

THE GRAND COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF SOUTH CAROLINA



Robert J.F. Elsner
R.E. Grand Commander

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Christmas 2018

Christmas Greetings from the Right Eminent Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of South Carolina

Alleluia! He is Risen! While you may think that I am in the wrong season, Christmas is about fulfillment and hope, so why not start at the end of the story? The Bible often does this with stories, starting off by telling the ending and then giving you the story. The Gospel according to John does this, telling us that at the end, God wins, so don't worry. Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6 told us of Christ long before Jesus was born, and those words are still sung at Christmas. Christmas is a season that begins on Christmas Day, even if stores start selling Christmas items earlier and earlier each year. The Season is forty days long, ending in the Feast of the Presentation when Jesus was presented at the Temple, especially meaningful for us as Templars.

Christmas is about love and sacrifice, just as Easter is. It is not as dramatic as Easter, as the least common thing in humanity is birth, while we are transfixed by violence and death. Death was an easy fix for God, but being born as fully human while being fully God, that was the hard part. The endpoints of the Story of Christ are the full manger and the empty tomb. We forget that these great gifts are what we should be focusing on. We get distracted by Christmas trees and other pagan fertility symbols that have taken root in the festival. Gifts to one another are important, but only if accompanied by the story and lessons of God giving of Himself for us.

In Lodge, we tell candidates what the outcomes are going to be before the degrees: they will embark on a path to make good men better. In Commandery we tell them that these Orders should challenge them to fight the good fight and build God's Kingdom. These stories and the encouragement that comes with them are gifts to each other, as sure as if they were wrapped and had bows on them. It is my prayer that during this Christmas Season you will celebrate the greatest gift that God has given us: His incarnate, eternal, and only-begotten Son to be with us and bear what we cannot. Merry Christmas to you and your families. I pray that you will find Peace, Hope, and Love throughout the Season, building His Kingdom and Spreading His messages of Hope and Love. He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

In Christ's Service,

Handwritten signature of Robert J.F. Elsner.

Robert J.F. Elsner
Grand Commander of Knights Templar
of South Carolina