



# Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of West Virginia

From the Apartment of the Grand Prelate

## **2023 Easter Message**

To the Right Eminent Grand Commander Richard M. Roy and his Lady Diana,  
The Grand Officers and their and Ladies, and to all  
Sir Knights and their ladies of the Grand Commandery of West Virginia:

### **Blessed Easter**

Easter is a time when we visit with our friends and families, but also with Christians around the world and across time, joyfully proclaiming what is perhaps the most ancient creed in Christendom: Christ is risen! For the 50 days, this great and powerful Easter proclamation will mark our liturgy, define our purpose, and affirm our most deeply held belief.

Of course, proclaiming that joyful phrase today amidst the beautiful flowers, the gorgeous music, and in the company of those we love comes easily for most, if not all of us. And yet, as much as we enjoy the more festive aspects of Easter, the truth is that these things, by themselves, don't tell the whole story.

Along with praise-filled shouts of "Alleluia," the whole story of Easter also includes shouts of war and hate; of fear and pain; of confusion and misunderstanding. In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks all around the world, and in the shadow of war and violence that plague our streets and our planet, these emotions are viscerally familiar to all of us. And although we may lose sight of it here this morning, these emotions also filled the hearts of the faithful on that first Easter morning.

The Gospel of John sets the scene: "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed." Then, John tells us, she ran to share the news with the others. And while John doesn't tell us this part himself, when people get news, they don't typically run unless it's really good news or really bad news!

Mary, it seems fair to say, is distraught—shocked that the body of her beloved Lord isn't in the tomb where he had been laid just three days ago. When she reaches the other disciples with the news, they take off running as well, reaching the tomb only to confirm what Mary had told them. They depart, their hopes dashed; their Easter alleluias muted.

This is where Easter ended: The disciples returned home—confused, saddened, and unsure of what would happen next. John tells us that they “as yet...did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.”

And who could blame them really? They had put so much trust in Jesus, only to have it squashed by powers and principalities. What were they to do now? Where would they go? Who would they believe in next? These were the questions that raced through the disciples' minds as they came to grips with their grief and disappointment.

But Mary wasn't ready to let go just yet.

Mary stays behind, weeping while she examines the emptiness of the tomb, making sure that no detail or clue goes unseen or unexamined—desperately searching for some shred of evidence; grasping for even the faintest possibility.

Just then, she sees two angels sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying. They ask her why she is weeping and she says, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

We can hear the weight of grief in her voice. And if we're honest with ourselves, we've all had similar moments to the one Mary is experiencing. Moments when we've found ourselves desperately searching for God, only to be met with emptiness and sadness. Have you ever come to church, yearning for the peace and comfort of the sacraments, only to find that God doesn't seem to be there? Has your prayer life ever felt dry and fallow? Have you ever found yourself wondering whether church itself might be futile?

In moments like these, we find ourselves in a kind of spiritual mourning, wondering where Jesus has gone, and why he seems to have been taken away. St. John of the Cross called these moments the “Dark Night of the Soul”—when prayer, sacrament, and community no longer bring comfort, and the transcendence of God's presence seems to have evaporated.[1]

There is a well-meaning tendency among many Christians—especially those who have never wrestled deeply with their faith—to liken these moments to a kind of spiritual weakness. “If you only prayed a little harder or believed a little deeper or

trusted a little more, then everything would be okay,” they tell us. We needn’t look much further than the shelves of our local bookstore for a seemingly endless litany of books offering prescriptions that promise to fix our spiritual life.

But as the Trappist monk and priest Thomas Keating reminds us, “The spiritual journey is not a career or a success story. It is a series of humiliations of the false self that become more and more profound. These make room inside of us for the Holy Spirit to come in and heal.”[2]

In other words, we can’t work our way into God’s good graces because God doesn’t deal in performance evaluations and goals and targets. God doesn’t show up on our time or in a manner of our choosing; and our relationship with God cannot be converted into a checklist or a “how to” guidebook.

This is the lesson that Mary learned on that first Easter, and it’s the one that God is still trying to teach us 2,000 years later. In the midst of her desperate search for clues about what might have happened to Jesus’ body, Mary is asked by a man walking by why she is so distraught. And desperately hoping that he would know something she didn’t, she says, “If you know where he is—if you’ve taken him somewhere else—just tell me where and I will take him myself.” If you will just tell me what to do or where to go, I’ll do it! It’s as if she’s saying, “Give me a target! Give me a goal! What are the five simple steps that I need to accomplish?”

And that’s when it happens: Jesus calls her by name! “Mary!” And when she hears it, she is overcome! She cries out, “Rabbouni! Teacher!”

With these words, Mary experiences the very first Easter moment! She realizes that Christ’s difficult and at times unbelievable teachings are true—that what he promised at the Last Supper has come to pass!

Mary’s witness to the first Easter is about far more than beautiful worship and festive celebrations. Mary brings us face to face with the depths of our humanity. Her witness is a mosaic of the human experience—grief and joy; uncertainty and affirmation; depression and determination. This is the true witness of Easter!

Even in the depths of our despair and grief, when things just seem to keep piling up with no end in sight, and even when we just don’t know if we believe it anymore, the God made known to us in Jesus Christ has a way of showing up where we least expect him!

But if we’re not careful, we’ll close the book as if the story ends right here. Mary recognizes the Resurrected Lord and everyone lives happily ever after. But this isn’t

the end of the story. In fact, if we keep reading, we realize that Easter isn't a story at all! It's a commissioning!

Once Mary recognizes Jesus, he says to her, "...Go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" The moment that Mary leaves the garden, the Good News of Easter gets loose and begins to transform the world! Mary bears witness to the fact that, even in the face of death itself, God will have the last word!

Through her first Easter witness, Mary teaches us that grief and joy, uncertainty and affirmation, desperation and determination, are all inescapable parts of our humanity. She teaches us that our lives of faith aren't about success or opportunities for advancement; rather, they are holy mysteries that will surprise, unsettle, and transform us. But most important of all, she teaches us that in the resurrection of our Lord Christ, we know that love, hope, and peace will ultimately prevail!

And so, in this Eastertide, may we proclaim that Christ is risen, not simply in church, but also in the world around us. May we proclaim it, not simply with our lips, but also with our hands and hearts. And as we live in the joy and promise of Easter, may we go forth into the world, looking for the Resurrected Christ in places we may not expect.

May we search for Christ amidst those who are cast down and rejected; among those who have nobody to care for them; and in the company of those who have never known the loving embrace of friendship. The world needs this now, perhaps more than ever before. But most of all, may we not simply proclaim the Good News, may we also believe it so that the whole world may see Christ in their midst and proclaim, "The Lord is risen indeed!"

Alleluia!

Respectfully and courteously in Christ, I am:

Benny E. Gurley



**\* TENTATIVE SCHEDULE \***  
**149<sup>TH</sup> GRAND CONCLAVE**  
**GRAND COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF WEST VIRGINIA**  
**MAY 18-20, 2023**

**THURSDAY, MAY 18<sup>TH</sup>**

11:00am ~ 4:00pm	Registration	Days Inn Conference Center
12:00pm ~ 1:00pm	Committee Meetings	Days Inn Conference Center
	<i>Education Committee</i>	
	<i>Finance Committee</i>	
	<i>Investment Committee</i>	
	<i>Jurisprudence Committee</i>	
1:00pm ~ 3:00pm	Grand Officers Meeting	Days Inn Conference Center
5:00pm ~ 6:00pm	Hospitality Room open	
7:00pm ~ 8:30pm	Divine Service *	

*\* Sir Knights: Uniform w/o sword / Ladies: Church attire*

**FRIDAY, MAY 19<sup>TH</sup>**

7:00am ~ 8:00am	Past Grand Commanders & REGC Breakfast	
7:00am ~ 8:00am	Past Grand Commanders Ladies Breakfast	
8:00am ~ 2:00pm	Registration	Days Inn Conference Center
10:00am	Informal Opening	Conference Center Theater
11:00am	Formal Opening	
12:00pm	Men's & Ladies Luncheons ( <i>Ticket Required</i> )	
1:00pm ~ 3:00pm	Resume Business	Conference Center Theater
3:00pm ~ 4:00pm	Election of Officers	
5:00pm ~ 6:00pm	Reception ( <i>Cash Bar</i> )	Conference Center Lobby
6:30pm	Grand Banquet* & Presentations ( <i>Ticket Required</i> )	
	<i>* Sir Knights: Uniform w/o sword &amp; chapeau</i>	
8:30pm ~ 11:00pm	Hospitality Room open	

**SATURDAY, MAY 20<sup>TH</sup>**

7:00am ~ 8:00am	Red Cross of Constantine Breakfast w/ Ladies invited *	
	<i>* Complimentary with room registration</i>	
9:00am ~ 10:00am	Resume Business	Conference Center Theater
	Presentation of Knightings Award	
	Presentation of Crusader's Sword	
10:00am	Open Installation of Officers for 2023-2024 *	
	<i>* All Ladies, Family Members, and Friends invited</i>	

**\* REGISTRATION FORM \***

**149<sup>TH</sup> GRAND CONCLAVE**

**GRAND COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF WEST VIRGINIA**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_ **TITLE** \_\_\_\_\_

**MAILING ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMANDERY NAME & NO.** \_\_\_\_\_

Will your Lady be accompanying you? No \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ Her name \_\_\_\_\_

Are you representing your Commandery? No \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ If yes, check your office below:

Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Deputy Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Generalissimo \_\_\_\_\_ Captain General \_\_\_\_\_

Proxy (signed & sealed) for \_\_\_\_\_

***HOTEL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE DIRECTLY WITH THE DAYS INN & SUITES AT FLATWOODS BY CALLING 1-866-700-7284. INDICATE THAT YOU ARE WITH THE GRAND COMMANDERY OF WV. THE CUT-OFF DATE FOR ROOM RESERVATIONS IS MAY 1, 2023.***

**MEAL TICKETS WILL BE REQUIRED FOR THE LUNCHEONS AND THE GRAND BANQUET. THE CUT-OFF DATE FOR MEAL RESERVATIONS IS MAY 1, 2023.**

Will you be attending the Divine Service on Thursday, May 18<sup>th</sup>? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**MEN'S LUNCHEON, FRIDAY, MAY 19<sup>th</sup>:** # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$27.50 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**LADIES LUNCHEON, FRIDAY, MAY 19<sup>th</sup>:** # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$27.50 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**GRAND BANQUET, FRIDAY, MAY 19<sup>th</sup>:** # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$45.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Entree Choices: Grilled Chicken \_\_\_\_\_ Roast Beef \_\_\_\_\_*

**TOTAL ENCLOSED FOR ALL MEALS:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

***PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO MT. HOPE COMMANDERY #22 AND WRITE 'GRAND CONCLAVE' ON THE NOTATION LINE.***

**MAIL TO: Sir Knight Kenneth Messer  
142 Maple Street  
Scarbro, WV25917**

*If you are eligible for mileage, do you wish to donate it to the Holy Land Pilgrimage?*

No \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ Your Name & Commandery \_\_\_\_\_