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+Greetings and Welcome + I hope you are enjoying your Templary!

Grand Commandery, 2014 – Ritual Competition – Last year, R:E: David Moore did a great job of creating a ritual competition that everyone could participate with relative ease, and to encourage all Commanderies to participate with, and to that end, it was very successful.

In 2014, we will do much the same thing, with one minor adjustment; the competition remains in the Order of Malta, however, we are adding one additional participant... The parts are: Prior, Marshal, 1st Banner, 2nd Banner, 3rd Banner, and the Table in the West. This adds an additional dimension to the competition and I hope your Commandery takes advantage of it! I encourage all Commanderies to form a Ritual Team and compete at the Grand Commandery session... Not only does it hone your ritual prowess, but the camaraderie and 'TEAM Spirit' it creates is incomparable! I hope to see you in Houston, on the Ritual Team!

Honoring Henry Bates Stoddard – On Saturday, November 23, 2013, we will gather at Ivanhoe Commandery #8, Bryan, Texas, to memorialize Sir Knight Henry Bates Stoddard, Past Grand Commander of Texas (1880), and Past Grand Master of the Grand Encampment (1901), Knights Templar, by placing an official Templar grave marker, upon the grave of this exemplar Knight... I hope that you will join us for this very special event! Please see the website for details, and plan to be there!

700 Year Anniversary – In commemoration of the 700th Anniversary of the death of Jacques DeMolay, the last Grand Master of the ancient Templar's, we will gather in Waco, Texas, at the Lee Lockwood Museum, on Saturday, March 15, 2014, to enjoy a day of Templary, beginning with the DeMolay Initiatory Degree and ending with the Order of the Temple (including the Order of the Red Cross and Order of Malta)... I hope you will plan on joining us there and bringing several candidates! More details to come, but mark your calendars now!

The Blessing of Thanksgiving – One of my favorite times of the year is late November; It is typically a little cooler and less humid; It is the end of hurricane season; Normally, the Commandery Inspection is behind us and the Dues Notices have been put into the mail box; and, it is that special time of year we refer to as "Thanksgiving", the time year that most families celebrate with some type of gathering or reunion, usually around some type of feast! It is a time that we reflect upon what has happened to us, our families, our friends, our State and our Country, during the past year, and we thank God for all of the blessings he has bestowed upon us and pray that we have, in some way been helpful to others in their time of need. I/we are blessed to have a great Grand Prelate again, this year in the form of R:E: Brian R. Dodson, and I consider myself very fortunate that he prays daily for you, me and our Grand Commandery, and I have to share with you that, it is very comforting to me that he does this, because God knows I need it!

Knowing that we all have so much to be thankful for, I have asked Brian, as Grand Prelate, to offer the following Thanksgiving message to you, on behalf of all of the Grand Commandery Officers, who wish you a most Blessed Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving Day – The national day of thanksgiving...turkey and dressing...pumpkin pie...sweet potatoes and marshmallows...green bean casserole with onion rings...Aggie football (Oh wait a minute, they don't do that anymore). All of this we should give thanks for, but there is so much more in this world for which Knight Templars should thank our Heavenly Father.

As soldiers of Christ, who have pledged to wield our swords in defense of the Christian religion, we should also live our lives by those same dictates. Where better to get instruction to do that than from the Holy Scriptures. Let us see what it says about thanksgiving.

In Psalm 100:4, it says "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless his name". What do we thank him for? In 1 Timothy 4:4-5, it says "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer". We should thank him for everything we receive with great thanksgiving, for all the blessings he gives us are good.

Colossians 3:15 instructs us further, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." It continues in Colossians 3:17, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" This tells us to not only live according to the commandments of the Christian religion but to have thanksgiving for the opportunity to do so. And when things seem to weigh too heavy on us then let us remember the words of Paul in his letter to the Philippians 4:6 where he tells them and us, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God."

In 1 Chronicles 16:34 we are giving the promise for the ages, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever." So on this day of Thanksgiving, let us give thanks for more than just the food and the hands that prepared it. Instead, let us give thanks to our Heavenly Father for all his blessings, to our Lord Jesus Christ, who took on our sin and died for us that we may have everlasting life, and also to the Heavenly Spirit, who continues to give us the ongoing blessing that brings us closer to Jesus. Also thank him for family and friends, for our great fraternity, for the health and wellbeing of our Grand Officers, and for the continued ability to bring other Masons closer to the active soldier ship of Christ through our Orders. Let us thank Him for our country and the freedom we enjoy. Thank him for those in our armed services working to keep that freedom. Thank him also for our ministers and priests that lead us to live a more Godly life.

To Knights Templar it should not be Thanksgiving Day...it should be thanksgiving 'daily'. It should not be a one day a year event to give thanks to our God, but should be our daily habit and practice to offer our prayers to him thanking him for all our blessings. We should make time in our daily lives to give Him the grace He deserves. This you can do either silently or aloud, just remember to do it.

To me, one of the most eloquent prayers is the General Thanksgiving found on page 58 in the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. It is a beautiful way to give thanks. It reads: "Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen."

So in this Thanksgiving season, may the peace of God that passes all understanding, be and remain with us all evermore. Amen.

Brian R. Dodson, Grand Prelate
Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of Texas