



Grand Commandery Knights Templar West Virginia



December 2022
Message

2022 Christmas

From the Apartment of the Grand Prelate
Grand Commandery of the State of West Virginia

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:

MERRY CHRISTMAS

In many of the Christmas stories that are read from Scripture during the weeks before Christmas we hear of God's messengers, the angels, delivering this very message. "Do not be afraid." When the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah to announce that his wife Elizabeth would become the mother of John the Baptist, even in her old age, Gabriel's first words to him were, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, your prayer has been heard." Not long after, Gabriel appeared again, this time to Mary, to announce that she would be the mother of Jesus. And again his first words were, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." And an angel appeared to Joseph, too. He was betrothed to Mary and it would have been understandable in those days if he had sent her away, but the angel said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

And finally, on Christmas Day, in glorious splendor and light, an angel appeared to the shepherds on a hillside while they were tending their sheep and said to them, "Fear not, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

All of these people were just ordinary folk who, each in their own way, were asked to overcome their fears and, in faith and obedience to a loving God, do improbable and difficult things. Zechariah and Elizabeth were elderly and

I'm sure many of their friends and neighbors had much to say as Elizabeth became obviously pregnant in her old age. Mary, on the other hand, was just a child of perhaps fourteen or fifteen. She was unmarried and as so a disgrace to her family and to Joseph, her betrothed. Everyone would have understood if Joseph had put her away from him. According to the times, he could have had her stoned, but he did not. Because of the angels' words, he stood by her and held his head, and Mary's, high. As for the shepherds, they were the lowliest of the low. Always smelly and dirty from herding their sheep, they lived apart from the other townspeople and were shunned by them. And yet they were the first to hear the news of Jesus' birth and they went quickly to see the babe in the manger.

All of these people were asked to do difficult things--things that were totally out of character for them and things we can be sure they never would have chosen for themselves. It is obvious that they were afraid. But Scripture tells us that they were faithful people. Not only did they believe in God, but they trusted in God and in God's love. They knew deep down in their hearts that if God asked something of them, God would also provide the strength and the courage and everything they needed to get the job done.

Now Christmas is here again for each and every one of us. The gifts of that first Christmas are as true today as they were on the first Christmas more than 2,000 years ago. Out of God's constant and abiding love, God waits to give them to you through God's best gift of all--the gift of God's own Son, come to earth as a tiny babe born in a manger in Bethlehem. May God fill your heart with his love this Christmas and may that love overcome your fears and set you free to accept the gifts God came to bring to each of you--gifts of light and hope and peace.

Living through the horrors of the past few years--let us rejoice! Rejoice in this hope and find the peace of the one who was dead and now is ALIVE!

God bless our Armed Forces, our country, the Ukraine, and all the peoples of the world!

We wish you a Christ-filled Christmas and a joyous New Year of hope!

Respectfully,

Sir Knight & Reverend Benny E. Gurley (PC #15), Grand Prelate

