

Texas Grand Commander's Message

Grand Commander's Message - May 2004

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To the Sir Knights of Texas:

It is with a great deal of humility and gratitude that I write you on this occasion, having the great honor of being elected and installed to serve as your Grand Commander. I think that I am the 150th Sir Knight to serve in this position of leadership, trust and confidence, and I am truly honored to have the opportunity to do so. I follow in the footsteps of a long line of great men who have led this Christian body over the past 149 years in Texas, and I solicit your good thoughts and earnest prayers as I endeavor to that same path in my service to you and this Grand Commandery.

Although every year is special to the officer then presiding, this year is one of particular importance to our Grand Commandery. We will celebrate the Sesquicentennial of our Grand Commandery in its birthplace and my hometown, San Antonio. Our Grand Commandery was formed in San Antonio on January 18, 1855 when representatives of the three Commanderies located in this State, San Filipe de Austin No. 1 (Galveston), Ruthven No. 2 (Houston), Palestine No. 3 (Palestine) met and formed The Grand Encampment of Texas. The rest, it is said, is history, but it is our history!

We—you and I—are part of the *living history* of our Grand Commandery. It is up to us to ensure that it continues. It will only do that if we continue to support its precepts and ideals at a grass roots level. That can only occur if each of us is an active member of our Grand Commandery and constituent Commandery Membership Committee and Team. *To Be One, Ask One* and *Every Christian Mason Should Be A Knight Templar* are two bumper stickers that many of us have on our cars, but just displaying these bumper stickers is not going to ensure the continuation of our Templar history. It takes personal commitment to make personal contacts. The efforts of our M:W: Grand Master in introducing Worshipful Masters and Wardens in our Lodges to a taste of our beautiful York Rite Degrees and Orders is a big step in the right direction. But we, the Companions and Sir Knights of Texas, must ensure that "the taste" becomes their enjoyment of the entire York Rite fare by following through with these Masters and Wardens, along with their fellow Lodge officers, ensuring that they are invited to become members of the Royal Arch Chapter. We cannot bolster our membership rolls unless we FIRST get the Master Mason to become a Royal Arch Mason, and then a Royal & Select Master! It is just a fact of life, a fact that we must nurture, develop and then benefit from when that new Council member also petitions to take the Templar Orders.

Our Statewide membership continues to dwindle, but stemming this decline I take as a challenge—and *it must be our challenge!* In the Fifties, the York Rite was the preeminent Rite in Texas, but we rested upon "our preeminence" and lost the leadership roll we once had. Although we now have only 12,422 Texas Templars as of February 29, I want to challenge you, the Sir Knights of Texas, to dam against the flood of our losses. This is our 150th year of existence as a Grand Commandery. I see no reason why we, as a Grand Body, cannot increase our membership by **at least 750 new Sir Knights by year end** (which equals the 6% Knightings sought by our own Grand Master Kenneth B. Fischer), while curtailing the losses due to demits and suspensions by at least 50%. We cannot do anything about our losses to the call of our Heavenly Father, but we can address and affect the demits, suspensions and new members gains.

In this regard, *each constituent Commandery should—MUST IF WE ARE TO SURVIVE—Knight a minimum of one new candidate each year.* If each Commandery knights just one candidate, we will have increased our membership by 74; two each will be 148, and we will then have at least 150 for our Sesquicentennial; **five each and we will reach 750.** This membership goal is not a Don Quixote windmill, not an impossible dream to reach, but it is a monumental task that will take a *redetermined effort* of a lot of us Sir Knights who are extremely proud of who we are encouraging and inviting Christian Masons—our friends and Brothers—to petition to join what we have and believe in. Again, *personal contact* with the candidate *and his observation of your—our—genuine enthusiasm* about what we are selling

is the key! Our own Grand Master Fischer has said it best: "**Every Christian Mason MUST be a Knight Templar.**" If we follow this as our membership credo for this Templar Triennium Year, we cannot help but be successful in this endeavor. And if we are successful in this aspect, we will necessarily be successful in many other of our Commandery endeavors with the infusion of new blood that the increased membership will bring.

The job we assumed as Christian Masons and Sir Knights is to preach the gospel, planting seeds that we may not sow immediately or even see the ultimate result. Recently, I was privileged to be present at the Knighting of a Companion who I had been discussing finishing his York Rite pilgrimage for three or four years. I was persistent and he was fertile soil and my persistence has resulted in a new Sir Knight. The message is clear that we do not fulfill our responsibility to our Christian Masonic Brothers by merely making a petition available to them. We must be persistent, demonstrating our enthusiasm for our belief in the merits of our Templar Order, yet leaving the result of our efforts to the Author and Finisher of Our Faith. Matt. 28: 18-20; 1 Cor. 1:17.

I am therefore asking and challenging each of you to ask one—*no, every*—Master Mason who has not completed his York Rite journey to do so by becoming a member of our York Rite; I am asking each of you to canvass your Chapters and Councils for members who have not taken our Commandery Orders and *persistently encourage* him to do so. If each Sir Knight is responsible for just one Master Mason becoming a Companion and Sir Knight, we can double our membership this year and we will not have even made a dent in the field yet to be harvested!

Lastly, I hope you had the privilege to attend your 151st Grand Conclave in Tyler. If not, you missed an opportunity to **live and help make Templar history**. I hope that all of you work with your Grand Officers to make Templar history this year; what kind of history that will be, however, is up to you and me!

Feel free to contact me this year at on of the following: 10122 N. Manton Lane, San Antonio, Texas 78213-1948; O: (210) 349-9933; H: (210) 344-4309; F: (210) 349-9988; Email: jnh.kt@hhzlaw.com. I assure you I want your input and suggestions. Also, check out the information that is on our website at www.texasyorkrite.org/grcommandery. We will be updating it regularly with pertinent information. Let me know your thoughts on how we can better serve you through this internet tool.

Yours in the Faith,

James N.(Jim) Higdon
Grand Commmander