



ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem

GPUSA Religious Patrons and Grand Chaplains

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Table of Contents

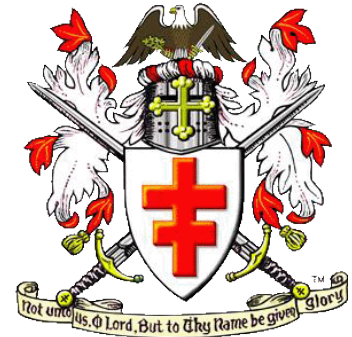
Introduction	1
Religious Patrons	
Metropolitan Theodosius	2
Vicken Aykazian	3
Grand Chaplains	
Martin Field	5
James Magness.....	6
Theodore Schneider	7
Herbert Groce, Jr.	8
William Waff.....	8
Frank Spindler	9
The History of Chaplains and the Chaplain Corps	10

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual Guidance

From the earliest days of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, the life of the Templar was ordered not only to the defense of the Holy Places, but also to prayer, discipline, sacrifice, and faithful service to Christ and His Church. That spiritual heritage continues within the Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America, where Religious Patrons and Grand Chaplains serve as guardians and guides of the Order's spiritual life. Through prayer, pastoral counsel, the proclamation of the Christian faith, and their presence at the sacred observances of the Order, they remind us that the Templar vocation is ultimately a spiritual one: to seek Christ, to serve faithfully, and to carry the principles of faith, charity, courage, and devotion into the world. Their ministry stands as a bridge between the ancient traditions of the Temple and the living mission of the Order today, offering spiritual guidance and encouragement to all who wear the mantle of the Temple.

This publication honors those who have served in these offices and recognizes their enduring contribution to the spiritual life and mission of the Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States.



Religious Patrons

In modern organizations inspired by the Knights Templar, such as the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (OSMTH) and SMOTJ-GPUSA, the position of Religious Patron holds a vital role in maintaining the soul, legacy, and purpose of the organization. Rather than managing daily administrative or political tasks, a Religious Patron—typically a high-ranking ecclesiastical figure, such as His Holiness Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem for OSMTH—acts as the guardian of the order's spiritual legitimacy. This individual serves as the foundational anchor ensuring that the community remains strictly faithful to Christian principles, the teachings of Christ, and the enduring traditions of the Church. By bridging the gap between the chivalric community and institutional Church authority, they offer a framework of authenticity that honors the order's foundational ethos.

Beyond ensuring theological fidelity, the Spiritual Protector provides essential pastoral guidance and oversight across the entire membership. Because modern Templar groups operate as ecumenical Christian knighthoods welcoming members from a widely diverse spectrum of denominations, the Spiritual Protector helps maintain a unified spiritual standard. They supervise the order's lower-ranking clergy and chaplains, directly counseling members as they navigate their modern duties of protecting Christians at risk, providing humanitarian aid, and keeping the road to Jerusalem open to all people. Whether operating on a global scale or supporting local priories through regional bishops, the Spiritual Protector ensures that while an order may adapt to the modern world, its spiritual heart and commitment to sacred activism remain entirely unchanged.

GPUSA established the position of Religious Patron in 2001. The first to hold the position was His Beatitude, the Most Blessed Metropolitan Theodosius, D.D., D.H.L., GMTJ.

His Beatitude

"His Beatitude" is a formal title of respect used in Christian churches—primarily within Eastern Orthodoxy and Eastern Catholic traditions—to address or refer to a high-ranking primate, such as a patriarch or an independent archbishop. The word "beatitude" itself originates from the Latin *beatitudo*, which translates to "blessedness" or a state of supreme happiness, meaning the title essentially acknowledges a spiritual state of divine favor and holiness associated with the leader's high office. In terms of ecclesiastical protocol, this honorific is typically reserved for the heads of autocephalous (self-governing) Eastern churches, certain historic patriarchs, or major Eastern Catholic archbishops. When speaking to a church leader who holds this rank directly, protocol dictates addressing them as "Your Beatitude," whereas "His Beatitude" is used in formal writing or when referring to them in the third person.

Metropolitan Theodosius

(1933 – 2020)

His Beatitude the Most Blessed Metropolitan Theodosius (Lazor), DD, DHL., GMTJ was born in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1933 to immigrant parents from Galicia. After completing his studies at Washington & Jefferson College, he entered Saint Vladimir's Seminary, graduating in 1960. His formation continued at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, followed by pilgrimages throughout the Holy Land and visits to Orthodox Christian centers across Europe and the Middle East.

Upon his return to the United States in 1961, he embraced the monastic life and was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood. His early ministry included service as rector of Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church in Madison, Illinois, and as an assistant military chaplain.

In 1967, he was called to the episcopacy and appointed Bishop of Sitka and Alaska. There he shepherded the faithful, oversaw the rebuilding of historic Archangel Michael Cathedral following its destruction by fire, and strengthened the spiritual and educational life of the diocese. In 1970, he led the Orthodox Church in America delegation to Moscow to receive the *Tomos* granting the Church its



autocephaly. He subsequently participated in the canonization of Saint Herman of Alaska, the first North American Orthodox saint.

In 1972, he was transferred to the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, where he continued his ministry of pastoral care, religious education, and formation of clergy.

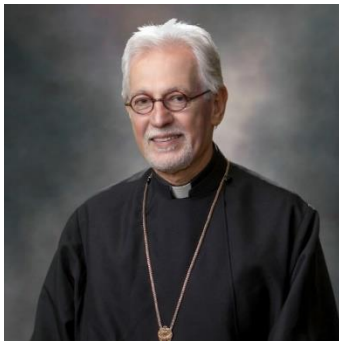
On October 25, 1977, he was elected Metropolitan of All America and Canada. As primate of the Orthodox Church in America, he devoted himself to strengthening the Church, fostering Orthodox unity, and advancing its witness throughout North America. He participated in councils and dialogues with Orthodox hierarchs throughout the world and maintained friendships and relationships with religious and civic leaders, always seeking to advance understanding, unity, and peace.

Throughout his episcopal ministry, Metropolitan Theodosius traveled widely in service to the Church, visiting the Holy Land, Greece, Turkey, Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, and other lands of the Christian East. He supported ministries of charity, missions, and inter-Orthodox cooperation, and remained a steadfast advocate for the unity of Orthodox Christians in North America.

Following health challenges, he retired as Metropolitan of All America and Canada in July 2002 after nearly twenty-five years as primate. He returned eventually to his native Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, where he spent his retirement.

His long episcopal ministry was marked by faithful service, spiritual leadership, devotion to the Church, and a steadfast commitment to Christian unity—qualities befitting one called to serve as a Religious Patron and spiritual guide to those who seek to uphold the Christian faith and the sacred ideals of the Order.

The next Religious Patron for GPUSA was Vicken Aykazian.



Vicken Aykazian

His Eminence Chev. Vicken Aykazian (Archbishop), PhD, KTJ was installed as the Order's Religious Patron on April 29, 2017. His Eminence has devoted his life to the service of the Armenian Church and the advancement of Christian unity. Born in Siirt, Turkey, in 1951, he studied theology at the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem and was ordained a deacon in 1968 and a celibate priest in 1971. In 1992, he was consecrated a bishop by His Holiness Vasken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

His Grace holds a Bachelor of Divinity from King's College London and a PhD in History from the Armenian Academy of Sciences, with additional theological studies in England and Switzerland. His ministry has carried him from Jerusalem and Constantinople to Switzerland, Armenia, and the United States, where he has served as pastor, Primate of the Diocese of Switzerland, Director of the Fund for Armenian Relief in Armenia, and Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

His Eminence

"His Eminence", abbreviated as H.E., is a formal religious title of honor and address primarily reserved for a cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church. Derived from the Latin *eminencia*, which denotes "exalted height" or "distinction," this style reflects the high position of cardinals, who rank just below the Pope. In conversation or writing, the title shifts depending on who is being addressed: you would refer to a cardinal in the third person as "His Eminence" (for example, "His Eminence, Cardinal [Surname]") but address him directly in the first person as "Your Eminence."

Historically, cardinals were addressed by various titles, including *illustrissimo* (most illustrious) and *reverendissimo* (most reverend). However, the modern standard was born in 1630, when Pope Urban VIII officially decreed that the style of "Eminence" would be strictly restricted to the College of Cardinals. Along with this designation, Urban VIII elevated their secular diplomatic rank to match that of a prince. This secular integration meant that non-church royal princes who had previously used "Eminence" had to relinquish it, adopting the title "Highness" instead. This change permanently solidified the status of cardinals as the elite "**Princes of the Church**" in global diplomacy, ranking them immediately below crowned monarchs and the Pope.

Right Reverend

The Right Reverend is a formal honorific title given to certain high-ranking Christian clergy members, most commonly bishops in the Anglican and Episcopal traditions, as well as specific senior prelates like abbots in the Roman Catholic Church. The title combines the word "right"—which functions here as an intensifier meaning "very" or "properly"—with "reverend," a term derived from the Latin *reverendus*, meaning "one who must be respected" or "worthy of reverence." Frequently abbreviated as The Rt Revd or The Rt Rev, it is used as a formal style of address in writing and formal introductions, such as referring to "The Right Reverend James Jones" or addressing an official letter to "The Right Reverend Bishop of the diocese."

A distinguished voice for Christian unity, Archbishop Aykazian served as President of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA from 2008 to 2009—the first Oriental Orthodox hierarch to hold that office. He has also served extensively within the World Council of Churches, including its Central Committee, and continues his service in its leadership.

Through a lifetime of faithful ministry, scholarship, and ecumenical service, Archbishop Aykazian embodies the calling of the Christian shepherd: to guard the faith, strengthen the bonds of the Church, and bear witness to Christ in a divided world.

Grand Chaplains

The Grand Chaplain serves as the chief religious advisor and spiritual counselor to the Grand Prior and the Executive Committee of the Grand Priory, entrusted with safeguarding the spiritual life and Christian character of the Order. In this sacred office, the Grand Chaplain leads the prayers and worship of the Grand Priory at appropriate occasions and as directed by the Grand Prior, and provides pastoral care, spiritual guidance, and opportunities for growth to the members of the Order.

The Grand Chaplain leads and oversees the Chaplain Corps, working in concert with the Deputy Grand Chaplains and Priory Chaplains to strengthen its ministry throughout the Order. The Grand Chaplain assists in the recruitment and formation of ordained clergy for the Chaplain Corps in cooperation with Priory leadership and may convene a Council of Advice to assist in the faithful discharge of these responsibilities. The Grand Chaplain also serves as an advisor to the General Raymond G. Davis Foundation on matters of religion, morality, and ethics, serves on committees of the Autonomous Grand Priory as appointed by the Grand Prior, and undertakes such other duties as the Grand Prior may entrust to the office.

At the Grand Convent and Investiture, the Grand Chaplain bears particular responsibility for preparing and conducting the prayers, Scripture readings, and worship experiences of the Order. In consultation with the Grand Registrar, the Grand Chaplain ensures that the departed Knights and Dames of the Order are remembered with dignity during the Grand Convent services. The Grand Chaplain also prepares and conducts the Vigil of the Postulants, guiding those who seek admission into the Order through a solemn period of prayer, reflection, and spiritual preparation.

The current Grand Chaplain is The Right Reverend Martin Field.



Martin Field

The Right Reverend Chev. Martin Scott Field (Bishop), MDiv, SCTJ, GMTJ, born September 13, 1956, in Salem, Ohio, has devoted his life to Christian ministry, pastoral care, and service to others. He was educated at Bethany College, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies, and at Lexington Theological Seminary, receiving his Master of Divinity in 1983. He later pursued doctoral studies in congregational development at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary.

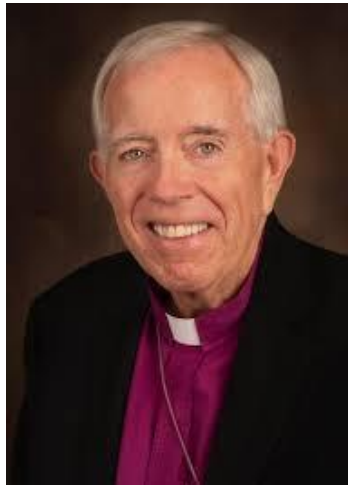
Ordained to ministry in 1983, Bishop Field served congregations in Maryland and Ohio before entering the Episcopal Church. He was ordained a deacon in the Diocese of Hawaii in 1990 and a priest in 1991, thereafter serving faithfully in parishes and missions in Hawaii, Tennessee, and Michigan. His ministry has been marked by a particular commitment to pastoral care, spiritual formation, and the strengthening of Christian communities.

His vocation of service extended beyond the parish into the Chaplain Corps of the United States Navy. Serving in Hawaii and Tennessee and accompanying American forces during Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Southern Watch, he ministered to those who served in times of duty, uncertainty, and conflict. His naval chaplaincy reflects the enduring union of faith and service that has characterized his ministry.

On November 6, 2010, Bishop Field was elected the eighth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of West Missouri and was ordained and consecrated to the episcopate on March 6, 2011. He served the Diocese until his resignation on Holy Cross Day in 2021. In 2022, he continued his pastoral vocation as interim rector of St. Luke's Church in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Throughout his ministry, Bishop Field has embodied the calling of the Christian servant: to lead with faith, to minister with compassion, and to stand in service to God and His people. His years as priest, bishop, and military chaplain reflect a life shaped by the principles of devotion, duty, sacrifice, and faithful service.

Preceding The Right Reverend Field was James Magness.



James “Jay” Magness

The Right Reverend CAPT Chev. James Beattie Magness (Bishop), DD, DMin., SCTJ, GMTJ, born October 21, 1946, in St. Petersburg, Florida, is an Anglican bishop and former military chaplain whose life and ministry have been marked by service to God, Church, and country. He began his military service in the United States Navy in March 1966, serving in the Navy Supply Corps in Vietnam before transferring to the United States Naval Reserve in 1969. He earned his Bachelor of Arts from Western Carolina University in 1974 and his Master of Divinity from the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest in 1977. Ordained to the episcopate of the Church's ministry on May 25, 1978, he was commissioned into the United States Navy Chaplain Corps the following year. He later earned the Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1999, with a concentration in Christian Leadership.

Father Magness devoted many years to the pastoral care of those who serve, retiring from the Navy Chaplain Corps in 2004 with the rank of Captain. In 2010, he was called to serve as Bishop Suffragan for Armed Services and Federal Ministries of the Episcopal Church, a ministry encompassing chaplains and congregations serving the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. In this high office, he carried forward the sacred ministry of bringing spiritual counsel, pastoral care, and the presence of the Church to those serving their nation and to others entrusted to federal institutions. He concluded his episcopal service in 2017 and subsequently served as Assistant Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia. From January 1, 2019, through February 1, 2020, he served as Bishop Pro Tempore of that Diocese.

Throughout a life distinguished by military and ecclesiastical service, Bishop Magness has embodied the enduring vocation of the Christian servant: to stand with those who serve, to minister faithfully in times of trial, and to uphold the spiritual and moral foundations upon which faithful service rests. His ministry reflects the ancient calling of the Church to accompany those entrusted with difficult duties, offering guidance, courage, compassion, and faith wherever they are called to serve.

Earlier Grand Chaplains included the following.



Theodore Schneider

The Right Reverend Chev. Theodore Frank Schneider, SCTJ, GMTJ was born on October 16, 1934, in Portsmouth, Virginia, and from his earliest years was shaped by a deep calling to the life of Christian service. A member of First Lutheran Church, where his grandmother had been a charter member, he was particularly influenced by its pastor, Ira Coiner, a 1905 graduate of Roanoke College. That early bond helped set Schneider upon the path that would lead him first to Roanoke College, where he graduated in 1956, and then to the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. He was ordained to the ministry in 1959 and thereafter devoted his life to the Church, pastoral care, Christian education, and service to others.

Schneider served congregations throughout Pennsylvania, including Saint John Lutheran Church in Millheim and Advent Lutheran Church in Lancaster, before becoming Senior Pastor of Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Lancaster in 1971. His ministry extended beyond the walls of the parish. He founded United Cerebral Palsy of Lancaster and helped establish Mount Luther Camp and Conference Center, reflecting a conviction that Christian faith must be expressed not only in worship, but also through compassion, service, and practical care for those in need. He served in numerous leadership positions within the Lutheran Church, including as dean of the Lancaster District, chairman of the Central Pennsylvania Synod Executive Board, and in commissions devoted to worship, parish life, mission, and strategy.

In 1986, Schneider was called to Saint Luke Lutheran Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, where he served as Senior Pastor until 1995. There, as throughout his ministry, he combined pastoral leadership with a strong commitment to the wider Christian community. His service and leadership ultimately led to his election in 1995 as Bishop of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Re-elected in 2001, he served as bishop until 2007. During his episcopate, he gave particular attention to Christian stewardship, outreach to an increasingly diverse and immigrant population, and the pursuit of visible unity among Christians of different traditions.

Throughout his years of ministry, Schneider was a servant of both faith and fellowship, seeking to strengthen the Church not through authority alone, but through stewardship, service, and the building of bridges among God's people. His leadership was recognized with the Richard Lee Peterman Good Steward Award for Outstanding Leadership in Christian Stewardship and the Virginia Council on Churches Lifetime Ecumenist Award. He holds a Doctor of Divinity degree from Susquehanna University and received the Medalist Award from Roanoke College.

In the years following his retirement from the episcopate, Schneider continued his service through Roanoke College, including service on its Board of Trustees and participation in efforts supporting its students and future. His life of ministry stands as a testament to the enduring calling of the Christian servant: to guard the faith, strengthen the fellowship of believers, and place one's gifts in service to others. In this spirit, Theodore F. Schneider's long ministry reflects the ancient principle that those entrusted with spiritual authority are called not to be served, but to serve.



Herbert Groce, Jr.

(1929 – 2010)

The Right Reverend Chev. Herbert Monroe Groce, Jr. (Archbishop), SSC, DD, STD, GCRTJ, GMTJ, was an eminent American churchman whose life was distinguished by service to God, country, and the wider community. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he answered the call to duty through his service in the United States Air Force during the Korean War. Following his military service, he pursued a vocation to the ordained ministry, earning both the Doctor of Divinity and Doctor of Sacred Theology degrees. He was ordained to the priesthood at the historic Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and went on to serve as an Archbishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States and later as Archbishop Emeritus of the Anglican Province of America. A devoted Anglo-Catholic, he was also a member of the Societas Sanctae Crucis (Society of the Holy Cross), reflecting his deep commitment to the sacramental and spiritual life of the Church.

Archbishop Groce's ministry extended well beyond the sanctuary. In the civic and academic spheres, he served as Director of Operations for the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and as Vice President of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. He was likewise active in those fraternal and service organizations dedicated to fellowship, duty, and the betterment of others. Among his many honors and offices, he served as Grand Chaplain of the New York State Free and Accepted Masons, as a chaplain of the International Order of Knights Templar, as a member of the American Legion, and in national leadership within the Boy Scouts of America.

For more than three decades, Archbishop Groce made his home in Jefferson Township, New Jersey, where he continued his ministry and service to Church and community. His life stands as a testament to the vocation of the Christian servant: answering the call to duty, remaining steadfast in faith, and dedicating one's gifts to the service of others. In both his ecclesiastical and civic endeavors, he exemplified the enduring virtues of faith, service, discipline, and charity that continue to inspire those who take up the mantle of Christian knighthood.



William DuBard "Razz" Waff

The Reverend MG Chev. William D. "Razz" Waff, DMin, GOTJ, CMTJ has devoted more than four decades to a life of service, faith, and leadership. Commissioned through Army ROTC after graduating *magna cum laude* from the University of Mississippi, he served more than 39 years in the United States Army and Army Reserve, ultimately attaining the rank of Major General. Among his senior assignments, he commanded the Army Reserve's 99th Regional Support Command and served as Deputy G-1 (Personnel) of the Department of the Army.

Alongside his military career, Waff pursued a vocation of Christian ministry. He earned a Master of Divinity, was ordained a priest in 1984, and later earned a doctorate in medical ethics. His ministry has included pastoral care, hospital ethics, and leadership within the professional chaplaincy community. Since retiring from the Army, he has continued his commitment to service, including serving as Executive Director of the Military Chaplains Association.

His distinguished career has earned numerous military and civic honors, including the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Humanitarian Service Medal, and Distinguished Eagle Scout Award.

Waff's life reflects the enduring Templar ideal of faith expressed through service. As a soldier, priest, and chaplain, he has answered the call to protect, lead, comfort, and serve others.



Image AI enhanced

Frank Spindler

(- 2009)

The Reverend Dr. Frank MacDonald Spindler, PhD, GCTJ, GMTJ devoted his long life to faith, scholarship, service, and the preservation of history and heritage. Born in Columbus, Ohio, he graduated from the University of Texas at Austin before entering the General Theological Seminary in New York City. There he earned his Master of Divinity and was ordained first as a deacon and then as a priest in 1948.

His ministry carried him through parishes in Texas and Maryland before bringing him to Washington, D.C., in 1962. There he served at St. Paul's, St. John's, and ultimately the Church of the Ascension and St. Agnes, where he served as associate rector for 35 years. His priesthood was not simply a profession but a lifelong vocation, joining the study of faith with the pastoral responsibility of serving others.

Alongside his ministry, Dr. Spindler pursued a distinguished academic career. While serving parishes in Texas, he earned a Master of Arts in History from the University of Houston. After moving to Washington, he continued his studies and earned a doctorate in philosophy from American University. He also began a second vocation as an educator, serving as a professor of history at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. He retired from the university in 1983 and was named Professor Emeritus in 2006.

His scholarship reflected his broad curiosity about the past and the ways in which history, faith, and civilization intersect. Dr. Spindler was an avid genealogist, author, and traveler who wrote numerous books and articles, many concerning Latin America and its religious history. His work demonstrated a deep respect for the people and traditions that shaped the generations that came before us.

Genealogy was more than an intellectual pursuit for Dr. Spindler. It reflected his conviction that heritage carries both memory and responsibility. He was active in numerous historical, genealogical, hereditary, and chivalric organizations, including the Sons of the American Revolution, the Order of the Crown of Charlemagne, Americans of Royal Descent, the Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims, and the Temple of Jerusalem. He was also a member of the Cosmos Club and remained deeply connected to his Scottish heritage through his involvement with Clan Donald.

A man of the cloth, a scholar, historian, genealogist, and keeper of heritage, the Rev. Dr. Frank MacDonald Spindler exemplified a principle deeply resonant with the Templar tradition: faith gives purpose to service, knowledge preserves what is worthy, and remembrance ensures that the lessons of the past endure.

The History of Chaplains and the Chaplain Corps

From the age of the Crusades to the present day, the chaplain has stood beside those called to lives of service, sacrifice, and duty. The office of the chaplain emerged from the ancient understanding that those who bear responsibility for others also require spiritual guidance, consolation, and the ministrations of faith. Nowhere was this calling more clearly embodied than among the military and religious orders of the Middle Ages, where the sword and the cross were joined in a common vocation of service.

Within the medieval Church, priests and religious ministers accompanied armies, princes, and communities of knights, providing the Sacraments, hearing confessions, offering prayers, tending to the wounded, and ministering to the dying. The great military orders of the Crusades—including the Knights Templar, the Knights Hospitaller, and the Teutonic Knights—recognized that the spiritual welfare of their members was inseparable from their obligations of discipline, charity, and service. Chaplains therefore became an essential presence within these communities, sustaining the spiritual life of knights and serving as ministers of the Church amid the uncertainties and hardships of war.

The tradition developed further as military chaplaincy evolved alongside the armies and institutions of Europe. Chaplains served not only on the battlefield but also in garrisons, hospitals, prisons, and military communities. Their ministry extended across denominational and national boundaries as the modern concept of military chaplaincy emerged. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, organized chaplain services had become established within many national armed forces, providing religious ministry to soldiers and their families while remaining distinct from the command structure.

The twentieth century brought the chaplaincy into an increasingly complex world. Chaplains accompanied servicemen and women through two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, and subsequent conflicts, ministering amid combat, captivity,

displacement, and loss. Their responsibilities expanded to include pastoral counseling, moral and ethical guidance, religious accommodation, crisis ministry, and care for those of many faith traditions. The chaplain became, in many circumstances, both a representative of a particular religious tradition and a trusted spiritual presence for all who sought counsel.

Today, chaplains serve in military organizations, hospitals, universities, prisons, emergency services, professional associations, religious institutions, and other communities of service. While the settings have changed, the essential vocation remains remarkably consistent: to stand beside others in times of trial, to provide spiritual strength in times of uncertainty, to comfort those who suffer, and to remind those entrusted with duty of the higher obligations of faith, conscience, and service.

For the modern Templar, this ancient tradition carries particular significance. The Chaplain Corps is not merely an administrative body, nor is the chaplain simply a ceremonial officer. The chaplain represents the spiritual dimension of the Order's vocation. Through prayer, pastoral care, counsel, worship, and compassionate presence, the chaplain helps preserve the principle that service must be guided by faith, courage must be tempered by charity, and authority must remain accountable to a higher moral purpose.

From the medieval priest standing among the knights of the Holy Land to the chaplain serving members of the Order today, the calling has remained constant: to minister to the spiritual needs of those who serve, to strengthen them in their obligations, and to ensure that the spirit of Christian charity remains at the heart of service.

SMOTJ-GPUSA

Chaplain Corps

The Chaplain Corps of the Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States (GPUSA) was established by proclamation of Grand Prior XIII, Patrick Rea, on May 12, 2002. In keeping with the mission and vision of the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem—GPUSA (SMOTJ-GPUSA), the Chaplain Corps exists to advance the Order's chivalric ideals and charitable purposes while providing for the spiritual care and formation of its Knights and Dames.

The mission of the Chaplain Corps is to establish and maintain standards for the recruitment and retention of clergy to serve the Order as Chaplains; to foster a collegial and ecumenical environment in which members of the clergy may comfortably and faithfully serve within the SMOTJ-GPUSA; and to provide a forum for mutual support, fellowship, and professional development among Chaplains serving at every level of the Order. The Corps also seeks to prepare and encourage Chaplains for service as Priory Chaplains and for other offices within the Chaplain Corps, while providing opportunities for spiritual enrichment, Christian formation, worship, and fellowship for all members of the SMOTJ-GPUSA at the Priory, Regional, and Grand Priory levels.

Members of the Chaplain Corps enjoy the full privileges and responsibilities of membership in SMOTJ-GPUSA. They may seek or accept election or appointment to offices at the local, Regional, or Grand Priory levels, while also retaining the freedom to decline such offices when they believe their vocation and ministry are better served elsewhere. Whatever other office they may hold, however, members of the Chaplain Corps remain, first and foremost, Chaplains. Their principal calling within the Order is the ministry of spiritual care and pastoral service to its Knights and Dames.

In this sacred charge, the Chaplain Corps serves as a spiritual presence within the Order—bringing prayer to its assemblies, pastoral care to its members, encouragement in times of trial, and a constant reminder that the chivalric life is

ultimately a life of faith, service, charity, and devotion.

Criteria for Admission to the Chaplain Corps

Admission to the Chaplain Corps of the Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States is reserved for members of the clergy whose faith, formation, and conduct are consistent with the spiritual mission of the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem. An applicant must be an active or retired member of the clergy in good standing within a Christian denomination, religious order, or faith community that professes faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, embraces the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and subscribes to the historic ecumenical creeds, with the Nicene Creed serving as the principal expression of that common Christian faith.

Each applicant must provide written verification from the appropriate ecclesiastical authority confirming that he or she is a clergyperson in good standing within the applicant's denomination or religious order and is free from any unresolved allegation, accusation, or judgment of misconduct. Such requirements reflect the high standard of character, integrity, and moral conduct expected of those entrusted with the pastoral care of the Knights and Dames of the Order.

Applicants must also demonstrate appropriate theological and ministerial formation. At a minimum, an applicant shall possess an entrance-level theological degree, such as a Bachelor of Divinity, Master of Divinity, or equivalent degree, earned from a theological school or seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools or by an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Applicants are ordinarily expected to pay the customary entrance fees and oblations of the Order. When circumstances warrant, however, a waiver of the customary entrance fees may be granted by the Grand Prior following consultation with the Grand Chaplain. Likewise, Chaplains whose denominational or religious organizations prohibit the payment of oblations may request a waiver of such payments. Any waiver of oblations requires the consent of both the Grand Chaplain and the Grand Prior.

Admission to the Chaplain Corps therefore represents more than the recognition of ecclesiastical office or academic preparation. It is an invitation to a ministry of service within the Order, requiring sound Christian formation, good standing within one's own ecclesial tradition, personal integrity, and a willingness to exercise the pastoral vocation in support of the spiritual life and chivalric mission of the SMOTJ-GPUSA.

Duties and Responsibilities

Members of the Chaplain Corps are called to serve the Order through prayer, pastoral ministry, spiritual guidance, and charitable service. As members of their respective Priories, Chaplains are expected to participate actively in the charitable work, spiritual fellowship, and common life of their Priory, while encouraging others to embrace the Order's commitment to faith, charity, service, and Christian fellowship. They should promote and support the charitable works of both their Priory and the SMOTJ-GPUSA, bearing witness through their ministry to the Order's enduring chivalric ideals.

Chaplains are called upon to conduct religious services, offer prayers, and provide spiritual leadership at gatherings of the Order. They participate in the ceremonies and observances of the Order as requested and, through their presence and ministry, help ensure that the spiritual character of those ceremonies remains central to the life of the SMOTJ-GPUSA. They may also be called upon to undertake such additional duties and responsibilities as may be assigned by the Grand Prior or the Prior of their respective Priory.

A Chaplain appointed to serve as a Priory Chaplain bears a particular responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the Priory and its members. The Priory Chaplain serves as the Prior's principal religious advisor, assisting the Prior in fostering the spiritual life of the Priory and strengthening the faith and fellowship of its Knights and Dames. The Priory Chaplain is also available to provide pastoral care, spiritual counsel, prayer, and guidance to members of the Priory, particularly in times of difficulty, illness, bereavement, or personal trial.

In all these duties, the Chaplain serves not merely as an officer of the Order, but as a minister of its

spiritual life. Through prayer, counsel, worship, pastoral care, and charitable service, the Chaplain helps the Knights and Dames of the Order remain mindful that the practice of Christian faith and the service of others stand at the heart of the Templar vocation.

Ranks of the Chaplain Corps (Ascending)

Assistant Chaplain (ACTJ)

Equivalent to Chevalier or Chevaleresse

Chaplain (CTJ)

Equivalent to Commander

Senior Chaplain (SCTJ)

Equivalent to Grand Officer

Grand Croix Religious (GCRTJ)

Equivalent to Grand Croix



PRIORY OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN
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”

A United Nations Non-Governmental Organization, New York, NY, Geneva, Switzerland and Vienna, Austria
Member, International Peace Bureau, Geneva, Switzerland
Member, Ordo Supremus Militaris Templi Hierosolymitani, Geneva, Switzerland
