing sins and being forgiven. I see sins as that of commission, as in doing something that is contrary to the will of God. I also see sins as that of omission, as in failing to do God's will. That is where I should have done something, reached out to someone, made a positive difference in this world, but failed to do so.

Shrove Tuesday is also known by the lighter term we call Pancake Day. People eat fun food before the more restrictive diet season of Lent begins.

Wednesday is Ash Wednesday (March 5 this year). Some traditions put a cross on peoples foreheads from the ashes of burnt palm crosses saved from the previous year's Palm Sunday. The ash cross marks the person as being penitent and the beginning of the season of Lent.

Lent is a forty-day season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It is a time for reflection and preparation for Easter. For me, it is a time to consider how I can be a better Templar, and a better follower of Jesus. My church has a weekly Lenten study group with a soup dinner, and I will be attending. Is your church having one? Will you be attending?

I invite you to walk with me through Lent and reflect on how we can be better Templars.

Russ

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 Garron Daniels

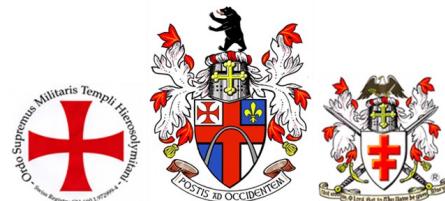
The Rev. Chev. Garron Daniels, ACTJ

## Seating of Chev. Daniels



On Thursday, January 30, the commemoration of Charles Stuart, King and Martyr, took place at St. Paul's Church in Alton, during the Celebration of a New Ministry with a Rite I Holy Eucharist. Father Chev. Garron Daniels, ACTJ was formally presented by his Vestry to The Right Reverend Brian K. Burgess for installation as the 21st rector of St. Paul's Parish and Trinity Chapel in Alton, Illinois. The service was marked by prayers and hymns of thanksgiving, with clergy from the Episcopal Dioceses of Springfield and Missouri, as well as the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield, participating. The Right Reverend Deon Johnson of Missouri assisted in the service, and The Reverend Dr. Nathan Haydon from St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Ladue, Missouri, delivered the homily. Father Daniels, a graduate of The University of the South School of Theology in Sewanee, TN, has already made a significant impact on the spiritual and missional life of the parish in East St. Louis. Members from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin and the Priory of St. Louis the Crusader were in attendance.

mark ✓ your **Calendar**



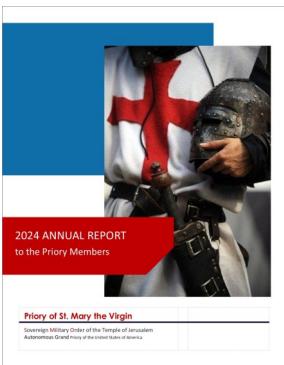
**PRIORY OF ST. LOUIS THE CRUSADER**

March 29, 2025  
St. Paul Episcopal Church  
Alton, Illinois



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## Annual Report

Each year, Priories must submit a Priory Annual Report to GPUSA by January 31.

The report consists of a summary of membership (members gained and lost during the year), finances (total income, expenses, and

closing balance), charitable giving, and activities from the previous year. The data is used by GPUSA to file the tax returns for the Order and to report to the International Order (OSMTH). St. Mary uses the data from the Priory Annual Report to create an Annual Report to the Priory Members. You can download a copy of the 2024 Report at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BZVvvjJAVaXUxmURFF7ujoGUhs-Wsuh2/view?usp=sharing>

# confre

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 4 April 2025

## Chaplain's Corner

How is your journey through Lent going? How is your time of reflection and preparation for Easter going? Are you participating in a Lenten study at church?

We are studying a short book, "I Am Yours" about a near death experience that caused the author to hear his call from God. The call begins by accepting that you are God's. Then accepting God's call to you to be a minister (lay or ordained), to be about the ministry of Jesus. As Templars, we are called to be about the ministry of Jesus: To love God and our neighbors, give to the poor, feed the hungry, visit the sick and lonely, and protect the oppressed.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday on April 13 where Jesus is welcomed into Jerusalem. May we welcome Jesus into our hearts and follow Him in service to others.

April 17 is Maunday Thursday and the feast of The Last Supper. Maundy means "mandate" or command when Jesus told his Disciples to love one another. Then Jesus humbly washed their feet to show them to be servants to others.

Friday is known by several names: Good Friday, Holy Friday, Great Friday, Sorrowful Friday, Long Friday, and Friday of the Passion. Jesus is crucified and dies and is buried. "It is finished."

Easter Sunday when God and the Holy Spirit resurrect Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we are also resurrected to new life, a life of service to Jesus.

How will you serve as a Templar?

Russ

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain  
russ@valomilk.com

## Welcome New Members

We are **DELIGHTED** to welcome the Hon. Chev. Justin Brown, KTJ (Senator, Missouri 16th District) and Chvse. Tiffany Brunner, EdD, DTJ to the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin. Chev. Brown and Chvse. Brunner were sponsored by COL Chev. David Appleby, GCTJ, GMTJ, Grand Master - OSMTH and invested at the OSMTH Grand Priory of Ireland event on March 22.



This month marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our newsletter. The newsletter was originally called *Precept* since St. Mary at that time was a Preceptory under St. Louis the Crusader. The name was changed to *Confre* for the December 2018 issue. And the rest, as they say, is history.

# Faith on the Frontlines

Ministry at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad

In the heart of Baghdad, where faith is often tested by the challenges of daily life, Oasis Church continues to be a sanctuary of hope. What began as a small gathering of believers inside the U.S. Embassy has grown into a thriving ecumenical Protestant church, uniting diplomats, NATO personnel, UN representatives, and embassy staff from 17 different nations.

Founded by Pastor Michael Ryan Burke, KCTJ, Priory of St. Mary the Virgin during his seven years serving in Diplomatic Security at the U.S. Embassy, Oasis Church was built on the vision of providing a spiritual refuge for those serving in a high-stakes environment. Over the years, it became more than a place of worship—it became a family. Among those who found their calling within its walls were Eugene (Gene) KTJ and Christina (Kris) DTJ.

Gene began attending Oasis Church in 2018, stepping into mentorship under Pastor Burke. A year later, Kris arrived in Baghdad and likewise entered discipleship. Their journey in faith was one they walked together, eventually receiving their ministry licenses in 2020. As they deepened their commitment to God, their 27-year marriage grew while serving God in new capacities than ever before. This led to opportunities to mentor and disciple relationships and couples, based on a love built on shared purpose and unwavering faith.

Their mission work extended far beyond Baghdad. Alongside Pastor Burke, they carried the gospel to Uganda and the Philippines, serving communities in need. Their journey also took them to Jerusalem, walking the streets where Christ once ministered—an experience that further cemented their devotion.

When Pastor Burke departed in 2021, Oasis Church needed new leadership to carry on its mission. Gene was called to serve as Head Pastor, while Kris stepped into the role of Assistant Pastor. Together, they have continued to nurture and grow the Oasis Church community. Gene leads a men's Bible study every Friday night, fostering accountability and spiritual strength among the men. On Wednesdays, Kris gathers the women for a Bible study of their own, offering encouragement and discipleship.

But perhaps the most visible sign of their impact happens at the end of every month. But specifically, the past nine months, Oasis Church has held baptisms on the last Saturday, welcoming at least one consistently—sometimes up to four—new believers into the faith.

The love offerings Oasis Church collects, goes 100% towards both local and international small ministries. This is to set the precedence of finding small but powerful ministries to plant seeds into and watch God multiply. There are several small churches and ministries in Baghdad Iraq. It is so impactful to help churches in a Muslim lead country, boldly confess and spread the Gospel. Also, they donate to a ministry in the Philippines that has currently helped build and rebuild 14 churches in several provinces.

Their courage and dedication have not gone unnoticed. In recognition of their unwavering commitment to maintaining the ministry in the face of violence and instability in Iraq, Gene and Kris were invested into the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (SMOTJ) in October 2024. Their induction honors their years of faithful service and the sacrifices they have made to ensure that Oasis Church remains an oasis in the desert.

All three pastors—Mike, Gene, and Kris—are members of the Priory of Saint Mary the Virgin in Kansas City, Missouri, further binding them in shared faith, duty, and the sacred mission of the modern-day Knights Templar.

Through it all, Gene and Kris's ministry has been a testament to both devotion and love—love for Christ, love for their community, and love for one another. Their story is more than just a continuation of Oasis Church's mission; it's a living example of faith in action, proving that even in the most unexpected places, God is at work, building His church and writing love stories along the way.



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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



## Chaplain's Corner

On Easter Sunday, God and the Holy Spirit resurrected Jesus to new life. In The Book of Revelation 21:5 God says, "See, I am making all things new." Our sins are forgiven, and we are also resurrected to new life.

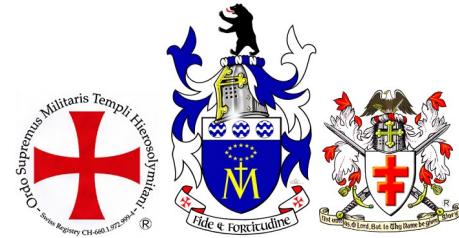
Eastertide, the church season of Easter celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, lasts fifty days. The color of Easter is white. White often signifies purity, devotion and new beginning, new life, and even new ministry. Our Templar mantles are white for a reason.

I consider Easter to be like New Year's Day resolutions. I have a new chance to try again to do better as a follower of Jesus and as a Templar. I am of the Episcopal tradition and at Easter, part of our service is The Renewal of Baptismal Vows. In those vows I declare that I will "proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ, seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving my neighbor as myself, and strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being." I consider these my "marching orders" as I re-up for another year as a follower of Jesus and as a Templar.

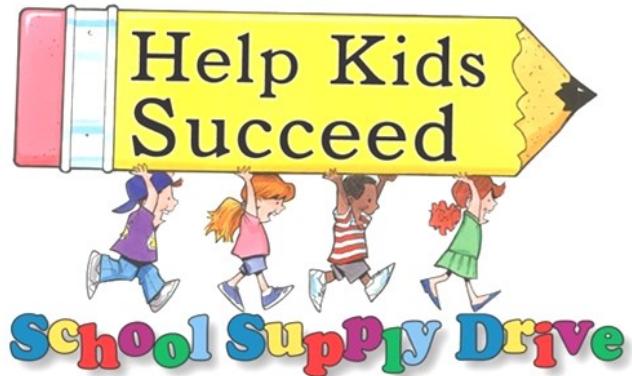
Will you re-up with me?

  
Russ

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Volume 11, Issue 5 May 2025



For many years, the Knights and Dames of the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin have contributed per-packaged elementary school kits to families at the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council in Kansas City, MO. We invite you to donate to the 2025 School Supply Drive. 100% of your donation will be used to purchase school supply kits for families in need.

Each kit contains...

- 3 - Premium Folders, Asst. Colors
- 2 - Notebooks, 70 Ct.
- 1 - Filler Paper, 100 Ct.
- 1 - Markers, 8 Ct.
- 1 - Colored Pencils
- 1 - Pencil Case
- 1 - Crayons, 24 Ct.
- 12 - Yellow Pencils
- 1 - Glue, 4 oz.
- 1 - Glue Stick, 2 Ct.
- 2 - Pink Erasers
- 1 - Dry Erase Marker
- 1 - 5" Safety Scissors
- 1 - Ruler
- 1 - Yellow Highlighter
- 3 - Blue Pen
- 3 - Red Pen
- 1 - Mini Dual ID Sharpener

\$30  
ea.



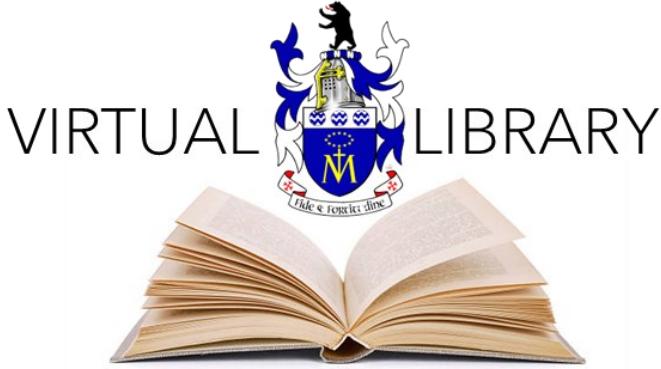
Make your check payable to:  
**St. Mary the Virgin SMOTJ**  
Memo: School Supply Program

Mail your contribution **by June 30** to:  
Brian Haupt  
403 West Lawrence  
Spring Hill, KS 66083

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All Knights and Dames are encouraged to continue their training and expand their knowledge of our Order by making full use of the extensive resources available in the Priory's Virtual Library. You can access the library at: <http://www.plheineman.net/publications/>



If you receive the Priory newsletter in print it's because we do not have your email. What you are missing out on are additional Priory communiques and announcements. If you would like to receive the newsletter and other communiques electronically, send your email address to: [plheineman@cox.net](mailto:plheineman@cox.net).

# confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 6 June 2025

## Chaplain's Corner

Pentecost Sunday is June 8 this year, the fiftieth day after Easter. The Book of Acts of the Apostles tells of "tongues of fire" that came into the house where the Apostles had gathered and "rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit." One tradition of Pentecost Sunday is to wear red to signify the fire of the Holy Spirit. On our mantles we wear a red cross.

As the original Apostles were filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, I invite us to pray a prayer that is over one thousand years old that we also may be filled with the same fire.

"Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. And kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit help us to relish what is right and always rejoice in your consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen."



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## A Trip to Temple Church

In the beginning of May, my wife and I took a much needed vacation for 10 days to the United Kingdom. We traveled to Wales, London, Canterbury, and finally around Norfolk and Walsingham. During our travels we visited many ancient Churches, but one of my favorite churches was one that many of us Templars know, Temple Church in London.

Temple Church was constructed in the 12th century by the Knights Templar to serve as their English headquarters. It is peculiar in its structure as the Church is round. Round churches are very uncommon as many churches are cruciform shaped. However, this church was made in this way to recall the holiest site in all the world, the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (the empty tomb of Jesus Christ) which is also round in its structure.

We went to the Church to pray and look at the beauty of the place, but we also had the honor to attend a special service entitled "Sanctuary" led by Christian Forshaw as the director and saxophonist, Rosanna Wicks as Soprano, Richard Pinel on the Organ, Ryna Hepburn on percussion, and the Choir of King's College London. During this performance they played a number of original pieces, but many mixed with ancient Christian music, poetry, and prayers. Sitting in the pews as this music was played was a deeply moving experience. Here we are in an ancient Church that was used by the Knights Templar. How many of them sat and prayed there like we were doing? How many of them even sang songs of the Christian faith? Since the time of the Templars, this place has served as a place of continued worship and singing. One only needs to sit for a few short moments to feel the overwhelming presence of God all around and the generations of Christians who have been in those very same seats that you now occupy.

Should you find yourself in London or in need of a place to take pilgrimage, I encourage you to go to the Temple Church. Go there as a Knight to feel the presence of the Knights who have come before you, and give thanks to the Lord above that our mission and work as Knights continues to propel us forward after hundreds of years and with no sign of stopping!



The Rev. Chev. Garron Daniels, ACTJ  
Chancellor

# Membership Drive

Recruiting new members is not just about growing our numbers — it's about strengthening our future. Each new member brings fresh perspectives, diverse skills, and renewed energy that keep our Priory and the Order dynamic, adaptable, and resilient. By actively seeking and welcoming new voices, we ensure that our mission continues to evolve and thrive in a rapidly changing world. ALL Knights and Dames are encouraged to recruit new members.

Here are some resources you may find helpful. Email [plheineman@cox.net](mailto:plheineman@cox.net) for copies.

**Recruit, Retain and Reengage** - a short publication on Values-Based Recruiting of new members and retaining and reengaging existing members.

**At a Glance** - a one-page overview of the Order and the Priory.

**Sample Invitation Letter** - as the name implies, an editable sample invitation letter to potential members. The content can also be cut and pasted into an email.

**Who we are and what we do** - a one-page overview of the Order.

**2024 Charitable Distributions** - a one-page summary of GPUSA's charitable distributions in 2024 through the Raymond Davis Foundation. It's a GREAT illustration of who GPUSA supports in the Holy Land.

**Operation Knight Flight** - a one-page overview of Operation Knight Flight (OKF). OKF transports relief aid to those in need throughout the world through the Denton Amendment Program.

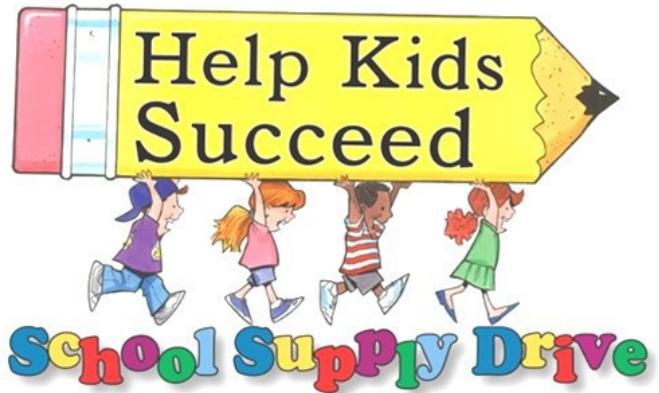
**The General Raymond G. Davis Templar Foundation** (RDF) - the RDF is the charitable arm of GPUSA. All distributions made by GPUSA flow through the RDF. This includes the Jerusalem Mite, Scholarship Program, and the Raymond Davis Society.

**Knight Protector** - Knight Protector offers free security assistance and training to churches so that they may be prepared to counter security threats and events.

Other GPUSA publications:

**Spring 2025 Edition of the Templar Times** - The Templar Times is a quarterly publication of GPUSA

Applications for fall investiture are due to the Prior by July 1 - but you can be recruiting all year. [Membership Application](#)



For many years, the Knights and Dames of the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin have contributed per-packaged elementary school kits to families at the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council in Kansas City, MO. We invite you to donate to the 2025 School Supply Drive. 100% of your donation will be used to purchase school supply kits for families in need.

Each kit contains...

- 3 - Premium Folders, Asst. Colors
- 2 - Notebooks, 70 Ct.
- 1 - Filler Paper, 100 Ct.
- 1 - Markers, 8 Ct.
- 1 - Colored Pencils
- 1 - Pencil Case
- 1 - Crayons, 24 Ct.
- 12 - Yellow Pencils
- 1 - Glue, 4 oz.
- 1 - Glue Stick, 2 Ct.
- 2 - Pink Erasers
- 1 - Dry Erase Marker
- 1 - 5" Safety Scissors
- 1 - Ruler
- 1 - Yellow Highlighter
- 3 - Blue Pen
- 3 - Red Pen
- 1 - Mini Dual ID Sharpener



Make your check payable to:  
**St. Mary the Virgin SMOTJ**  
Memo: School Supply Program

Mail your contribution **by June 30** to:  
Bria Haupt  
403 West Lawrence  
Spring Hill, KS 66083

# confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 7 July 2025

## Prior's Comments

All of you should have received the Annual Report 2024 prepared by SMOTJ by now. It reports on the important work that all of our collective Priories and Knights and Dames do to further the Mission. The contributions of our small group of Knights and Dames may seem insignificant, but in fact, we are as crucial to the programs as some of the largest Priories.

The Scholarship Program provides educational opportunities for 197 total students. Only 22 Priories donate to this important program. We have been actively supporting students for several years and I'm hopeful that we will continue to find this a worthy cause. I believe our individual contributors will continue to find this their personal mission to bring change.

Closer to home, your donations allow for us to provide "back to school" school supplies for students in our community. Often people think that their contributions mean nothing--after all, we are only able to provide a small number of students with supplies. What we need to stay focused on is that to the recipients, it makes a significant difference in their ability to enhance learning.

Just this week, the slate of officers was approved for the upcoming two years. I believe that there will be a renewed emphasis on the religious importance of SMOTJ with Father Garron becoming your next Prior. Faith is an essential part of who we are. Your new Chancellor, Brother George, will allow for development of new recruiting efforts for membership as George brings a vast wealth of influential potential members as he focuses on where he would like to see our mission in five years.

There is no doubt that the membership of our Priory will continue to grow. While there were some transfers from Kansas City to St Louis earlier this year, we also had new members join our ranks. As noted before, in many respects we are an "at large" Priory because of the diverse locations of our members, but in no way does that diminish what we do in furtherance of the cause.

Peter, who is undoubtedly my savior, comes back from being the Grand Secretary, to being our Secretary. Without his guidance and recommendations on procedures and times for taking certain action, we'd not be the magnificent group we are. Peter will be providing his report from the Grand C & I recently completed.

As always, I appreciate everything that has been done to make St Mary the Virgin one of the best Priories in the country.



## Chaplain's Corner

In Luke 1:66, Elizabeth and Zechariah's son was named John. And the people said, "What then will this child become?"

What are we to become? Who were you before the White Templar mantle was placed on your shoulders? Who were you before the Red Templar cross was placed around your neck? Who are you now?

Pope John Paul II said, "Become what you are." What are we? Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." Saint Paul told us, "Live as children of light." How? John Paul II suggests, "By committing ourselves humbly and patiently to improving ourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal."



Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain  
[russ@valomilk.com](mailto:russ@valomilk.com)

† Richard T. Bryant

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

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



# Highlights

## 2025 Grand C&I Highlights

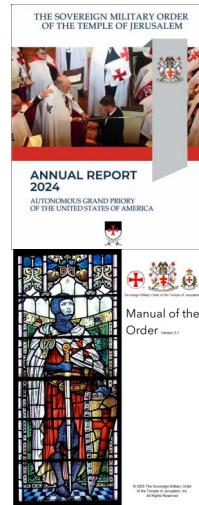
The 2025 GPUSA Grand Convent & Investiture took place June 5–8 in Scottsdale, Arizona, and was hosted by the Priory of The Light. Each day began with morning chapel services led by Chaplains from the Chaplain Corps. On Thursday, meetings were held for the Raymond Davis Foundation Board and the Extended Executive Committee (EXCOM). The Grand Convent officially opened on Friday, followed by breakout training sessions for Priory Officers. That afternoon, the Order of Merit Luncheon featured presentations from Fr. Peter Vasco and Fr. John Puodzuinas of the Franciscan Friars of the Holy Land Foundation, who previewed topics they would cover in a later Middle East Panel discussion.

Saturday's Grand Council and Grand Convent session included approval of updates to the Manual of the Order, the appointment of new EXCOM and Grand Officers, and presentations from Grand Officers, OSMTH, the Raymond Davis Foundation, and others. The Investiture ceremony included the elevation of a Commandery to Priory status, the investiture of three new Knights and one Dame, and the presentation of awards, promotions, and Order of Merit honors. Among those inducted into the Order of Merit was Chev. Ian Good from the Priory of St. Louis the Crusader.

The ceremony included a change of command for GPUSA:

- **Grand Prior:** COL Chev. Frederick Kienle, PhD, GCTJ, GMTJ
- **Grand Chancellor:** Maj Chev. Sandor Mayuga, Esq., GCTJ, GMTJ
- **Grand Inspector:** Chvse. Diane Allen, PhD, GCTJ, CMTJ
- **Grand Secretary:** Chvse. Lisa Donant, GCTJ
- **Grand Growth & Strength Officer:** MG Chev. James Comstock, GCTJ
- **Senior Deputy Grand Prior:** LCDR Rev. Chev. Richard Inman, GCRTJ, CMTJ

The Grand Banquet, attended by nearly 300 Knights, Dames, and guests, welcomed special visitors including OSMTH Grand Master David Appleby, OSMTH Chancellor General-elect Kurt Orcutt, and the Grand Prior of the United Kingdom, Anthony Cuthbert. Donations from the mite collection, silent auction, and live auction raised over \$30,000 for the Franciscan Friars of the Holy Land.



## 2024 GPUSA Annual Report to Members

The 2024 GPUSA Annual Report to Members is now available for download from the Community Library

## Updated Manual of the Order

Version 5.1 of the Manual of the Order is now available for download from the Community Library



## Priory Convent & Investiture

Mark your calendar for the 2025 Priory of St. Mary the Virgin Fall Convent & Investiture on Saturday, November 8 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church (1307 Holmes Street, KCMO) starting at 10 AM followed by a Grand Luncheon. Details to follow. The event will include a change of command.



## 2026 Grand C&I

The 2026 Grand Convent & Investiture is scheduled for May 27-31 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The "Lite" C&I will focus on leader workshops, informational meetings, and planning meetings to better position the Order for the future.

Registration is open at:

<http://grandcandi.org>.

# confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 8 August 2025

## Chaplain's Corner

I was born and adopted in KC. My adoptive parents loved me very much. I never knew my birth parents, but last summer I discovered my full birth sister and brother. We now love each other. We are family.

I have six children (two have died), twelve grandchildren (one has died) and soon to be fourteen great grandchildren. Only one child and two grandchildren are genetically related to me, but I love all of them. We all are family.

In John 13:34 Jesus said to his Disciples, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples." As Templars, we are called to be disciples of Jesus. As Templars, we are called to love one another. But how?

I believe everyone is a child of God, and thus, everyone is family. So how do we love everyone? In Matthew 25:35-40 Jesus tells us to take care of the poor, tend to the sick, visit the lonely and welcome the stranger. We all are in the Family of God.

 Russ

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain  
russ@valomilk.com



Thanks to the generosity of our Knights and Dames, 32 elementary school supply kits were delivered to the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council for distribution at their Back to School Giveaway on Saturday, August 8.

## The Temple of Solomon

At first, the *Poor Fellow-soldiers of Jesus Christ* had no church and no particular place of abode. Then, in 1118 (nineteen years after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders) they had rendered such good and acceptable service to the Christians that Baldwin the Second, king of Jerusalem, granted them a place of habitation within the sacred enclosure of the Temple on Mount Moriah. Amid the holy and magnificent structures (partly erected by the Christian Emperor Justinian and partly built by the Caliph Omar) they took up residence in what was known as the *Temple of Solomon*. The Poor Fellow-soldiers of Jesus Christ came to be known by the name of "*the Knighthood of the Temple of Solomon*."

The site of the great Jewish temple on Mount Moriah has always been regarded with veneration. Mahomet, in the first year of the publication of the Koran, directed his followers when at prayer to turn their faces towards it and devout Moslems have constantly made pilgrimages to the holy spot. On the conquest of Jerusalem by the Arabians, it was the first care of the Caliph Omar to rebuild "the Temple of the Lord." Assisted by the principal chieftains of his army, the Commander of the Faithful undertook the pious office of clearing the ground with his own hands, and of tracing out the foundations of the mosque, that now crowns the elevated summit of Mount Moriah.

This great house of prayer is erected over the spot where "*Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.*" It remains to this day in a state of perfect preservation, and is one of the finest specimens of Saracenic architecture in existence. It is entered by four spacious doorways. Each door faces one of the cardinal points: the *Bab el D'jannat*, or gate of the garden, on the north; the *Bab el Kebla*, or gate of

prayer, on the south; the *Bab ib'n el Daoud*, or the gate of the son of David, on the east; and the *Bab el Garbi*, on the west. By the Arabian geographers it is called *Beit Allah*, the house of God, also *Beit Almokaddas*, or *Beit Almacdes*, the holy house. From it, Jerusalem derives its Arabic name, *el Kods*, the holy, *el Schereef*, the noble, and *el Mobarek*, the blessed; while the governors of the city, instead of the customary high-sounding titles of sovereignty and dominion, take the simple title of *Hami*, or protectors.

On the conquest of Jerusalem by the crusaders, the crescent was torn down from the summit of the Temple and was replaced by a golden cross. The edifice was then consecrated to the services of the Christian religion but retained its simple appellation of "The Temple of the Lord." William, Archbishop of Tyre and Chancellor of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, gives an interesting account of this famous edifice as it existed in his time, during the Latin dominion. He speaks of the splendid mosaic work, the Arabic characters setting forth the name of the founder, the cost of the undertaking, and of the famous rock under the center of the dome that is shown by the Moslems as the spot where on the destroying angel stood, "*with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.*" The rock was left exposed and uncovered for the space of fifteen years after the conquest of the holy city by the crusaders, but was, after that period, cased with a altar of white marble, upon which the priests said daily mass.

To the south, on the extreme edge of the summit of Mount Moriah, and resting against the modern walls of the town of Jerusalem, stands the Christian church of the Virgin, erected by the Emperor Justinian. A description of the building is provided by Procopius. That writer informs us that in order to get a level surface for the erection of the edifice, it was necessary on the east and south sides of the hill to raise up a wall of masonry from the valley below and to construct a vast foundation partly composed of solid stone and partly of arches and pillars. The stones were of such magnitude, that each block required to be transported in a truck drawn by forty of the emperor's strongest oxen; and to admit of the passage of these trucks it was necessary to widen the roads leading to Jerusalem. The forests of Lebanon yielded their choicest cedars for the timbers of the roof, and a quarry of variegated marble furnished the edifice with marble columns.

The interior is adorned with six rows of columns, from which spring arches supporting the cedar beams and timbers of the roof; and at the end of the building is a round tower, surmounted by a dome. The vast stones, the walls of masonry, and the subterranean colonnade raised to support the southeast angle of the platform whereon the church is erected may be seen by penetrating through a small door, and descending several flights of steps at the southeast corner of the enclosure. Adjoining the sacred edifice, the emperor erected hospitals, or houses of refuge, for travelers, sick people, and mendicants of all nations; the foundations of which are composed of Roman masonry still visible on either side of the southern end of the building.

On the conquest of Jerusalem by the Moslems, the church was converted into a mosque and was called *D'jamé al Acsa*. It was enclosed, together with the great Mussulman Temple of the Lord erected by the Caliph Omar, within a large area by a high stone wall that runs around the edge of the summit of Mount Moriah.

When the Holy City was taken by the crusaders, the *D'jamé al Acsa*, with the various buildings constructed around it, became the property of the kings of Jerusalem. William of Tyre described it as "*the palace*," or "*royal house to the south of the Temple of the Lord, vulgarly called the Temple of Solomon.*" It was this temple on Mount Moriah that was appropriated to the use of the poor fellow-soldiers of Jesus Christ, as they had no *church* and no particular place of abode, and from which they derived their name of Knights Templars.

James of Vitry, Bishop of Acre, who gives an interesting account of the holy places, speaks of the Temple of the Knights Templars. "*There is, moreover, at Jerusalem another temple of immense spaciousness and extent, from which the brethren of the knighthood of the Temple derive their name of Templars, which is called the Temple of Solomon, perhaps to distinguish it from the one above described, which is specially called the Temple of the Lord.*" He moreover informs us in his oriental history that, "*in the Temple of the Lord there is an abbot and canons regular; and be it known that the one is the Temple of the Lord, and the other the Temple of the Chivalry. These are clerks, the others are knights.*"

# confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 9 September 2025

## Chancellor's Comments

Your Excellencies, Knights, and Dames,

There is so much happening in the Priory of St Mary of the Virgin at this time and I have a feeling there is a lot more on the horizon! Our November Convent and Change of Command is fast approaching and we are beyond excited to welcome the Grand Prior. I have a feeling he will motivate and inspire us to continue to grow the Order, especially in Kansas City. When I read all the materials coming out from the Grand Officers and other members of the Order, I feel as if the Holy Spirit is moving in our midst. Something great is happening. Something God inspired is happening. I can't wait to see where it takes us! I encourage you all to set your calendars for our Convent so that we can give the warmest welcome to our Grand Prior and talk about how we can grow the Order and continue our mission in supporting vulnerable Christians in the Holy Land.



In all that you do, always remember to pray for our Order and especially your fellow Knights and Dames of this Priory. Prayer is a powerful thing easily at our disposal. Pray for the Order. Pray for the Priory and her members. Pray for the Christians who are suffering in this world and face persecution. Pray for the Holy Land. In all you do, pray!

 *Garron Daniels*

The Rev. Chev. Garron Daniels, ACTJ  
Chancellor

## Chaplain's Corner

I am not a techie. Just being curious, I asked if Google AI and MS Copilot read the New Testament, what themes would be found. The answers were: "love God and neighbor, forgiveness, humility, justice and compassion."

Those themes are particularly good attributes, among many others, for Jesus. As followers of Jesus and as Templars, those are attributes we should strive for. Let us focus on one for now – compassion.

A central theme in the Gospels is the compassion of Jesus as demonstrated in his deep empathy and his action towards those suffering. Jesus wants us to help those who are suffering. How? One way is our Jerusalem Mite.

 *Russ*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain

## GPUSA Jerusalem Mite Appeal – Coming Soon

Each fall, GPUSA asks members to support the Jerusalem Mite (JM) with a donation. You may have already contributed when paying your annual dues — if so, thank you! This is a separate appeal, and the need is still great. The Jerusalem Mite Program supports Christians in the Holy Land and the Middle East by funding healthcare, housing, education, and job training.

With help from American Knights, Dames, and friends, the Raymond Davis Foundation (RDF) sends funds to trusted, church-based organizations making a real impact. You can view the 2024 distributions at:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/10ToL\\_22JD1r-4mYefKOlsjKEn5MjBce0/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/10ToL_22JD1r-4mYefKOlsjKEn5MjBce0/view?usp=sharing)

## Hierosolymitani

"Ordo Supremus Militaris Templi Hierosolymitani" is Latin for "Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem. It is the official name of the international governing body of the Knights Templar, often abbreviated as OSMTH. This organization is a modern revival of the medieval Knights Templar order, with a focus on humanitarian aid, human rights, and religious freedom.



"Hierosolymitani" is a Latin term referring to something or someone from Jerusalem. The word is derived from "Hierosolyma," the Latin name for Jerusalem, and the suffix "-itanus," indicating origin or belonging. It's often used in historical and religious contexts, particularly in relation to the city's role in Christianity and the Crusades. It can also be found in the names of religious orders and organizations associated with Jerusalem.

## Priory Convent & Change of Command

Officiated by Grand Prior Kienle

You are cordially invited to attend the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin Convent & Change of Command, taking place November 7–8, 2025, at St. Mary's Episcopal Church (1307 Holmes Street, Kansas City, MO).

We are honored to announce that Grand Prior, HE COL Chev. Frederick Richard Kienle, PhD, GCTJ, GMTJ, will officiate the weekend's solemn and celebratory events.

The schedule includes:

- **Friday, November 7:** *Grand Prior Reception & Compline Service*— an evening of fellowship, reflection, and reverence.
- **Saturday, November 8:** *Convent & Change of Command Ceremony*— followed by a *Grand Luncheon* honoring the occasion.

This is a significant moment in the life of our Priory, and your presence—whether for all or part of the weekend—will lend strength, dignity, and unity to our shared mission and sacred tradition.

**Mark your calendars and make plans to join us.**

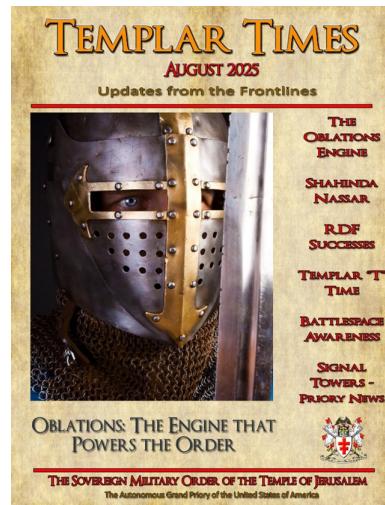
Full details and formal invitation will follow.

## 2026 Grand C&I

The 2026 Grand Convent & Investiture is scheduled for May 27-31 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The "Lite" C&I will focus on leader workshops, informational meetings, and planning meetings to better position the Order for the future.



Registration is open at: <http://grandcandi.org>.



## August Templar Times

The August edition of the Templar Times is out and available for download at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xqcn8WKxzul-MAcspnJ1mcRUqbeJGER/view?usp=sharing>

This issue includes a message from the Grand Prior, an explanation of the oblation process, an eyewitness report from the Holy Land, a report from the Raymond Davis Foundation, an announce of upcoming training podcasts, and much more.

# confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 10 October 2025

## Chancellor's Comments

Your Excellencies, Knights, and Dames,

We are getting into a very busy part of the year! Our private lives will certainly be busy with the fall and the seasons to come, but the Priory will be very busy as we prepare for our Convent and Change of Command on November 7-8th. Please be sure to RSVP if you haven't already! We want to give the Grand Prior a warm welcome!



I also want to call your attention to the Jerusalem Mite. The yearly campaign has begun and when I read the Templar Times I was shocked to see that less than 50% of Knights and Dames of the Order give to the Jerusalem Mite. Is this not what we are about? A big part of the reason I personally joined the Order was not only to find community, but to help Christians in need in the Holy Land. The Jerusalem Mite is the way we do that and we all know that the help is needed now more than ever. I encourage and implore each and every one of you to take a moment to login to the Portal and give to the Jerusalem Mite. Even if it's only \$10, that \$10 will be a blessing to the lives of our fellow brothers and sisters in need.

As always, pray for this Priory and pray for the Holy Land!

 *Garron Daniels*

The Rev. Chev. Garron Daniels, ACTJ  
Chancellor

## Chaplain's Corner

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 and Associate Members of our Priory. 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 by my parents and by Jesus.

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.

 *Buzz*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain

# Priory Convent & Change of Command

Officiated by Grand Prior Kienle

## To all Knights, Dames and Friends of the Order

You are cordially invited to attend the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin Convent & Change of Command, taking place November 7–8, 2025, at St. Mary's Episcopal Church (1307 Holmes Street, Kansas City, MO).

### Grand Prior Reception and Compline Service

Friday, November 7, 2025

Reception: 6:30 PM

BYOB, Hors D 'Oeuvres and non-alcoholic Drinks Provided  
Compline Service to Follow

Business Attire and Insignia (no mantle)

### Convent & Change of Command

Saturday, November 8, 2025: 10:00 AM

Grand Banquet to Follow

## pleasepleaseplease

This is a significant moment in the life of our Priory, and your presence—whether for all or part of the weekend—will lend strength, dignity, and unity to our shared mission and sacred tradition.

Don't assume we know you are coming  
RSVP by OCTOBER 31 to  
heineman@bellevue.edu

with the name(s) attending the Grand Prior Reception, Convent, and/or Grand Luncheon  
Make banquet checks (\$40/person) payable to:  
Priory of St. Mary the Virgin—SMOTJ

mail in advance to:  
Bria Haupt, 403 West Lawrence,  
Spring Hill KS 66083

## 2026 Grand C&I

The 2026 Grand Convent & Investiture is scheduled for May 27-31 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The "Lite" C&I will focus on leader workshops, informational meetings, and planning meetings to better position the Order for the future.



Registration is open at: <http://grandcandi.org>.

## What language did the Templars speak?

Templar founders were from what is now northern France, but at the time was all of Francia. Hugues de Payns came from the family of the lords of Montigny, from the area between Champagne and Burgundy, or Godefroy de Saint-Omer and Payen de Montdidier, both of more elevated status, who were respectively from Flanders and Picardy.

The language of Northern France at that time, *oïl*, was the official language of the Order. The so-called Primitive Rule given to the brothers at the Council of Troyes in January 1129 was translated from Latin into *oïl* French under the Mastership of Robert de Craon, who was Master between 1136 and 1149. This decision was revolutionary given the practice of religious communities at the time (which usually stuck to Latin). Subsequently, the Hierarchical Statutes further regulating the order were written in the French *langue d'oïl* around 1165.

Most probably, Latin never disappeared from the practice of Temple and other vernacular languages were used, but from the outset, *oïl* French was the international language of the Order.



## Recruiting and Retention Medal

As members of the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (SMOTJ), GPUSA, we are committed to leading, serving, and protecting the faithful at risk—but our mission depends on the strength of our membership. That's why recruiting new members and re-engaging those who have become inactive is a priority for every Knight and Dame. SMOTJ GPUSA is actively working to grow the Order, and your participation is vital. By identifying and inviting accomplished individuals to join us, or encouraging former members to return, you directly contribute to the Order's success and longevity. To recognize these efforts, the new **SMOTJ Recruiting and Retention Medal** will be awarded to members who help grow and strengthen our ranks. This is your call to action—someone is waiting for your invitation to join or return to our Order.

# confrere

A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 11 November 2025

## Prior's Post

Your Excellencies, Knights and Dames;

This will be my last newsletter to you as Prior, as I have winded up my tenure over the past 2 years. I have been honored to serve you, St Mary the Virgin Priory, and most of all each and every Knight and Dame who serves the SMOTJ.



There are accomplishments which I am happy to say that we made successes. We made great progress in adding postulants to the Priory and our Region. I am confident that our incoming Prior and Chancellor will continue to draw upon their resources and relationships to build our ranks. There is no doubt that as our membership ages, we will continue to need to draw upon new postulants to fill our positions and perpetuate the roles of past Knights and Dames. Sadly, individuals who express interest in becoming future Templars send an email and then never respond to further inquiry. This tells me that becoming a future Templar requires old school recruitment, not technology as we currently utilize. Our next Chancellor will serve our Prior and Priory through his enthusiasm for recruitment.

We have continued to be a substantial contributor to SMOTJ and to the Raymond Davis Foundation. Even though we are a small Priory we exceed contributions and expectations of many larger Priories. Without the contributions generated for scholarships, we cannot fulfill an important role of SMOTJ. Our organization has stressed the importance of drawing upon members who are not just believers, but also financially capable of meeting the various important needs of the programs of our organization.

Our membership is unique in diversity of locale. Many Priories draw upon a concentrated geographic area. We, however, have substantial involvement in at least three areas. I am hopeful that we continue to expand in Oklahoma thanks to our Knights and Dames who have heard our calling. I am hopeful our Prior will

expand the membership to both Kansas City and St Louis, drawing on the varied activities of each jurisdiction. My first participation in the Templars came when I was inducted at a C & I in St Louis and I have been blessed to know many of the Knights and Dames through the years. I am hoping that many Knights and Dames who once expressed interest in being active in Kansas City but relocated to St Louis will again become dual Priory Templars and consider Kansas City your home .

I am sorry that I was unable to be as active as I desired. In June I began to express concerns about heart health. Unfortunately practitioners only looked at numbers and made assurances that historic prescribed treatment was just fine....until a stroke proved things different. With the incredible treatment plan of new practitioners, I'm probably 99% recovered, 3 months later. In many ways my treatment was different than some patients'. I insisted in being an integral part of "neuroplasticity"—something I'd never heard of, but certainly know of now. As Templars, we also need to draw on our own neuroplasticity. We need to use our body and experiences (our brain) to recognize and make new connections in response to experiences of being a Knight or Dame. Intensity, salience and transference are but three crucial characteristics that need to be incorporated as part of our organization if we are to be relevant in the years to come.

Thanks again for allowing me to be your Prior. Thank you each for being Knights and Dames and leading by example. Thank you especially to Peter for your insight, your guidance, your strength for being the inspiration of St Mary the Virgin, through your leadership and friendship to me and SMOTJ.

 *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

November 1 is All Saints Day; when we remember saints known and unknown. Saints are those who faithfully served our Lord. They are heroes who were devoted to Jesus Christ and people we would do well to aspire to become.

As I pondered on becoming a saint (follower of Jesus) a song came to mind, "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God." You can find many versions online. It ends with "I mean to be one too." How?

In Hebrews 12:1 "We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...let us run with perseverance the race that is before us." "A cloud of witnesses" refers to a roll call of heroes in the previous Chapter 11: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and more. "The race" is our life and our ministry in following Jesus. Let us continue our race with perseverance.

**+**  
*Bless*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain

## Priory Convent Officiated by Grand Prior Kienle



### To all Knights, Dames

You are cordially invited to attend the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin Convent & Change of Command, taking place November 7–8, 2025, at St. Mary's Episcopal Church (1307 Holmes Street, Kansas City, MO).

## Grand Prior Reception and Compline Service

Friday, November 7, 2025

Reception: 6:30 PM

BYOB, Hors D 'Oeuvres and non-alcoholic Drinks  
Provided

Compline Service to Follow

Business Attire and Insignia (no mantle)

## Convent & Change of Command

Saturday, November 8, 2025: 10:00 AM

## Grand Luncheon to Follow

contact Peter Heineman at [heineman@bellevue.edu](mailto:heineman@bellevue.edu)  
for further information

## Chancellor's Comments

Your Excellencies, Knights, and Dames,

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give the glory"



I've been thinking about this line from Psalm 113 that is used regularly by the Order and our lives as Knights and Dames. I'm especially thinking about this as I prepare to take on the responsibility of being your next Prior. I can already feel the weight of the of this position, and I can assure you that I do not take it lightly. As the Prior I not only help lead the Priory, but I also help in representing the entirety of the Priory of St Mary the Virgin. I hope and I pray that I may serve and work to the benefit of this Order and to the glory and praise of God

As I step into this role, I ask that each of you not only pray for myself and all our other new officers, but that you pray for the Priory as a whole. We are about to embark on a new chapter as a Priory that I hope will see new engagement, fellowship, and more time to pray with one another. I'm beyond excited for what these next two years will bring us!

May God's Name be Glorified and may we continue to faithfully serve our Lord and Savior!

**+**  
*Garron Daniels*

The Rev. Chev. Garron Daniels, ACTJ  
Chancellor



## 2026 Grand C&I

The 2026 Grand Convent & Investiture is scheduled for May 27-31 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The "Lite" C&I will focus on leader workshops, informational meetings, and planning meetings to better position the Order for the future.

Registration is open at: <http://grandcandi.org>.

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A bulletin from the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin



Volume 11, Issue 12 December 2025

## Prior's Post

Your Excellencies, Knights and Dames;

With December already here we enter into the Advent season, marking the beginning of a new year in the Church Calendar. This is a time that also marks the beginning of a new and exciting chapter as a Priory after our Convent this past November. I thank you again for your support, prayers, and participation in the life of this Priory. It was wonderful to welcome the Grand Prior and his wife to Kansas City to see what our Priory is up to!



As your new Prior, I hope to see a new level engagement in our Priory. We will be meeting virtually once a month as a chance to check in with one another, cover any business, and maybe have some time for education and fellowship. I hope to also see at least two or three events per year where we get together to hang out or pray with one another. I want to see our bonds as knights and dames strengthen, and I only believe that's possible through joint worship and fellowship. I hope you join me in the work of this Priory to see it grow and thrive.

Please know that I am always here to help. I am just a phone call or email away! As always, please keep your leadership and our Priory in your prayers this Advent season! May this be a holy season for you all as we wait for the coming of the Incarnate Son!

 *Garron C. Daniels*

The Rev. Chev. Garron C. Daniels, OCS, CTJ  
Prior VII

## Chaplain's Corner

November 30 begins the season of Advent, the season of Jesus coming into God's world and coming into our lives. Advent lasts until Christmas Eve and has three Ember Days, December 17, 19 and 20. Ember Days can be a special time for prayer, fasting and giving alms.

Alms can be money, food or goods given to people in need. Our Jerusalem Mite can be considered alms for people in need in the Holy Land. Locally in KC, Harvesters ([www.Harvesters.org](http://www.Harvesters.org)) helps people in need. I am sure your church could use a special Advent donation for their outreach ministries.

The original Templars helped pilgrims going to Jerusalem. As modern Templars we can help today's pilgrims who are in need on their journey through life. If you have not yet made your Jerusalem Mite, please do so. It is not an option; it is an obligation.

 *Bless*

Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
Chaplain

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## 2025 Convent Picture Show

His Excellency COL Chev. Frederick Kienle, PhD, GCTJ, GMTJ, Grand Prior XXIV attended the Compline Service and officiated the Priory Convent and Change of Command ceremony on November 7-8 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Kansas City, MO. You can view a picture show of the weekend events at:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/10A7rkWW49Kuoh-kabhGPFR5s3SMaptZ\\_/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/10A7rkWW49Kuoh-kabhGPFR5s3SMaptZ_/view)

HINT: Count to five before starting the show to allow time for the file to download. Contact Chev. Russ Sifers for additional photos at [russ@valomilk.com](mailto:russ@valomilk.com).



**PRIORY OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN**  
SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM  
AUTONOMOUS GRAND PRIORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## 2025-2027 Officers

**Prior** - The Rev. Chev. Garron Daniels, OCS, CTJ  
**Chancellor** - Chev. George Bukaty, KTJ  
**Inspector** - The Hon. Chvse. Barbara Kogerman, GOTJ  
**Treasurer** - Chvse. Bria Haupt, GOTJ  
**Secretary** - Chev. Peter Heineman, EdD, GCTJ, CMTJ  
**Registrar** - Chvse. Marilyn Geery, GCTJ, CMTJ  
**Aumonier** - Chev. Adam James, KTJ  
**Avocat** - Chev. Richard Bryant, Esq., GOTJ  
**Chaplain** - Chev. Russell Sifers, GOTJ  
**Chief of Protocol** - Chev. Aaron Rose, KTJ  
**Master of Postulants** - Chev. Aaron Shoemaker, GOTJ  
**Sword Bearers** - Chev. Lee Egdorf, KTJ  
Chvse. Tiffany Egdorf, DTJ



## Blessing Bags Donation

In response to the growing challenges of food insecurity, the Priory EXCOM voted to donate \$1,200 to St. Mary Episcopal Church's Blessing Bag Program. This contribution will provide **600 blessing bags** to individuals and families in need.



## RDF 2025 Holy Land Trip

In October, representatives from the GEN Raymond G. Davis Templar Foundation, Inc. (RDF) — Chairman Clay Kemmerer, Executive Director Bob Bellitto, and SMOTJ Permanent Preceptory of the Holy Land Grand Mentor and RDF Co-Director of Scholarships Jim Fosbrink — visited several recipients of RDF funding in the Holy Land. Their full report is available at:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sWQ3N4mtA3cXaM0Tx-y3uF2\\_A2HmFQ7\\_/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sWQ3N4mtA3cXaM0Tx-y3uF2_A2HmFQ7_/view)



WE WISH 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*