



# IDAHO KNIGHTLY NEWS

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## Editor's Note

If anyone would like to submit an article for the Idaho Knightly News, please email me your article using Microsoft Word. Keep it between 1 page and 1.5 pages.

## Upcoming Events:

Grand York Rite of Oregon ..... Apr 10-12  
Easter Observance..... Apr 20  
Grand York Rite of Idaho ..... Apr 24-26  
Grand York Rite of Montana ..... Jun 5-7

## The Death of DeMolay

By Sir Knight Barry E. Newell

This month marks the 711th anniversary of the martyrdom and death of Jacques DeMolay, the 23rd and last Grand Master of Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, or the Knights Templar.

Born around 1244 in Moly, Burgundy, DeMolay was of minor nobility, a

prerequisite for joining the Templars. At 21, in 1265, he was initiated into the Order at Beaune in a ceremony overseen by high-ranking Templars, including Humbert de Pairaud and Amaury de la Roche. His early years in the Order remain obscure, but he is believed to have spent most of his service in the East, where he likely survived the fall of Acre in 1291, escaping with then-Grand Master Thibaud Gaudin.

Following Gaudin's death in 1292, DeMolay was elected Grand Master. By this time, the Templars were based in Cyprus, having lost their last strongholds in the Holy Land to the Mamluks. Determined to restore Christian control in the region, DeMolay embarked on a European tour, seeking support for a new Crusade. However, his efforts were met with little enthusiasm, as many European leaders had grown disillusioned with crusading efforts. Although he secured supplies to fortify Cyprus, he failed to rally the necessary military support.

Despite the Order's weakened position, DeMolay sought to reform and revitalize the Templars. He attempted to recapture the coastal city of Tortosa with the help of the Mongols, but unreliable alliances

and internal Mongol conflicts led to repeated failures. In 1302, the Templars lost the island of Ruad, their last strategic foothold near the mainland. With political turmoil brewing in Europe and growing distrust toward the Templars, DeMolay faced increasing challenges. Calls for merging the Templars with the Hospitallers arose, but both Orders strongly resisted the idea.

King Philip IV of France, deeply in debt to the Templars, saw an opportunity to rid himself of financial obligations while eliminating a powerful institution. Under false pretenses, he lured DeMolay to France, greeting him with supposed diplomacy. However, on October 13, 1307, the trap was sprung; DeMolay and numerous Templars across France were arrested and charged with heresy, blasphemy, and other fabricated crimes. The accusations, many of which mirrored those previously used against Pope Boniface VIII, included renouncing Christ, idol worship, and immoral initiatory rites.

Under torture, DeMolay initially confessed, leading Pope Clement V, who was under Philip's influence, to order the arrest of all Templars throughout Christendom. However, in December 1307, DeMolay retracted his confession. This defiance triggered a prolonged struggle between the Church and the French Crown. Although Pope Clement attempted to conduct a fair trial, Philip intervened, ensuring that many Templars were burned at the stake before the process could be completed. The 2001 discovery of the Chinon Parchment revealed that, in 1308, the Pope had secretly absolved DeMolay and the Templar Order of heresy, yet this did nothing to prevent their downfall. In 1312, under pressure from Philip, Clement officially dissolved the Templars through the Papal Bull *Vox in Excelso*.

After seven years of imprisonment, DeMolay and Geoffrey de Charney, the Preceptor of Normandy, were sentenced to lifelong imprisonment. However, on March 18, 1314, both men publicly renounced their confessions, declaring their innocence, and condemning their accusers. Enraged, King Philip immediately ordered their execution as relapsed heretics. That evening, they were burned at the stake on a small island in the Seine near Notre Dame. Witnesses reported that DeMolay met his fate with dignity and defiance, allegedly cursing the Pope and the King, prophesying that they would soon face divine justice. Remarkably, both Philip and Clement died within the year.

DeMolay's execution marked the end of the Knights Templar as an officially recognized Order, but their legend only grew in the centuries that followed. Myths of their survival, hidden treasures, and secret continuations persist to this day, keeping alive the memory of the last Grand Master and his fateful stand against one of the most powerful monarchs of the Middle Ages.

