



THE GRAND COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF IOWA

Grand Prelate's Easter Message

Easter, 2023

Matthew 6:25-34

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

John 20:13-16

... They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, *Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?*

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, *Mary.*

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").



Sir Knights, Companions, and Brothers, I'd like to think with you about Easter for a few minutes.

Depending upon when your Commandery gets around to reading this, it's either shortly before Easter, 2023, or shortly after.

Whatever else it may promote, Freemasonry encourages its members to contemplate seriously their own relationships with the present and the eternal, with the human and the divine.

Templary goes farther. As a specifically trinitarian Christian Order, Knights Templar are sworn to defend the Christian religion, by force if necessary.

While these oaths, like most Masonic oaths, are symbolic (look around at your fellow Sir Knights and imagine a real sword fight—it probably wouldn't last long against a determined foe!). Like all symbols, however, there is a serious meaning in these promises.

Moreover, there is much in how Templary defines itself: it is a "magnanimous Order."

"Magnanimous" is a big word with deep meaning. One respected dictionary gives this definition: "kind, generous and forgiving, especially towards an enemy or competitor."

I suggest that the definition of our Order as magnanimous has much to do with the two quotations from scripture above, and with the meaning of Easter—or what I, as one Sir Knight, think we might consider at Easter time.

I'm not going to argue the accuracy of the Bible as a volume of history; that's for each Sir Knight to determine for himself. But I am most certainly going to argue that the story and symbolism of Easter have a great deal to do with what being a Christian Knight is all about.

Let's look just a bit closer at these two scriptures.

The sixth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew is a heavy hitter: earlier it includes the Lord's Prayer.

These verses, at the end of the Chapter, tell us about faith, and how essential it is that we believe in our God through faith. Listing all manner of things that we worry about every day, Jesus tells us that we need, before anything else, to “seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness.”

It's not that we shouldn't be concerned about our daily needs—far from it! But everything in its place. If we are mindful of our God **FIRST**, then the rest of it is much easier to put into perspective.

So first comes faith—you of little faith. And just what is this “faith,” a word we bandy about on a daily basis as if we knew its deepest meaning.

Faith, I submit, is the ability to believe in something we can neither see nor prove objectively. In a world that depends so much on being able to “prove” something by demonstrating its parts by facts (the method of knowing we call “empiricism”) it can be difficult to support something we know by “just knowing it.”

This does NOT mean we haven't thought deeply about things we know non-empirically, or “by faith.” Quite the contrary! If we truly accept something “by faith,” we often have considered it very deeply indeed.

Don't get me wrong! I'm all in favor of empiricism. I believe in science and in proof by fact. I believe in “evidence,” if you will. I have no doubt whatsoever that, should I accidentally drop a cast iron skillet onto my foot, the law of gravity might just allow that skillet to fall and perhaps cause the nerves in my foot to register no small amount of pain in my brain.

I'm equally persuaded, however, that not all that is **true** in this world can be proved through a series of logical and provable steps. All the science we know—at least so far—cannot describe how or why I am so moved when I am alone and watch a sunrise over a calm lake, when a chorus of birds welcomes the new light. Is my being moved by that sunrise any less real than the pain I feel when the frying pan hits my foot?

Oh, ye of little faith! Believe **FIRST** in God, Jesus tells us, and *then* worry about the rest of it. It's not a question of not being empirical. It's simply demonstrating the obvious, and Shakespeare may have put it best and most succinctly in *Hamlet* (1.5.167-68):

*There are more things in heaven and earth,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*

Philosophy here means “things provable by fact.” Today we probably would say “science,” but that would not fit Shakespeare's iambic pentameter rhyme scheme.

There is, I submit, more—far more—in our daily life than meets our “philosophy.”

And what about the Scriptural passage from St. John?

Here, in this deeply moving passage, we find Mary Magdalene—significantly a **female** follower of Jesus, and one much maligned by misogynistic medieval theologians—who has come to visit Jesus' tomb two days after he was buried. Horrified when she sees that the tomb has apparently been desecrated by grave robbers, her tears of sorrow are redoubled, so that she cannot see clearly. She does not realize that there are angels in the tomb, and probably thinks they are among the grave-robbers. When they ask why she is weeping, she answers honestly, and then turns away.

And there, perhaps almost beside her, is Jesus, though she cannot physically recognize him through her tears.

When he speaks, however, she recognizes him immediately. She knows that voice as well as any other she has ever heard.

And she acknowledges him with the title she has used almost since she met him: **Rabboni**. Teacher. **Master**, we probably would say, and that is an equally valid translation from Aramaic.

Mary does not know by sight, but rather by faith. She recognizes the sound of a voice. It is a voice that cannot possibly be present with her, because she knows **by fact** that the owner of that voice is dead and has been buried. Yet so familiar and well-beloved is that voice that it can be no other than her Rabboni, the Master she has believed and followed for years. She cannot see Jesus, cannot demonstrate his presence empirically, yet she knows by faith that it is he.

Oh, ye of little faith! Are there not, indeed, more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy?

What does this have to do with our magnanimous Order?

Everything!

Not only does our magnanimity have everything to do with accepting more than we know by fact, but it also requires us to accept things by *faith*.

If our vows within this Order require us to be “kind, generous and forgiving, especially towards an enemy or competitor,” then, for us to do so, we must overlook reasons to *dislike* enemies or competitors, and to accept—by *faith*—that they, too, are human, and faced with the same daily demands and concerns that we also face. Rather than continuing strife, we must be kind, generous, and forgiving. By *definition*!

And what does this have to do with Easter?

Again, everything.

Can I prove empirically that *EITHER* of these passages of Scripture is empirically true—based in provable fact? Of course not!

But I can nonetheless *believe* what they teach me about being a Christian and a magnanimous Masonic Knight Templar!

Moreover, we can apply our fervent faith and magnanimity to another passage from Scripture, this one from St. Paul’s first letter to the congregation at Corinth, I Corinthians 13:8-13:

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part will disappear. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

My Brother, magnanimous Sir Knight, may your faith bring you hope and love.

The greatest of these is love.

Jesus, our Lord and Savior, loved, and continues to love, each of us enough that he died the most painful death the Roman Empire knew how to inflict. His friends took his body and buried him. They continued to weep, and to suffer deep sorrow.

But we know that is not the end of the story, because his disciple Mary Magdalene recognized his voice—by faith. He had defeated even death, and continued to be her—and more importantly *our*—teacher and master.

That, I submit, is the lesson of Easter, a lesson we accept by *faith*.

Remember, Sir Knight:

After all else, these three remain: faith, hope and love.

But the greatest of these is love.

I dare you, Sir Knight: Be the magnanimous Christian knight you swore you would be when you became a Knight Templar. You can only do it when you hear your Savior’s voice, and follow your Master by faith.

May you and all those dear to you have a joyous and blessed Easter!

John M. Klaus
Grand Prelate
Grand Commandery of Iowa
Easter, 2023