

Worthy the Name of “Sir Knight”

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“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”¹

What a pleasure it is to be in the presence of such Good Men. My Fratres, to you from the newly created Sir Knight, to the grizzled knight who wears a uniform dulled by years of service in the name of Templary, I bring greetings from the Grand Commandery of Virginia and extend the right hand of friendship and it is my sincere desire that the fellowship we experience here will be long remembered.

My District Deputy Grand Commanders have been charged with presenting my program for the 2019-2020 Chivalric Year, so I will not bore you with it. But, I do want to present my theme for this year.

Two Masonic Books, a Masonic Pamphlet, and a Masonic Poem impressed me early in my Masonic Life:

- *Back to Basics* by Michael Retziaff, a collection of talks taken from years of study and reflection on the concepts of Freemasonry and their application toward the individual Mason.
- *Let Your Work Become Your Mark* by Stewart Miner, a collection of sort talks given by the Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter, Royal Arch Masons of Virginia.
- *Charting the Course*, Wilber Brucker, GEKT, a collection of talks on the purposes and objectives of Templary.
- *Worthy the Name of Sir Knight* by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the only Knights Templar poem she wrote and has been used by Masonic Orders all over the World at many distinguished gatherings.

I began to plan this Chivalric Year when I was elected Grand Warder and those four Masonic works went through my mind as I progressed throughout the Grand Line. My Pin and Theme are linked to those works—I call them “***Back to Basics in Templar Masonry.***”

The triangle was picked for its strength and ability to bear large loads without deforming and its use as building blocks.

The three Triangles represent the Trinity: Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct, but consubstantial entities, the three houses in the Virginia York Rite are separate, yet connected.

¹ Psalm 133:1 JKV

In the **White Triangle**, the Knight Templar Passion Cross is both a sign of military distinction and a symbol that Christian knights fight with greater valor for God's cause. The Crown and Cross symbol represents Knights Templar of the York Rite. And the phrase "In Hoc Signo Vincas," Latin for "By this sign thou shalt conquer,"

In the **Red Triangle** are the words *Membership, Templar Spirit* and *Dedication*, the names of the foundation blocks of a dynamic Commandery.

In the **Black Triangle** are the names of the Chivalric Virtues: *Faith, Courage, Generosity, Courtesy, Temperance, and Prudence*.

The 2019 – 2020 Theme is... "***Embrace the Challenge***". It is not just a theme—but a philosophy. It is a standing Challenge to aid Grand Commandery of Virginia and its Constituent Commanderies as we march together, onward toward future growth and development. First and foremost, every one of us must be an Ambassador to our Symbolic Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters – promoting our Magnanimous Order.

“Embrace the Challenge”—***The challenge is to re-dedicate yourself to the Purpose of Templary and the Principles upon the Orders of Knighthood are founded. We all must take personal responsibility to preserve Templar Masonry in Virginia, be sold on our product, to expand our membership, and practice Effective Communication.***

Worthy the Name of "Sir Knight"

by Ella Wheeler Wilcox²

*Sir Knight of the world's oldest order,
Sir Knight of the Army of God,
You have crossed the strange mystical border,
The ground-floor of truth you have trod;
You stand on the typical threshold
Which leads to the temple above;
Where you come as a stone,
and a Christ-chosen one,
In the Kingdom of Friendship and Love.*

² Ella Wheeler Wilcox (Nov 5, 1850 – Oct 30, 1919) married Robert M. Wilcox, of St. Elmo Commandery Knights Templar in 1884. Being a poet, she was asked to write a poem to honor distinguished guests at St. Elmo Commandery. Her husband provided her with such books and literature as would provide her the history of the Order. She wrote *Worthy The Name of "Sir Knight"* to do honor to her husband and the occasion. That is the only Knights Templar poem she wrote and has been used by Masonic Orders all over the World at many distinguished gatherings.

*As you stand in this new realm of beauty,
Where each man you meet is your friend,
Think not that your promise of duty
In hall, or asylum, shall end.
Outside, in the great world of pleasure.
Beyond in the clamour of trade,
In the battle of life
and its coarse daily strife,
Remember the vows you have made.*

*Your service, majestic and solemn,
Your symbols, suggestive and sweet,
Your uniform phalanx in column
On gala-days marching the street;
Your sword and your plume and your helmet,
Your 'secrets' hid from the world's sight;
These things are the small,
lesser parts of the all
Which are needed to form the true Knight.*

*The martyrs who perished rejoicing,
In Templary's glorious laws,
Who died 'midst the faggots while voicing
The glory and worth of their cause—
They honoured the title of 'Templar'
No more than the Knight of to-day,
Who mars not the name
with one blemish of shame,
But carries it clean through life's fray.*

*To live for a cause; to endeavour
To make your deeds grace it; to try
And uphold its precepts forever,
Is harder by far than to die.
For the battle of life is unending,
The enemy, Self, never tires,
And the true Knight must slay
that sly foe every day,
Ere he reaches the heights he desires.*

*Sir Knight, have you pondered the meaning
Of all you have heard and been told?
Have you strengthened your heart for its weaning
From vices and faults loved of old?
Will you honour, in hours of temptation,
Your promises noble and grand?
Will your spirit be strong
to do battle with wrong,
'And, having done all, to stand'?*

*Will you ever be true to a brother
In actions as well as in creed?
Will you stand by his side as no other
Could stand, in the hour of his need?
Will you boldly defend him from peril,
And lift from him poverty's curse —
Will the promise of old,
which you willingly made,
Reach down from your lips to your purse?*

*The world's battle-field is before you:
Let Wisdom walk close by your side,
Let Faith spread her snowy wings o'er you,
Let Truth be your comrade and guide;
Let Fortitude, Justice, and Mercy
Direct all your conduct aright,
And let each word and act
tell to men the proud fact,
You are worthy the name of 'Sir Knight.'*

“To everything is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”³ The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.⁴

“Templary was founded upon the Christian Religion and the practice of the Christian virtues. It was the fraternal light that illumined the world during the Crusades of 1099 to 1187. Today’s Templary consists of men of all walks of life, professing a belief in the Christian Religion and

³ Ecclesiastes 3 KJV

⁴ Mitch Albom, author, journalist, screenwriter

displaying moral and ethical courage in their daily lives.”⁵ “(It) is not solely a fraternal brotherhood—it is vastly more than that. When Masonry crosses the threshold of the Commandery, it becomes Christian. We are endowed with a sense of mission which transcends all ordinary fraternal objectives. It is not enough to say that we “favor” ethics and good morals. The Orders of Knighthood require that we live up to the high calling of Christ in our lives.”⁶

Membership standards in a Commandery Knights Templar are purposely very high, the financial and time commitments are not for everyone, and the Fraters’ dedication to his Masonic and Chivalric vows requires significant expectations to be a living example of Christian values and principles that not everyone can meet. But, for those who qualify, membership in a Virginia Commandery Knights Templar offers an unequalled opportunity to serve with Master Masons who believe in Chivalric vows and strive to exemplify the sublime teachings of this magnanimous Order in his daily life and conduct.

The honor and prestige of Templar Masonry emanates from its high standards of morality, its moral teachings, the fact that those teachings are exemplified in the lives of men, who not only believe in them, but demonstrate them in their lives, morally and socially. It should be the goal of every Knight Templar to spread the good news of Templar Masonry and to encourage his Brothers in the Symbolic Lodges and Companions in the Capitular Chapters to enlist under our Banner. It is also incumbent upon us to reach out to the Sir Knights who no longer attend our conclaves, or who have allowed their membership to lapse. And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we need to keep them attending by offering more than the “same old stuff.”

In Conclusion: How many Sir Knights start their Commandery experience like a lighting flash—hot, fast and dazzling. How many people (aged sixty and over) can you name who are finishing the course with sustained enthusiasm and vigor? Oh, there are some, *but why so few?* What happened along the way that swells the ranks of those that have lost the purpose of today’s Templary? I really wish I knew that answer. If I did, I’d shout a warning from the East every day. No, better than that, I would stoop over and whisper to them and every discouraged Sir Knight who has lost the purpose of Templary. Before it is too late—before he quits and embrace the Knight on the Five Points of Fellowship, and at low breath.

Please join with me, Sir Knights, in doing all you can to be Worthy of the name Sir Knight!

⁵ The Purpose of Templary, *Charting the Course*, Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the U.S.A., 1965

⁶ Ibid

