ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem

Royal Patrons of the Knights Templar

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

Royal Patrons of the Knights Templar

First Edition
2026
Prepared by

Chev. Peter L. Heineman, EdD, GCTJ, CMTJ
2020 Avenue B
Council Bluffs, IA 51501
Phone 712.323.3531• www.plheineman.net

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Medieval Royal Patrons

King Baldwin II 2

Count Fulk V of Anjou 3

King David I of Scotland 4

Royal Patrons of SMOTJ-GPUSA

King Peter of Yugoslavia 5

Her Highness Princess Elisabeth of Ysenburg and Büdingen, Princess of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg 6

Royal Patronage

During the High Middle Ages, European knights were primarily armored, mounted warriors. Under the feudal system, which was characterized by subinfeudation, knight commanders commonly had the authority to knight their most distinguished soldiers. Those newly created knights could, upon assuming command themselves, confer knighthood on others. This decentralized practice continued into the Renaissance. According to British historian Lawrence Stone, as many as one-quarter of the approximately 550 English knights living at the time of Queen Elizabeth I's death in 1603 had been created by a single nobleman, the Earl of Essex.

Private individuals could also establish orders of chivalry during much of the Middle Ages. The oldest surviving order, the Order of Saint John of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, originated as a private organization before later receiving official recognition from both the Church and the state.

Beginning in the 13th century, however, monarchs increasingly asserted exclusive control over the granting of honors. A major milestone came in 1231, when Emperor Frederick II, acting as King of Sicily, claimed the *fons honorum* ("fount of honour") as a royal prerogative. Over time, rulers gradually abolished the traditional right of knights to confer knighthood on their esquires.

With the decline of feudalism and the rise of the nation-state, the authority to grant titles of nobility, knighthoods, and orders of chivalry became the exclusive privilege of the monarch or head of state. As a result, the sovereign came to be regarded as the nation's **fount of honour**, rewarding loyal subjects through the formal bestowal of honors and distinctions.

Today, a royal patron of an order of chivalry is a member of the royal family who lends the organization official support, prestige, and public recognition. By serving as patron, they help raise awareness of the order's history, charitable work, and traditions. They may attend important ceremonies, anniversaries, and other formal events, and their patronage demonstrates that the order is respected and enjoys royal recognition.

The Kings and Queens of Jerusalem

The King (or Queen) of Jerusalem was the sovereign of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, established after the First Crusade captured the city in 1099. Although the throne was usually held by men, five women also ruled as queens regnant, either in their own right (*suo jure*) or jointly with husbands who ruled *jure uxoris* ("by right of his wife").

The kingdom's first ruler, Godfrey of Bouillon, declined the royal title, preferring *Advocate of the Holy Sepulchre* to emphasize that Christ alone was King of Jerusalem. His brother, Baldwin I, became the first crowned King of Jerusalem in 1100.

After Jerusalem fell to Saladin in 1187, the Crusader kingdom survived with its capital at Acre. The city of Jerusalem was briefly recovered during the Sixth Crusade (1229–1239) and again from 1241 to 1244, before being permanently lost. The kingdom came to an end with the fall of Acre in 1291. Even so, the prestigious title "King of Jerusalem" continued to be claimed by several European royal houses and remains among the historic titles of the King of Spain today.

King Baldwin II

(c. 1075–1131)

Baldwin II (c. 1075–1131), also known as Baldwin of Bourcq, was Count of Edessa from 1100 to 1118 and King of Jerusalem from 1118 until his death. He joined the First Crusade alongside his kinsmen Godfrey of Bouillon and Baldwin of Boulogne, succeeding as Count of Edessa when Baldwin of Boulogne became King of Jerusalem in 1100. Baldwin was captured by Muslim forces at the Battle of Harran in 1104 and spent four years in captivity while Tancred of Antioch and later Richard of Salerno ruled Edessa as regents. Ransomed in 1108 by his cousin Joscelin of Courtenay, he regained the county after a dispute with Tancred and spent the following decade defending Edessa against repeated Seljuq invasions led by Mawdud and Aqsunqur al-Bursuqi. He also consolidated his authority by annexing neighboring Armenian lordships and quarreled with Joscelin over control of Turbessel.

Following the death of Baldwin I in 1118, Baldwin II was elected King of Jerusalem and granted Edessa to Joscelin. After the near destruction of Antioch's army at the Battle of the Field of Blood in 1119, he became regent of Antioch, dividing his attention between the two Crusader states. Around 1120, Baldwin gave Hugues de Payens and his companions quarters in the former al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, which served as the headquarters of the newly founded Knights Templar and gave the order its name. He supported the Templars' mission of protecting pilgrims and endorsed their growing role in the defense of the kingdom thus, becoming the first Royal Patron of the Order. Captured again by Belek in 1123, Baldwin was released in 1124, during which time Jerusalem's forces, aided by a Venetian fleet, captured Tyre. He unsuccessfully attempted to seize Aleppo in 1125 and later strengthened the kingdom through dynastic alliances, marrying his daughter Alice to Bohemond II of Antioch and his heir Melisende to Fulk V of Anjou, whose arrival enabled Baldwin to capture Banias in 1129 with Nizari support. After Bohemond II's death in 1130, Baldwin resumed the regency of Antioch for his granddaughter Constance.

He died in 1131 after taking monastic vows and was succeeded by Melisende and Fulk, leaving a reputation as an able military commander and administrator while also being criticized by contemporaries for his attachment to wealth.

From French Origins to a Dramatic Fall

The Knights Templar was one of the most powerful military and religious orders of the Middle Ages, with deep roots in France. Founded around 1118 by French knight Hugues de Payens and eight companions, the order began as the *Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon*, a small brotherhood dedicated to protecting pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. Its growth was strongly supported by the French Church, especially the influential abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, whose advocacy helped secure official recognition at the Council of Troyes in 1129.

From its modest beginnings, the Templars developed into an international organization with vast wealth, military influence, and a sophisticated network of estates, known as commanderies, across France and Europe. French regions such as Champagne, Provence, and Languedoc became important centers of Templar activity, providing recruits, resources, and administrative support for the order's campaigns in the Holy Land.

The Templars' close ties to France also shaped their downfall. On Friday, October 13, 1307, King Philip IV of France—heavily indebted to the order—ordered the mass arrest of French Templars on accusations of heresy and other charges. Many members confessed under torture, and dozens were executed, including those burned at the stake outside Paris in 1310. In 1312, Pope Clement V formally dissolved the order, and its final Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, was burned at the stake in Paris in 1314. Despite its destruction, the Knights Templar remained one of the most enduring symbols of medieval chivalry, faith, and mystery.

Count Fulk V of Anjou

(1089/90–1143)

Fulk V of Anjou, known as Fulk the Younger, was Count of Anjou from 1109 to 1129 and King of Jerusalem from 1131 until his death, ruling alongside his wife, Queen Melisende. An energetic and experienced military leader, he strengthened both Anjou and the Crusader kingdom by suppressing rebellions and defending their frontiers.

The son of Count Fulk IV of Anjou, Fulk inherited Anjou in 1109 and became Count of Maine through his marriage to Eremburga. A devout supporter of the Crusades, he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1120–21, where he became an early patron of the newly founded Knights Templar, providing them with financial support and endorsing their mission to protect pilgrims. After his wife's death, he arranged the marriage of his son Geoffrey to Empress Matilda, laying the foundation for the Plantagenet dynasty in England. In 1129, he abdicated Anjou in Geoffrey's favor to marry Melisende, heir to King Baldwin II of Jerusalem, and settled permanently in the Holy Land.

When Baldwin II died in 1131, Fulk became King of Jerusalem as Melisende's husband and co-ruler. He spent much of his reign defending the Crusader states against the expanding power of Zengi and served as regent of Antioch for the young Princess Constance.

The Knights Templar became one of the kingdom's most trusted military orders during his reign, and Fulk relied heavily on them in campaigns and frontier defense. His attempt to dominate the government at Melisende's expense led to a revolt by Hugh II of Jaffa in 1134. Although Fulk suppressed the rebellion, Melisende emerged with greater political authority, and the royal couple thereafter ruled the kingdom as partners until Fulk was killed in a hunting accident in 1143.

The Knights Templar in Scotland

The Knights Templar arrived in Scotland during the reign of King David I in the 1130s, becoming part of the kingdom's growing network of religious and military institutions. The order established estates and administrative centers throughout Scotland, with its principal strongholds at the preceptories of Balantrodoch (modern-day Temple in Midlothian) and Maryculter in Aberdeenshire. These properties supported the Templars' religious mission, agricultural activities, and wider role in the defense of the Christian world. After the order was officially dissolved by Pope Clement V in 1312, its Scottish lands were transferred primarily to the Knights Hospitaller.

Unlike in France and some other European kingdoms, the Scottish Templars largely avoided widespread arrests, trials, and executions during the suppression of the order. This was partly due to Scotland's political situation under King Robert the Bruce, who was excommunicated at the time and did not actively enforce papal measures against the Templars. Their survival in Scotland contributed to centuries of legends, including the popular claim that Templar knights fought alongside Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. While historians find little evidence to support this tradition, the story remains one of the most enduring myths surrounding the Templars' Scottish legacy.

King David I of Scotland

(c. 1084–1153)

David I (c. 1084–1153) was King of Scotland from 1124 until his death and one of the most influential medieval Scottish rulers. The youngest son of King Malcolm III and Queen Margaret, David spent part of his youth at the English court of King Henry I, where he was shaped by Norman culture, feudal government, and church reform. He became Prince of the Cumbrians in 1113 and, after the death of his brother Alexander I, secured the Scottish throne in 1124 despite opposition from his nephew Máel Coluim mac Alaxandair. After years of conflict, David defeated his rivals and greatly expanded royal authority throughout Scotland.

A major supporter of religious reform and the Crusading movement, David encouraged the growth of new monastic and military institutions. He was among the earliest Scottish patrons of the Knights Templar, granting the order lands and privileges in Scotland and helping establish its presence in the kingdom. His reign saw the foundation of monasteries, the development of burghs and markets, and the introduction of Anglo-Norman knights, Flemish settlers, and feudal practices—changes collectively known as the "Davidian Revolution." David also played a role in English politics, supporting his niece Empress Matilda's claim to the English throne against King Stephen and expanding Scottish influence in northern England despite defeat at the Battle of the Standard in 1138. Remembered as a devout Christian ruler and reformer, David I was later recognized as a saint, with his feast day celebrated on May 24.

Establishing the American Grand Priory

In 1960, Anton Leuprecht, Grand Prior of the Autonomous Grand Priory of Switzerland, and the Modial Chief of the international Order, OSMTH, began accepting Americans as associate members. Two years later, in 1962, Grand Prior Leuprecht authorized the creation of an American Grand Priory.

On March 31, 1962, an agreement was reached to establish the Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America (GPUSA). The organization's corporate charter was signed on June 4, and GPUSA was officially incorporated in the State of New Jersey on June 29, 1962.

On April 18, 1964, King Peter II, former King of Yugoslavia, agreed to be the Royal Patron of the Grand Priory of America.

King Peter II of Yugoslavia

(1923–1970)

His Majesty King Peter II of Yugoslavia was born in Belgrade on September 6, 1923, the eldest son of King Alexander I and Queen Maria of Yugoslavia. His godfather was King George V of the United Kingdom. Peter began his education at the Royal Palace in Belgrade before attending Sandroyd School in England. After his father's assassination in 1934, when Peter was only 11 years old, a regency was established because of his young age. The regency was led by Prince Paul Karađorđević, a cousin of King Alexander I.

As the Second World War approached, Yugoslavia became increasingly surrounded by Axis-aligned nations. In 1941, Prince Paul's decision to sign a pact with Nazi Germany led to widespread protests and a military coup on March 27, 1941. Following the coup, King Peter II was declared of age and assumed full royal authority. However, the Yugoslav Army was unable to withstand the German invasion, and the country was occupied within eleven days. King Peter II and the Yugoslav government went into exile, first traveling to Greece, then Palestine and Egypt, before joining other exiled European monarchs and leaders in London in June 1941.

During his exile, King Peter II became a symbol of Yugoslav resistance to Nazi occupation. He continued his education at Cambridge University and served with the Royal Air Force. Following the collapse of Yugoslav military resistance, two major resistance movements emerged: the royalist Chetniks, led by General Dragoljub Mihailović, and the communist Partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito. Although the Allies initially supported Mihailović, they later shifted their support to Tito. Partisan forces entered Belgrade in 1944 with Soviet assistance and established a communist government. In 1945, the monarchy was abolished without a referendum, and Yugoslavia became a one-party communist state.

King Peter II never abdicated the throne. In exile, he married Princess Alexandra of Greece and Denmark in 1944, and their son, Crown Prince Alexander, was born in 1945. King Peter spent his final years in the United States and died after a long illness on November 3, 1970 at a hospital in Denver, Colorado. He was initially buried at St. Sava Monastery Church in Libertyville, Illinois, making him the only reigning European monarch buried in the United States. In 2013, his remains were returned to Serbia and reinterred in the Royal Mausoleum of St. George at Oplenac during a state funeral, where he was laid to rest among members of the Karađorđević royal family.

Princess Elisabeth

(1945–2024)

In 1997, Her Royal Highness Princess Elisabeth of Ysenburg and Budingen, Princess of Schleswig, Holstein, Sonderburg und Glucksburg agreed to serve as Royal Patron for the Autonomous Grand Priory of the United States of America (GPUSA).

Her Royal Highness (born Princess Elisabeth of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg on September 10, 1945) was a member of two distinguished European royal houses. Born in Schleswig, Germany, she was the daughter of His Highness Prince Friedrich Ferdinand of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg and Duchess Anastasia of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. Through her ancestry, Princess Elisabeth was a descendant of King Christian IX of Denmark, known as the "Father-in-Law of Europe," as well as of the Russian imperial family through Grand Duchess Anastasia Mikhailovna of Russia.

In 1975, Princess Elisabeth married His Serene Highness Prince Ferdinand Heinrich of Ysenburg and Büdingen, joining the ancient German princely House of Ysenburg and Büdingen. The couple had two sons, Prince Johann Georg and Prince Ludwig Ferdinand. Following her husband's death in 1989, Princess Elisabeth continued to represent the traditions of both her dynastic families while supporting charitable, historical, and chivalric organizations.

Princess Elisabeth was closely associated with the modern Order of the Temple traditions through her support of the Ordo Supremus Militaris Templi Hierosolymitani (OSMTH). She became involved with the organization in the 1990s and accepted the role of Royal Patron of the Grand Priory of the United States becoming a prominent supporter of its charitable and historical mission. Her involvement continued through attendance at events, encouragement of members, and support for the preservation of the ideals associated with the medieval Knights Templar.

Princess Elisabeth represented a living connection between several historic European dynasties and the continuing traditions of Christian chivalry, service, and philanthropy. She died on August 8, 2024, leaving a legacy of dedication to family, heritage, and the organizations she supported.

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