

Grand Commandery of Knights Templar in Virginia
March, 2018 Devotion

Psalm 122:6 “Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.”

In 2011, I received one of the greatest gifts of my life, one that I will treasure forever; I was a Christian Minister / Sir Knight chosen to experience the “*Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage*,” and what a life changing, soul enriching experience it was. As I sit here tonight, seven years later, it all seems like a dream. For me the dream of visiting the Holy Land started in a Sunday school room over forty years ago, as I listened to the stories of Biblical heroes such as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Jacob, Samson Daniel, Elijah, Elisha and the like; continuing with Jesus and the Disciples, the Apostle Paul and ending with the Devil’s defeat, ushering in an everlasting peace.

I am writing this devotion on the 4th Sunday of Lent, and as I take inventory of my life, I have discovered that I am a blessed man, blessed but unworthy of so many of God’s good gifts and graces. Because of the generosity of my fellow Sir Knights, my Brethren, the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar in Virginia and the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage, I have walked in the Holy Land, something I may have never been able to do on my own accord. From Tel Aviv to the Holy City Jerusalem, I have been able to visit many of the places mentioned in the Word of God; those sites where God worked miracles to prove His Divine Existence to the pagan nations and the love He has for His people. It is on the later that I wish to write this devotion.

The battles that were fought in the Old Testament capture the mind and the heart of the reader. Though many philosophers and theologians claim that these events were grand tales at best, for us, we know that, in faith, they are true. David besting Goliath on the battlefield; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s surviving the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar; Daniel overcoming the Lion’s Den all pale in comparison to the victory Jesus Christ, the Son of God secured for us and the whole of humanity on the Cross! In just a few weeks we will observe and celebrate Easter, the very basis of our faith. As Christians, we know the story of the Birth of Christ, but we are not saved by His birth. We read and understand the importance of the miracles that He worked, proving that He was and is both man and God, but we are not saved by the miracles He performed. No, my friends, we are saved by the single most important act of love ever recorded in history: the death of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. All four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell of God’s plans and purpose for this event, Jesus the Son of God, had to die so that we may live; He did so with unconditional love in His heart, for you and for me.

One of the most humbling stages of the Holy Land Pilgrimage is walking the Via Doloroso – the Way of Sorrow. It is the path that Jesus walked from the “Hall of Judgment” to the place of His Crucifixion on Golgotha. Each station of the Via Dolorosa tells a story and climaxes in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which houses Mount Calvary and the tomb in which our Lord was placed. (There is some debate on the actual location of the tomb, but my friends, do a few yards really matter when you’re talking about an event of this magnitude?) Inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher there are dozens of shrines erected to Jesus and you can even reach through the protective glass and touch what is said to be Calvary. As you descend from the Mount, you can see and visit the marble slab which is said to be the actual slab which held the body of Christ as the Pharisee Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea hurriedly prepared His body for burial as the Sabbath approached. In the same general area you can visit one of the two places believed to

be the tomb in which the body was laid. It was a very humbling experience to feel the spiritual presence of the Lord in this place. During a time allotted for reflection, I couldn't help but read Isaiah 53, knowing that Jesus, the Christ, endured such a torturous death on my behalf, I am not ashamed to tell you that I wept.

Calvary was the place where the price of sin was paid; paid in full, for you and for me. However, we must remember that Jesus Christ is no longer on that Cross as many would prefer; He is no longer in that borrowed tomb, Jesus is alive to die no more! Just outside the Holy City there is a little place where it is believed that the body of Jesus was buried. It was there, at the Garden Tomb, the hearts of many Americans, Chinese, Africans, Russians, Japanese, Canadians, Dutch and other nationalities of Christians were moved to sing the praises of the Risen Savior! You would think that the voices of such an international ensemble would be devastating to the ears, but my friends, in all my years, I have never heard a more beautiful chorus of praise; each singing in their native tongue the songs of praise worthy of the Lamb of God. To me, this was a glimpse into the glorious realms of Heaven.

Yes, my friends, I walked into the tomb that was housed in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and I visited the interior of the Garden tomb. I can tell you as sure today, as when the Angel spoke to Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the other ladies who came to the tomb to properly anoint the body of Christ: "He is not here; for He has risen, as He said." Our Lord Lives! He is the Peace of Jerusalem!

In closing, as we draw closer to Easter Sunday and in observation of Lent, would you, my fellow Sir Knights, sacrifice a bit of your hard earned money to afford another Minister the chance to visit the Holy Land? At the next stated Conclave, will you be moved to ask your respected Commandery to donate to the Holy Land Pilgrimage? I cannot describe how this journey changed my life, on so many levels and increased my passion, my zeal to worship Him, to obey Him and to share the Good News of Jesus and His love. As I stated before, it was a dream come true and a dream that was only realized by the charity and generosity of good Sir Knights. From the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU! May God bless you and prosper you; may He shield and protect you and your family from all harm and may His will be at the center of your lives, now and forever.

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