

## Remembrance and Renewal

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In the third chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes we are reminded that there is a time and season for every purpose under Heaven. So, we have assembled in ***Remembrance and Renewal***, to reflect on and pay our respect to the past and to strengthen and prepare ourselves for the future.

In the Scottish Rite, Remembrance and Renewal, or Maundy Thursday, is an exercise of obligation: the ceremonial extinguishing of *The Lights* and thereby remembering the most fundamental foundation stones of Scottish Rite Freemasonry. The *Ceremony of Remembrance and Renewal* is usually presented under the direction of the Chapter of Rose Croix or the Knight Commanders of the Court of Honour. The ceremony, including the Mystic Banquet, is not a religious observance. It is neither the Feast of the Passover nor a Sacrament of Holy Communion, although it commemorates the spirit of both days. The observance strengthens the ties of brotherly love, past and present, to break the bread of fraternity, to reconcile yourself with those you may have offended, and to drink the wine of refreshment and renewal. The *Ceremony of Remembrance and Renewal* also commemorate the lives all those who labored to improve mankind and were rewarded with betrayal, punishment, and death. Masonry, all Masonry, is duty and its practice, often fraught with personal sacrifice, requires the performance of duty for the good of humanity.

The word “Maundy” is derived from the Latin word “command.” Maundy Thursday is the day on which Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples, known as the Last Supper,<sup>1</sup> and washed His disciples’ feet in an act of humility and service thereby setting an example that we should love and serve one another in humility.<sup>2</sup> The *Constitutions and Statutes* of Grand Encampment USA and Grand Commandery of Virginia require every Commandery assemble annually in some church or its Asylum on or near Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and Ascension Day to hear an address by its Prelate or some other person. I was once asked should we observe Maundy Thursday as well. The Bible neither commands nor forbids it. Nor does the *Constitutions and Statutes* command or forbid it.

It is a good thing to remember the Last Supper and Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf. But at the same time, we should avoid ritualistic observances of holidays unless they are truly focused on God and our relationship with Him. I have long viewed Maundy Thursday and Good Friday two acts of the same play during Holy Week – a powerful reminder of how we are to live as Christians.

What is important is to remember our Masonic and Knightly bonds; it is an opportunity to remember our Brother Knights who have journeyed on before us; and it is a time to reflect upon our own individual quest. During our life journey, we experience cycles of darkness as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 22: 19-20, NIV

<sup>2</sup> John 13: 3-17, NIV

peaks of joy and spiritual growth. Symbolically, during Holy Week we move our thoughts from the darkness of winter to the renewal of spring and the promise of more Light. Freemasonry provides us with insights into the assimilation of Light. It is a vast fraternal system of tenants, a superstructure of degrees and orders, various tools for the craftsmen, sublime truths and inculcated lessons, and directional signs on the highway of life wherein man learns to find a series of interpretations, to have his faculties awakened to the vista of sight, sound and ideas to which he can constantly return for new meanings and fresh understanding.

We are reminded that generations of men have faced the forces of darkness, intolerance, greed, and cruelty, and that we must recognize, on occasion, these forces are strong enough to sometimes obliterate the Light that we constantly seek. Nevertheless, Christian Knights hold that God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, overcame darkness and despair and by such conviction we are tempered and strengthened, each in his own way, to meet and cope with the uncertainties, even the certainties of life itself.

Maundy Thursday is one of the most significant linchpin events in the history of civilization and we are reminded the son of God and His disciples assembled to observe a sacred Jewish rite to commemorate God's intercession on behalf of His people. Out of that meeting, the mainsprings of Christianity evolved to capture the imagination of mankind. The scriptures tell us on that Thursday<sup>3</sup>, Christ, His disciples, and Jews everywhere turned their attention to the past – to their heritage, the history of their people, and the very source of their purpose in God's kingdom. They assembled that eventful evening to raise the torch of remembrance and enlightenment of the present by memorializing the past.

It is fitting and proper that we too should lift the torch of remembrance to symbolically recognize our fraternal heritage and our debts to those who served so diligently to enrich our history – may they rest in peace and joy. Let us pause to also remember who we are, from whence we came, and the purpose for which we were about. It is time to rededicate ourselves to the Christian Religion and commit to Templary. It is time to consider the vows so reverently taken and those so conveniently set aside. It is time to consider the principles upon which the Orders of Knighthood are founded and the moral and Christian practices that transcends the fraternal brotherhood. It is time to consider the purpose and mission of Templary.

These are matters that should be of concern to every Knight Templar, for we have taken vows that bind us to each other, to God, and the whole human race. We have committed ourselves to a way of life that is as specific as it is beautiful. We are bound to uphold a set of principles that are designed to create a true brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God and we have obligated ourselves to that end by upholding and practicing the vows we have so solemnly taken at the altars of Freemasonry and Templary.

We should also remember the fact that death is a part of God's divine plan for this world, and in that divine plan there is a provision for redemption, through resurrection, of all of God's children. On his way to the Mount of Olives, Christ spoke of the demise of the shepherd and of the scattering of the sheep<sup>4</sup> but after that, he assured them, he would arise and go before them

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 22:17-20, NIV

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 26:30-31, NIV

into Galilee. During the evening Christ spoke words of reassurance and comfort. Thus, he promised to redeem His flock. Until that happens, we should take comfort in the lessons that were taught during that celebration of ***Remembrance and Renewal***.

Hence, Sir Knights, any day is a good day to dwell on ***Remembrance and Renewal***, to reflect on and pay our respect to the past, and to strengthen and prepare ourselves for the future. We should be saddened by our losses; we should look to the future, not with anguish, but with hope, confident that God will treat us with kindness, with love, and with benevolence.

Today's Sir Knights cannot afford to lay down their working tools for their work is never done--men of action are always needed. You must believe in your Chivalric vows and be a living example of Christian values and principles. Each of us must strive to exemplify the sublime teachings of this Magnanimous Order in our daily life and conduct.

