

THE YORK RITE  
OF FREEMASONRY  
IN VIRGINIA

THE ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER  
(Including the Council)



THE COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR



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KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF VIRGINIA

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Office of the Grand Recorder  
3031 Colonial Dr  
Charlottesville, VA. 22911-9114  
Phone (434) 328 8051  
Fax (434) 328-8071  
email: [vacomdry@comcast.net](mailto:vacomdry@comcast.net)

## THE YORK RITE IN VIRGINIA

Every well informed Mason knows that the Symbolic or Blue Lodge is the foundation of all Masonry. The additional degrees only serve to expand and elaborate upon the principles exemplified in the ceremonies of the Blue Lodge. There are no “higher” degrees than that of Master Mason. All of the Orders of the York Rite and the Degrees of the Scottish Rite are but supplementary to and an extension of the great themes set forth in the ceremonies through which the candidate passes in becoming a Master Mason. Hence, there are really no “higher” degrees and truth lies at the foundation of them all.

In Virginia the York Rite, which derives its name from the ancient association of the city of York, England, with Freemasonry, consists of the following bodies:

The Symbolic Lodge.

The Royal Arch Chapter (which includes the Council degrees).

The Commandery of Knights Templar.

The degrees conferred in the Symbolic Lodge and the Royal Arch Chapter constitute the whole of “Ancient Craft Masonry.” All of these degrees are based upon events connected with the erection of King Solomon’s Temple, its dedication and the sequel as recorded in the Old Testament and in secular history.

The Orders conferred in the Commandery are based upon certain events and teaching of the New Testament and is, therefore, a further extension to that of the Lodge and the Chapter. To the Mason who embraces the Christian religion, the Orders of Knighthood are necessary for a complete understanding of the many applications of Masonic teaching.

It will be seen that as the Mason climbs the symbolic stairway to the heights of knowledge and wisdom, he needs to receive more and more detailed instruction to enable him to make personal use of Masonry's sublime principles. This knowledge can never become complete.

#### **MASONRY – A PROGRESSIVE SCIENCE**

No serious minded member of the Masonic fraternity will ever consider that the receiving of the various Degrees and Orders is the ultimate end of his endeavors. They are only means to the ultimate end of making him better than he was before he received them. Ignorance, however, will always be a part of his life and there can never be an end to his striving to become better as long as life shall last. The consciousness of the divine compulsion, which is a part of man's higher nature, will cause every true Mason to become a seeker after light as his highest mission. In so doing, he is aided immeasurably by obtaining as early as possible in his Masonic career, the knowledge which will be afforded him in our Orders.

Thus, in following the *path of initiation*, he will find himself as a York Rite Mason, passing through its Degrees and Orders:

#### **IN THE SYMBOLIC LODGE**

1. Degree of Entered Apprentice
2. Degree of Fellow Craft
3. Degree of Master Mason

#### **IN THE ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER**

1. Degree of Mark Master
2. Degree of Past Master
3. Degree of Select Master
4. Degree of Royal Master
5. Degree of Most Excellent Master
6. Degree of Royal Arch Mason

#### **IN THE COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR**

1. Illustrious Order of the Red Cross
2. Order of Malta or Mediterranean Pass
3. Order of the Temple

It will be seen from the Degrees and Orders enumerated that the York Rite of Freemasonry consists of twelve steps. No explanation of the three degrees of Craft Masonry will be given. These are the fundamental foundation of all other

Masonry and need no further explanation other than that contained in the degrees themselves.

### **THE ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER**

A brief explanation of the meaning of these degrees is in order for the Mason who would seek more light via the *pathway of initiation*.

1. *Mark Master*: This degree is an extended teaching of the degree of Fellow Craft, wherein is taught order, regularity and discipline. The work of our hands and the thoughts of our minds should be good and true, so that the Great Overseer will see fit to approve our work.
2. *Past Master*: While this is an honorary degree, every brother who would serve as a warden of a Symbolic Lodge is required to have it. It has to do with presiding over a Lodge. It is in the Capitular system because when the Royal Arch was a part of the Symbolic Lodge degrees, only those who had presided over a Lodge were eligible to receive the Royal Arch Degree. Humility is one of its greatest teachings.
3. *Select Master*: The history of this degree is connected with the commemoration of the deposit of an important treasure, said to have been planned by Hiram Abif, and has to do with a secret vault beneath the Temple.

4. *Royal Master*: The legend of this degree occurred at the building of the Temple of Solomon, and after the death of the "builder."
5. *Most Excellent Master*: This is purely an American degree. It is practiced in no other country. It deals with the dedication of the Great Temple by Solomon and reminds us that the glory of the Lord can not only fill His house of worship but that it can also illuminate the hearts and minds of men devoted to His service in the true spirit of sacrifice.
6. *Royal Arch*: This degree, originally a part of the work of a Lodge, is built upon the theory that the ancient word which was lost, was found in the Royal Arch, and under most exalted and dignified surrounding. It demonstrates most effectively, that there is no substitute for the genuine in any walk of life and that the discovery of the hidden meaning of this life and its mission are worth all of the effort and sacrifice in obtaining them.

## **THE COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR**

The three Orders conferred in the Commandery of Knights Templar embody some of the most beautiful and impressive ceremonies enshrined in any Masonic ritual.

These Orders of Christian character are open only to those who profess a faith in divinity of Jesus Christ. A brief explanation of these orders will shed further light upon the *pathway of initiation*.

1. *Illustrious Order of the Red Cross:*

This Order is based upon certain historical events connected with the erection of the second Temple in Jerusalem. Its great emphasis rests upon the doctrine that “of all things truth beareth away the victory.” It is an order of transition between the old and the new dispensation as set forth in the Great Light of Freemasonry—the Holy Bible.

2. *The Order of Malta:*

This Order opens the books of the New Testament to Masonic ritual. It recites certain events which took place during the life of Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, and his missionary journeyings. It teaches that God always “sits within the shadow, keeping watch over his own.”

3. *The Order of the Temple:*

Rich in pageantry and sublime teachings, the ritual of this Order combines historical facts from the records of the Templars, who waged the Crusades (1096-1273) for the purpose of wresting the Holy Land from the Turks and highlights from the ministry of the Blessed

Emmanuel who is the acknowledged head of all Templar hosts. The birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord, as climaxed by His ascension, are presented in a most impressive manner. Loyalty to God and country are also an indispensable part of its teaching.

## **THE GRAND COMMANDERY OF VIRGINIA**

In Virginia there are thirty-one Commanderies of Knights Templar. The location of these constituent Commanderies makes it convenient for any Mason who so desires to join a Commandery of Knights Templar. The fees and dues are moderate and the intimate association provided is among the most inspiring to be found in the entire Masonic fraternity.

The Grand Commandery of Virginia is one of the oldest Templar sovereign bodies in the country, having been organized in 1823. Its present membership totals approximately thirty-two hundred “valiant and magnanimous Knights of the Temple.”

## **HOW DO YOU BECOME A KNIGHTS TEMPLAR?**

Membership in a Commandery of Knights Templar is not a matter of right. It is a privilege for those who profess Christianity and live up to the ideals of this great religion and freemasonry combined.

In Virginia the only additional prerequisite, other than character and good standing among one's fellows, is membership in a Symbolic Lodge and a Royal Arch Chapter. The petitioner must be in good standing in these two bodies, as demitted or unaffiliated Masons are not eligible.

If you desire to become a Knights Templar, as many thousands have done before, you need only to take the following steps:

1. Talk with one or more Knights Templar, who are known to you.
2. Request a petition.
3. Fill out the petition; obtain two or more endorsers who know you and who are members of the local Commandery. Attach the necessary fee and request one of your sponsors to present it for you.
4. Await further instructions from the Recorder.

It will be seen, of course, that the procedure is a simple one. The ceremonies involved in the three Orders are of high character and deeply impressive. You need have no apprehension as to the commitments involved. They deviate in no respect from the New Testament teachings, in which you probably have been steeped since childhood.

What more is needed in our time of “storm and stress” than a host of men working enthusiastically in season and out, for the realization of the Kingdom of Christ upon earth? If that is your desire and you are a Royal Arch Mason, then the Commandery has much to offer you. Why not begin today by petitioning the Commandery of your choice and having a part in this fellowship.

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Suite 100  
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## THE AMERICAN CREED

I believe in the United States of America, as a Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a Republic, a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States, a perfect Union, one and inseparable, established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice and humanity, for which American Patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its Flag, and to defend it against all enemies.