



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 as a Microsoft Word document. Keep it between 1 page and 1.5 pages.

Upcoming Events:

Colorado Grand York Rite..... Sep 10-12
Grand Lodge of Idaho Sep 16-19
Wyoming Grand York Rite..... Sep 17-19
Northwest Dept. Conference..... Oct 16-17

The Rule of the Knights Templar

By Barry E. Newell

Every Grand Commandery of Knights Templar today is governed by a Constitution and Bylaws. These documents define our purpose, establish our officers, regulate our meetings, and preserve order within the order. While separated from the medieval Order by more than seven

centuries, this concept of governing ourselves through written law has a direct historical parallel. The original Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon were likewise governed by a written constitution known as the Latin Rule.

The Latin Rule was born during the formative years of the Order. When Hugh de Payens and his companions established the fraternity in Jerusalem around 1119, they possessed no formal body of regulations. They lived simply as religious warriors under the authority of the King of Jerusalem and the Patriarch, following many of the customs already practiced by the Augustinian Canons who occupied part of the Temple Mount. As the Order grew in numbers and influence, however, it became clear that a permanent institution required a permanent rule of life.

That opportunity came at the Council of Troyes in January 1129. Convened largely through the efforts of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the council formally recognized the Knights Templar as a religious order of the Church. Bernard and the assembled Bishops adapted principles from the Rule of St. Benedict and, more directly, the reforms of the Cistercian Order to produce a rule uniquely suited to men who combined the

vocations of monk and knight. The resulting Latin Rule contained 72 articles and became the constitutional foundation of the Order.

Unlike a modern military code or corporate handbook, the Rule governed every aspect of a Templar's life. It prescribed the clothing he wore, the food he ate, the prayers he recited, the silence he observed, the discipline he accepted, and even the manner in which he slept. Knights were instructed to dress modestly in white mantles, avoid unnecessary ornamentation, eat together in common, and maintain humility despite their growing fame. Hunting for sport was discouraged, conversation during meals was limited, and obedience to lawful authority was absolute. The Rule sought to eliminate personal ambition in favor of communal discipline and spiritual devotion.

Yet the Latin Rule was never intended to remain static. As the Order expanded across Europe and the Holy Land, new circumstances demanded additional legislation. Successive Grand Masters issued supplementary regulations. These additions addressed matters such as military discipline, elections of Grand Masters, management of commanderies, financial administration, judicial procedures, and ceremonial practices. By the 13th century, the complete body of Templar legislation had grown to hundreds of articles, reflecting an international organization administering thousands of members and vast estates throughout Christendom.

This evolution bears a striking resemblance to the way modern Masonic Templar organizations function. Our Grand Encampments adopt Constitutions establishing the principles of government, while Statutes, Regulations, and local Bylaws

address the practical needs of administration. Constitutional provisions remain relatively stable, but amendments are periodically adopted as circumstances change. In much the same way, the medieval Rule provided enduring principles, while later enactments supplied the flexibility necessary for an expanding institution.

There are, however, important differences. The Latin Rule was far more comprehensive than any modern Constitution because it regulated not only organizational governance, but also the personal religious life of every member. Medieval Templars took the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Their Rule dictated daily life. A 21st-century Masonic Knight Templar, by contrast, remains a husband, father, citizen, and church member whose personal life is governed by his own conscience, his obligations to God, and the teachings of his denomination rather than by his Commandery.

Nevertheless, the spirit behind both systems is remarkably similar. Both are intended to preserve harmony, ensure accountability, and promote the ideals for which the Order stands. The medieval Rule reminded every brother that no individual stood above the Order, while our modern Constitutions remind us that no Sir Knight stands above the laws of the Grand Commandery or Grand Encampment.

Perhaps that is the Latin Rule's greatest legacy. More than a collection of regulations, it embodied the conviction that Christian knighthood flourishes only where discipline, humility, and obedience are joined with faith.