

Orators Report
on the 28th degree
Knight Commander
of the Temple
April 3, 2013



The apron of the Degree is of scarlet lambskin, bordered and edged in black.

Bremerton Valley of the Scottish Rite

The Legend: The degree of Knight Commander of the Temple is sometimes called the Knight of the House of St. Mary of Jerusalem. The later is an Order that consisted of Knights of Germanic origin, commonly called the Teutonic Knights. The 28th degree, 29th degree -Scottish Knight of Saint Andrew, and the 30th- degree -Knight Kadosh, combine chivalric ideals, reminding us that Masonry involves the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of virtue.

The Setting: Bodies of this degree are styled Chapters. There are essentially three sections of the degree: the Chapter room, the Altar area, and a post-battle Chapter room. The major roles are: The Commander, First Lieutenant Commander, First and Second Lieutenants, and the Chaplain.

The Ritual: In the reception, the candidate is charged with helping the sick and needy and defending the principles of Masonry including devotion and fidelity. The candidate is then taken to the Altar area and directed to keep a vigil throughout the night and charged to not leave his post. The candidate is subjected to many temptations, details are left for you to read in the degree. Ultimately, he is made a Knight Commander of the Order.

The Lecture: Having made yourself familiar with some of the great truths common to some of the world's great religions, and firm in what you have learned in all the degrees up until now, you assume the vows of Knighthood and take up arms against injustice, falsehood and oppression. The five excellent qualities of a Knight are Humility; Temperance, Chastity, Generosity; and Honor. You realize fully that you have no time to waste, as death draws nearer upon you with every breath. You vow to guard the honor of women, not neglect the sick and suffering, live to serve your fellow man. You will endeavor to exemplify all the principles inculcated in the Rite, and never harm another as a result of base motives. A firm and steadfast willpower is needed on the part of every initiate, so that he does not deviate from the path, no matter how strong the temptation. When one sacrifices personal desires for nobler and higher

ends, or for the benefit of humanity at large, then one is worthy of the highest rewards.

The History: Formed in 1190, the medieval Order of the House of St. Mary of Jerusalem originated at the siege of St. Jean d'Acre, when tents were made for the sick and wounded of the sails of the ships. They fought the infidel Saladin by day and nursed the sick and wounded soldiers by night. The Knights, along with the Knights Templar, engaged themselves to guard the city of Jerusalem against the Saracens; to protect Christendom; to succor and assist the feeble and oppressed, and to defend the innocent. The Order played an important role during the Crusades in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the northern provinces. In 1230, they launched the Prussian Crusade, a joint invasion intended to Christianize Prussia. The Teutonic Knights had a strong economic base, hired mercenaries from throughout Europe to augment their feudal levies, and became a naval power in the Baltic Sea.

At the dissolution of the Knights Templar in 1312 many of those in the Germanic regions were said to have been absorbed into the Order of the House of St. Mary of Jerusalem.

In 1410, a Polish-Lithuanian army decisively defeated the Order and broke its military power at the Battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg). In 1515, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I made a marriage alliance with Sigismund I of Poland-Lithuania. Thereafter the Empire did not support the Order against Poland.

In 1525, Grand Master Albert of Brandenburg resigned and converted to Lutheranism, becoming Duke of Prussia as a vassal of Poland. Soon after, the Order lost Livonia and its holdings in the Protestant areas of Germany. The Order kept its considerable holdings in Catholic areas of Germany until 1809, when Napoleon Bonaparte ordered its dissolution and the Order lost its last secular holdings. The Order continued to exist as a charitable and ceremonial body. It was outlawed by Adolf Hitler in 1938 but re-established in 1945. Today it operates primarily with charitable aims in Central Europe.

In this degree, the Mason learns that Practical charity, knightly attributes of character, and a scorn for the base and selfish...are but a few of the lessons taught in this degree. Truth and honor are more to be cultivated than the gathering of wealth and power, and while we have been studying the historical, philosophical and religious lessons of Masonry, let us not forget the practical side of it, ever remembering our duties to the poor and helpless, the weak and the unhappy.

DUTIES: Be devoted to truth, honor, loyalty, justice and honor.

LESSONS:

- Masonry is practical and requires its members to be actively involved in life. Virtue and duty are constants that never change.

FOR REFLECTION:

- Is it nobler to err and make amends than to never err at all? Does the virtue of prudence conflict with this ?

IMPORTANT SYMBOLS:

- The colors of the Order are scarlet and black. The Teutonic Cross.

The apron of the Degree is of scarlet lambskin, bordered and edged in black. The flap is white. On the flap is the jewel of the Degree, a black and gold Teutonic Cross. In the center is a shield with a black, double-headed eagle.

Two gold Teutonic crosses are embroidered on the collar, and the jewel of the Degree hangs from the point.

This report is based on excerpts from: McClenachan, Book of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, "Bridge to Light" – 2006, Rex Hutchins; "Scottish Rite Ritual, Monitor and Guide" – 2007, Arturo de Hoyos.

Note: at some point in the past, the 28th and 27th degrees were swapped.