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“Order of Malta” or Knight Hospitaller of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta:

In the previous issues we have examined the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross and the Pass degree of the Order of Saint Paul or the Mediterranean Pass. Progressing through these Chivalric Orders we now come before the Order of Malta in hopes to pass through its ceremonies and prove (for the first time in our Masonic journey) to be legitimate soldiers of the Cross and Brothers of the Order. Masonic sources postulate the Order of Malta most likely originated in England and was exported to America. English records place the degree in the Encampment (or Commandery) as early as 1780, seventeen years before Thomas Smith Webb include the degree in his monitor. Like the other degrees in his monitor, Webb most likely edited the ritual for American audiences.

Masonic scholars have long commented that the Commandery requires the candidate to have orders of knighthood of two different orders of medieval knights conferred upon them. It is ironic that historically, the Knights Templar and Knights of Malta were rivals and generally hostile toward each other. In fact, Albert Gallatin Mackey was so displeased with the inclusion of the Order of Malta that it was removed from the Commandery Orders at the thirteenth triennial prior to the Civil War. However, Commanderies were permitted to communicate the Order as an honorary order. It was restored in 1862, by a resolution that was found to be against the constitutions of the Grand Encampment. Three years later, the Order of Malta was restored into the Templar orders. However, it did not appear as an order unto itself as the 1862 resolution had described. Rather, the orders were listed in sequence as:

- Knight of the Red Cross
- Knight Templar and Knight of Malta

The Order of Malta became a part of the Knight Templar Order. This situation remained until 1916, where the current sequence was established, once again giving the Order of Malta a place as an independent degree.

Today, the Order of Malta is the second order conferred in the Commandery. This order actually consists of two: The Order of Saint Paul, or the Mediterranean Pass, (previously presented within the Oklahoma insert of the August Edition of Knight Templar Magazine) which is a preparatory order, and the Order of Malta itself. The ceremony for conferring the degree contains a mixture of Masonic tradition, historical accounts of the Order of St John, moral teaching, and the communication of modes of recognition between members. A series of banners is employed in the ceremony, each representing one of the great battles of the historic medieval Order of St John, whose story is the basis of the moral teachings of the degree. The Order of Saint Paul is the first of the Christian orders contained in the chivalric system, and is based upon the story of the Apostle Paul (nee Saul) who, en route to Rome for trial, was shipwrecked on the island of Melite (Malta) in 60 C.E. The candidate represents a knight preparing to depart for the crusades in

the Holy Land. He receives sustenance, both spiritual and physical, to gird him for the arduous of his journey.

In the next portion of the order, the history of the Knights of Saint John (Knights of Malta) is explained and the periods of the order's history are paralleled with the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. While Freemasonry often comes under attack by fundamentalists who accuse the fraternity of being un-Christian, the candidate for admission into this Christian order can offer clear argument to the contrary. The Order of Malta is a suitable preparation for the Order of the Temple, in that it provides the candidate with additional New Testament instruction, particularly in the Eight Beatitudes. The symbol of the Order is the Maltese Cross, its eight points symbolic of the Beatitudes and of the eight languages which once were spoken by its members. The candidate is created a Knight of Malta and invested with words and signs specific to the order. The body is called a Priory.

The jewel of the order is the only jewel required for wear at all times on the uniform of a Knight Templar. Two bars are typically worn on the jewel: the upper bar identifies the Fratres' Grand Commandery (generally his home state) on a black background, while the lower bar identifies his individual Commandery on a white background. An eight-pointed Maltese cross is used for the jewel across the world, but the rendering varies by jurisdiction. The centre of the American version features eagle design, derived from pre-1885 renderings of the Great Seal of the U.S.

The original Knights of Saint John, or Hospitalers of Saint John, afterward known as Knights of Rhodes, and finally called Knights of Malta, were a military-monastic order, established in 1080 C.E. to care for sick and injured pilgrims, and was militarized nineteen years later during the First Crusade. As early as 1018 C.E., some merchants from Amalfi, in the Duchy of Naples, being struck with the misery to which the pilgrims were exposed on their road to Terra Sancta, the "Holy Land", obtained permission of Tariq I-Hakim, the Fatimid Caliph of Egypt, to erect a church and build a monastery near the site of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, which they dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. They entertained all pilgrims who came for devotion, and cure, the diseased among them. They became eminent for their devotion, charity, and hospitality. Saint John the Baptist, being their patron, they were called Brethren Hospitalers of Saint John the Baptist of Jerusalem, in order to distinguish them from the pre-existing Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. They took the black habit of the Hermits of Saint Augustine, and on the left breast wore a cross of eight points. In war, they wore crimson, with the white cross, but in their monasteries, and on the day of their profession, the black garment only.

I wish to thank Albertus Magnus Cmdry #92 whose research was the foundation of this report. Correspondence to the Sir Knights should be addressed to:

[Http://www.chicagoyorkrite.org/commanderyresearch/index.html](http://www.chicagoyorkrite.org/commanderyresearch/index.html)

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Events



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