

Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Florida

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GRAND COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Merry Christmas Sir Knights:

In the early 17th century, a wave of religious reform changed the way Christmas was celebrated in Europe. When Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan forces took over England in 1645, they vowed to rid England of decadence and as part of their effort, cancelled Christmas. By popular demand, Charles II was restored to the throne and, with him, came the return of the popular holiday. The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than Cromwell. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. By contrast, in the Jamestown settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident. After the American Revolution, English customs fell out of favor, including Christmas. In fact, Congress was in session on December 25, 1789, the first Christmas under America's new constitution. Christmas wasn't declared a federal holiday until June 26, 1870. Where are we today? When it comes to Christmas, some people don't like to keep Christ in Christmas. We need to remember that Jesus is the reason for the season. So when your Commandery has its Christmas observance, please show up and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior. This time of year is hard on a lot of Sir Knights and many others who have no family so invite someone to celebrate with your family, just to see the smile on their face knowing you care is worth millions.

We should be proud of the accomplishment we have made when it comes to the Holy Land Pilgrimage. Our Grand Jurisdiction will be

sending four ministers to the Holy Land in early 2015. This is an increase of two ministers from the year before. I hope in the next year that the Grand Commandery can send more than four. I would encourage each Commandery to start looking now for a minister and be prepared. Some Commanderies had the money but could not come up with a minister due to a lot of different conflicts.

I would like to thank all Sir Knights around the state who participated in the District Meeting/Festivals, a lot of planning has gone into this format of a District Meeting. We have Knighted as of Oct 29, 184 new members. I will give the final report of the Festival in the 2nd District (Bradenton, Sarasota, Ft. Meyers, Naples York Rite Bodies) Venice Lodge No. 301 118 E. Venice Ave. Venice, Fl. on Friday Night Nov. 7th and Saturday Nov. 8th. We do expect to have over 200 new members for the year 2014. Since April 29, we have Knighted 122 new members into our Order. I would like to announce that there will be a Statewide Class that will be held on Friday night March 6th and Saturday March 7th in honor of our Most Worshipful Grand Master James Ford. All the Degrees and Orders will be conferred outdoors at Box Ranch in Indiantown, Florida. The work will be conferred by several different York Rite Bodies from around the State.

Finally on behalf of my wife Judy, and myself I wish you a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. So may the Lord's LIGHT shine upon you, give you peace and ever keep you from falling.

Yours in Christ,

S.K. Paul W. Friend, KTCH
Right Eminent Grand Commander