

A PILGRIMAGE TO GREECE AND RHODES

By S.K. Richard W. Van Doren



From April 22nd to May 6th of 2009, The Grand Commandery of Knights Templar and the Appendant Orders of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and Boston Commandery #2, KT made a special Pilgrimage to Greece and Rhodes. The following is a brief report of that sojourn.

This was a very special trip to Greece and the Island of Rhodes, the latter celebrating 700 years since the Knights Templar began their first occupation in 1309. In preparation for the event, there was a very unusual happening – a throwback to the traditions of the original Knights Templar.

On Palm Sunday, April 6th, a Service of Blessing of the Knights was held at the Congregational Church of Littleton, MA. All participating Knights and their ladies were in attendance and

received Communion and a special blessing from the Rev. Dr. Vern Swett for the success of their journey. Dr. Swett's blessing included these words:

Gracious and Loving God,
Bless these Knights on their journey to Greece and Rhodes.
Bless them and all who travel with them.
May their journey be a holy journey,
May it be a sacred pilgrimage.

As they travel, may they share the love of Christ in all they say
and in all they do.
May they be worthy ambassadors of the Christian faith.

In the various sites they travel to,
May they experience the deep, historical significance of these places.
In the events in which they participate,
May they experience their power and meaning.

Bless them in their endeavors of charity and service to people in need,
Especially widows and orphans.

May they go with the Peace of Christ. Amen

The Commander of Boston Commandery #2, KT was an active participant in the service, making some initial comments about Templary, reading the Scriptural lessons and, along with the Grand Commander and all Knights, receiving the Blessing.

Is this the first such Blessing of the Knights in modern times? If so, we would recommend it to other Commanderies. The reaction of the congregation, who had no prior knowledge of Templary, was uniformly positive. Four of the members of this small country church who were also members of the Masonic Fraternity came forward after the service and requested to petition to receive the Orders.

The party departed from Logan Airport in Boston for Greece on April 22nd and landed the following day. Arriving in Athens, they had several days to see such sites as the Parthenon, the ancient agora, and the National Museum. Special day trips were made to the Oracle at Delphi and City of Mycenae, the walled city of King Agamemnon.

They met with their Greek brethren at the Grand Lodge building in downtown Athens and observed their Order of the Temple, with seven of the Boston brethren receiving their knighthood under the auspices of the Grand Encampment of Greece. They would later also be knighted on Rhodes by Boston Commandery.

An overnight ferry boat ride made travel to the Island of Rhodes easy and enjoyable. After landing, the pilgrims had plenty of time to walk around the nearby Old Medieval City. During the next few days, additional trips were made to the Castle of Lindos, the Valley of the Butterflies, the ancient Castle of Monolithos, and the wonderful monastery of Fillerimos.



On May 2nd, Boston Commandery conferred the Order of the Temple on 17 new Knights – 7 Americans, 9 Greeks, and the Grand Master of Malta.



It was held in the Grand Master's palace – in the same room and on the very same spot where our ancient companions knighted their own so many centuries ago. Following the conferral of the Order ritual, while still in the ancient room of the Knights, Boston's Commander made the following extemporaneous Final Exhortation:

Congratulations on becoming Knights Templar. You observe me removing my gloves in order to take you by the right hand. This is the proper method and comes from a tradition first observed during the medieval period when knights would remove their gauntlets as a sign that they carried no weapons.

We observe many customs from the age of chivalry – including the salute – whereby one knight would raise his visor when greeting another to be identifiable and, again, as an indication that he was friendly and meant no harm.

So welcome – Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ – Knights of the Order of the Temple!



During the ceremony, you were promised “severe duty”. And now, I give you your assignment:

Every day, you are to rise and put on the Full Armor of God and go forth to defend the innocent; to protect the weak and the helpless from the Warlords of Darkness and their minions. You will not countenance the abusers of power; those that would harm the less fortunate and who seek to gratify only their own selfish interests – greed, avarice, advantage over those who are defenseless. You are to succor the ill, champion the wronged, love the less loveable. At the approach of the followers of Evil, you will draw your sword -- and join the Ancient Templar Battle Cry: **Mon Dieu y Mon Droit!! – God and My Right!!**

And late, very late in life – as evening shades decline and you near the end of your own pilgrimage from Nazareth to Jerusalem – from Alpha to Omega – and you peer down into

the sepulcher which was prepared for you...do not be afraid. Remain faithful. Stretch forth your hands and be welcomed into the Joy of our Savior and Lord -- Jesus Christ.

And so ride forth, Sir Knights! And may God and His angels uphold you.

Everyone put forth his best effort and American Knights Templar now enjoy a most favorable reputation amongst the Greeks for doing excellent ritual work. Later, they were joined by the ladies for a gala event in one of the upper chambers of the palace and treated to three lectures on Templary. There were a large number of Greek Knights and their ladies in attendance as well as the Deputy Minister of Defense, the Governor of Rhodes, and the Mayor of the City of Rhodes.



Throughout the trip, the Knights and their ladies enjoyed the outstanding food of Greece and the warmth of the brethren who went all out to ensure that that they had a good time. It would also be remiss if it was not said that the Grand Commander, S.K. Eugene A. Capobianco, and his staff did yeoman duty to help make this trip a true “trip of a lifetime”. In fact, this was a historical pilgrimage without precedent.

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