

ARKANSAS SUPPLEMENT



Timothy J. "T.J." Henwood, PGC(H), KCT, Editor
P. O. Box 6681, Sherwood, AR. 72124-6681
Phone: (501) 413-8181 e-Mail: content@aryorkrite.org
Explore the AR Supplement, and other states too, on-line at:
www.aryorkrite.org

Grand Prelate's Christmas Sentiment

E. SK & Rev. Steven G. Tiner

R.:E.: Grand Commander, S.K. Wilson:

On this Nativity of the birth of our Lord, I wish you a very Merry Christmas!

As I prepared to toast you, the question arose in my mind, as to when the Grand Encampment's worldwide Christmas observance came into being. I discovered it to be a dramatic story which does credit to our great Christian order.

The first Knights Templar Christmas Observance was proposed in 1876, 142 years ago. In that year, S.K. Stephen Berry of a commandery in Portland, Maine, invited the Templar Correspondents of Grand Commanderies to drink a toast at noon on Christmas Day in expressing the fine sentiments typical of the great order and its allegiance to the Great Captain of Our Salvation.

In 1885, then Grand Master, S.K. Robert Withers was stationed in Hong Kong as U.S. Consul. S.K. Berry (the Christmas Festival in mind) sent him a warm, religious greeting captioned "To Him That's Away!" He invited an answer. The Grand Master responded. This encouraged S.K. Berry to enlarge the scope of the toast, and in a circular widely distributed requested all Sir Knights to join the Templar Correspondents on Christmas Day at noon in a libation pledging loyalty and obedience to the Grand Master.

Several of the Grand Commanders issued invitations to all the subordinates in their jurisdictions and from Maine to Texas, and from Massachusetts to Oregon and California, at the "witching hour", the Templars rose simultaneously to honor the sentiment and the response.

The chain was unbroken from America, through Paris, France. Through England, Ireland and the British provinces the idea was carried out. The London Freemason then suggested that Australia should join the chain and complete the circuit of the Globe.

Continued on facing page

R.: E.: Grand Commander
William Paul Wilson
gc@aryorkrite.org

Greetings, Sir Knights:



The custom was unofficially continued throughout the following Triennium.

Then, in 1889, a "Committee on the Christmas Toast" was appointed. They reported in 1892 and their resolution was adopted. In 1901, Grand Master Reuben Hedley Lloyd in his report said in brief, "From far-off Manila, 6,000 miles beyond the sea, on Christmas Day, A.D. 1898, I received a telegram saying "The sojourning Templars toasted you on Christmas morning."

The preference for many years was for the toast to be held at 12 on Christmas Day. Later, however, it was decided that constituent commanderies fix the hour to the best advantage for the convenience of the Sir Knights.

On this 142nd Anniversary, I pray that the Observance is widely exemplified. Perhaps if all of the Christmas messages written by the Grand Encampment of the past, together with the responses by the Grand Masters and the inspiring messages of the Grand Commanders and the Grand Prelates, were collected and compiled into one volume, it would form the most precious and inspiring Templar literature ever written and offered to all the Sir Knights in this Order of Christian Knighthood.

R.:E.: S.K. Wilson, in this long tradition, I toast to a joyful present and a well-remembered past. Best wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a magnificent New Year.

Grand Commander's Response

E. Sir Knight Tiner:

I return your best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. That is our tradition in the United States, and most everywhere around the globe.

As we pause in our pursuits of our everyday lives at this time of year, may we give thanks for the blessings we have all received, and most especially the blessing of the birth of Christ. May we have hope that in the coming year, we may see more "Peace on Earth", and "Goodwill towards all men."

Again, my wish for you, and all Sir Knights, wheresoever dispersed is a very Merry, and Blessed Christmas season.

Yours in His service,
Wm. Paul Wilson
Grand Commander

Editor's note: Sir Knights, with this and the Sentiments found in the Knight Templar magazine, you can have an excellent Christmas Observance in your Commandery.