

# THE KNIGHTS OF MALTA, THEIR HOSPITALS, AND THEIR STAMPS

by Frater James A. Marples, VII<sup>o</sup>,  
Life Member, Nebraska College, S.R.I.C.F.



1884 Masonic Knight  
of Malta Jewel



Knight of Malta Grand  
Masters Stamps



Christmas Knight of Malta  
Stamp of Bellini:  
Christ Baptized

Since Time Immemorial, mankind has struggled with two opposing forces, namely "Man's inhumanity to Man" (referring to war and conflict); and "Man helping his fellow Man" (referring to nurturing, befriending and healing). During the Crusades: the Knights of Saint John (founded circa the year 1099) (later known as the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta) had, as its principal aim, the "Defense of the Faith and Assistance to the Poor". It was a Christian Military Order, but almost a quasi-Medical Order, too.

The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon was established circa the year 1119. They were commonly known as the Knights Templar. Their mission was also that of a Christian Military Order charged with the task of protecting Christian Pilgrims visiting the Holy Land Sites. They also became involved in activities such as Banking, Commerce, and Communications to lessen the burdens of the pilgrims. The people who the Knights attempted to help (their 'clientele,' if you can so describe the Christian pilgrims) could almost be literally described as people on-the-move....not quite nomadic. They didn't wander aimlessly, as some nomads. They were Pilgrim-travelers who had a clear destination: traveling the primitive pathways and sea-lanes to (and from) their visit to see the Holy Land where Jesus Christ was born; where He lived, preached, was Crucified, and where he was buried (hence, the Holy Sepulchre).

Our Masonic Chivalric Orders, which are styled by British Masons as "The Orders of the Temple, and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and of Malta" encompass the merging of the disbanded (and barely surviving) Knights Templar (after the year A.D. 1314) with their brother knights --- the Knights of Malta.\*\*\* Although both groups were Christian; and both groups received papal sanction for their existence, admittedly there were jealousies and rivalries between both medieval Orders. Thankfully, our Masonic Orders strive to re-introduce harmony among our modern Orders.

The founder of our Rosicrucian Society, Fr. Christian Rosenkreutz (1378-1484) was a Catholic Monk. During his lifetime, the Templars were an almost non-existent remnant or shell of their former glory ---having been mostly incorporated into the Knights of St. John, as stated above. Fr. Rosenkreutz lived to the ripe old age of 106 years. He, himself, designed the Society of the Rose & Cross to be a healing Society as well as an academic Society. **With regard to any Medical or healing knowledge: one "Rule" of the Society was that such knowledge and Treatment was to be done freely = gratis.** His aim was to glean the best aspects of Ancient Wisdom with new Discoveries to create advancements which would benefit mankind. By contrast, Fr. Rosenkreutz envisioned the people being served, as being in a 'fixed place' or 'stationary'. Fr. Rosenkreutz and his Fratres would go out in pairs, two-by-two, and go to serve the People at-large.

That is where our Rosicrucian Order is so vastly different. While the Knights Templar and Knights of Malta were essentially Christian military-men, on-the-move, patrolling the distant Lands and Sea-lanes; the



Rosicrucian Order was a domestic Order. Its members (our ancient Fratres) indeed made 'pilgrimages,' but they felt a need to [Reminisce](#) about their experiences; [Record](#) their Findings; and attempt to help mankind [React](#) to new or improved knowledge and therefore [Replenish](#) (or boost/promote) the [diversity of Wisdom and Beauty; and Health](#). Religious Faith was always left to the province of Almighty God. The Fratres' observations were "to seek what was lost"... to "utilize what we currently possess"; and "to strive for advancements which would enhance people's lives for the future. And, all-the-while, giving all Glory and Honor to Almighty God."

Let us look at the governing-structure of these organizations: [The Knights of Malta and the Knights Templar had a governing-structure similar to an organizational 'hierarchical ladder.'](#) At the very TOP was a distinct leader, given the distinction and title of "Grand Master." In the Catholic Order of Malta, the Grand Master is styled a "Prince of the Church" and has immense powers and prerogatives; which are equal in nature to that of a Roman Catholic 'Cardinal'. In ancient times, the various tongues or Langues/dialects of the Order of Malta (representing the diverse Languages and Nationalities of its members) were united by a single Grand Master, at the TOP-RUNG of the hierarchical ladder, who was himself directly accountable only to the Pope. In our Masonic Order, the Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of the U.S.A., and his counterparts in "Great Pories" across the world, are duly elected (rather than 'Appointed') and have similar "Supreme Authority" to oversee the Ritual of Masonic Knights of Malta as well as Templar Masonry. The Grand Master is empowered to grant Dispensations, issue Edicts, direct his subordinate leaders as well as rank-and-file members at the State and local-levels. A 'Templar Commandery' in the United States is called a 'Templar Preceptory' in Canada and in the United Kingdom. Within the bailiwick of Masonic Templary are the Knights of Malta Pories: convened exclusively (as such) an assembly. A good Grand Master gives good, benign, benevolent Leadership from the TOP downward. Yet, any Grand Master in Masonic or Templar circles today, simultaneously depends on support and approval from whole membership, from the bottom UPWARD to sustain Brotherly Harmony. As for duration of a "term of Office," A Grand Commander in a U.S. State usually serves a one-year term. The Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the U.S.A. usually serves a three year Triennium; and a Grand Master of the Catholic Order of Malta usually serves "for life" or until his resignation.

By way of contrast, [the Rosicrucian Order](#) (at least in ancient times) was vastly different. Its [governing structure](#) more closely [resembled spokes-on-a-wheel](#); with The Supreme Magus IX<sup>o</sup>, being at the center of the 'hub'. He is technically "in-charge", but freely accepting input, knowledge and insight, just as if he were an "ordinary member. Fr. Rosenkreutz deliberately set-up his Society differently, so that knowledge, insight, and yes ---governing-power would gravitate INWARD towards the CENTER. It was more of a round-table discussion group, in ancient times, when Fr. Rosenreutz and his Fratres met back at a designated place, once a year. In the United States, the national governing leadership of The Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis ---commonly abbreviated S.R.I.C.F. ---- is constituted by The High Council, presided over by The Supreme Magus, holding the Grade IX<sup>o</sup>, and his slate of Officers. Each U.S. State (such as Nebraska) having S.R.I.C.F. Colleges therein, are led by a Chief Adept, assisted by a Celebrant, Suffragan, Secretary/Treasurer, Webmaster, as well as other Officers and Fratres. Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F. is truly blessed to be one of the comparatively few Colleges to be "on-line" with Internet postings, research-papers, and general news. Ours is an organization of Masonic Scholars. Membership is predicated on regular mainstream Masonic affiliation; by invitation only, as well as a profession of the Christian faith.

The "Grand Mastership" organizational-style of the Malta and Templar Orders was (and is) more of a Hierarchy; whereas the Rosicrucian-model of Leadership was akin to a modern collaboration or "focus group." Which 'governing style' is better? It all depends on 'circumstances' and 'needs' of any given Organization.

Charitable Works: The Catholic S.M.O.M. Order of Malta either owns, sponsors or supports various Hospitals and Clinics --- throughout the world. Most are in Germany, France, England, and Italy. The Order's hospital in Rome specializes in neurological treatment and rehabilitation. Interestingly, (and appropriately) the Order runs a maternity hospital in Bethlehem, which is mainly overseen by members of the French Association of the modern Order of Malta. In Prague, in the Czech Republic, the Order has an institution for children; and in Senegal and Cambodia the Order runs specialized hospitals for those who suffer from leprosy. The Order also sponsors a yearly pilgrimage to Lourdes, France were the Sick (the 'malades') (French word for 'the sick' or 'unwell' are helped and served with dignity, piety, and high respect as if they were 'lords' (lower case 'L'), by members of the Order. The Brotherhood of Blessed Gerard is the relief-arm of the Catholic Order of



Malta. In England and Ireland, the St. John Ambulance Corps (composed largely of Protestants) is an allied-organization which provides on-scene medics for emergencies and natural disasters. Our Masonic Knights Templar have our Eye Foundation, helping to restore 'sight' to those in need as well as academic scholarships for deserving students; as well as other charitable projects undertaken by local Commanderies, Preceptories, and Pories on a worldwide basis.

The common-thread of Brotherhood/Fraternalism: An additional element which was (and is) mutual to the Catholic-based and Masonic based Order of Malta; along with the Knights Templar (both ancient and modern) as well as to our Rosicrucian Order (in ancient and modern times) --- is the high priority placed on Fraternalism.

Diplomatic Relations: In a Masonic context, we have "Fraternal Relations" amongst recognized Masonic groups deemed "Regular and Legitimate." In the Catholic groups, the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, enjoys "Permanent Observer Status" at The United Nations. While it has no voting powers to cast in that deliberative Body: its "observer status" enables the Order to engage in Diplomacy by acting as a neutral mediator whenever a State requests for its intervention --thus promoting 'Peace'.

Fr. Rosenkreutz and one of his fellow monk's in Germany had the mere wish of making a pilgrimage to visit The Holy Sepulchre in The Holy Land in their lifetime. Both were getting to be of very advanced-age at that time. The other monk (his traveling companion) died in Cyprus, prompting a shift in Fr. Rosenkreutz's travel plans, itinerary, and route. Fr. Rosenkreutz diverted to Damascus, Syria; and then toured parts of Arabia --- however, I feel certain Fr. Rosenkreutz accomplished his stated goal of visiting the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in what is modern-day Israel. Fr. Rosenkreutz then returned to Europe to share the knowledge which he and his followers had learned in the Near East. For one thing: he retained the Christian prerequisite amongst the members (Fratres) of his Society. Although the members (Fratres) largely traveled on foot; they remained --- for the most part--- a domestic philosophic and benevolent group. Any foreign-travel was mostly confined to regions they could walk to.

The last voyage that Fr. Rosenkreutz made was his final re-entry back into Europe via Portugal and Spain (where he and his companions were, sadly, ostracized and expelled). Finally, Fr. Rosenkreutz died in his native Germany. I find it particularly interesting that the Hospital of Queen D. Leonor in the municipality of Caldas da Rainha, in Portugal, was established in 1485, just one year after Fr. Rosenkreutz's death. Did Rosicrucian knowledge inspire the Hospital's inception? No one can know for certain. However, it has been reported that Queen Leonor (wife of King Joao II) founded this free hospital, after seeing peasants wallow in the mud as a cure for rheumatism and arthritis. The water is sulfurous, calcic, chlorinated, sodic, and magnesian with a pH level of 6.7 and interestingly the town's name translates into "The Queen's Spa".

When one hears historical stories about "The Crusades", the general public conjures-up images of Warfare. However, the Christian Chivalric Orders did not swear oaths to 'convert the whole world by the sword'. In a more modest manner, Christian Knights made solemn obligations to preserve, protect and defend the Christian Religion from hostile aggression.

Fr. Rosenkreutz came along decades after the disbanding of the Templars. However, he would have traveled Sea Routes carefully watched over and patrolled by the Knights of St. John (the Hospitallers). So, Fr. Rosenkreutz and his followers would have been escorted and protected by the valiant Knights of St. John. It is remarkable that the Virtues of taking-in wandering souls and giving them food, shelter, direction, and a 'purpose in life' is essentially the milk of human-kindness which has spanned centuries.

A prime example of human-kindness spanning centuries is the case of Rev. Fr. Edward J. Flanagan founded "Boys Town" in Nebraska. In the 1940s, he saw an artistic rendering of a boy carrying his younger brother on his shoulders. Father Flanagan sought permission (which was received) to adapt this artwork with the caption: "He ain't heavy, Father...he's m'brother." This phrase became the motto of Boys Town. Fr. Flanagan envisioned a wholesome shelter where troubled, needy, or orphaned boys could go ---and be hopefully free from harm or abuse and taught how to become productive members of American society.

Compassion, Charity, and Generosity can do limitless "good" ---if we can just harness those virtuous attributes.



The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta (S.M.O.M.) no longer possesses any geographic territory. To stimulate their annual revenues: the Order issues coins as well as postage-stamps (especially commemorative ones, such as Christmas stamps or issues depicting Grand Masters of the Order). Proceeds benefit the Order, and are directed to help the sick and the poor.

Let all of us...whether it be at Christmas-time; Easter-time; or anytime during the calendar year ---- remember the attributes of Brotherhood, Worthy Charitable Endeavors, and Patriotism. Let us remember the Past Grand Masters of the various Knightly Orders. Let us remember the departed Past Supreme Grand Magi of our Rosicrucian Society. Let us remember to visit the sick, the home-bound, and those who are hospitalized.

The purpose of these organizations....and the purpose of this Presentation Article can be summed-up in one simple word: **CARE**. Care about yourself, care about your neighbor, care about your country, care about your devotion to God and be thankful that others have "cared" since the Dawn of Time. Take due notice thereof, and govern yourselves accordingly.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Sources / Exhibits /Recommended Readings:

\*\* The old regalia ribbon and jewel is that of The United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of Saint John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and of Malta. It depicts a Prior of Malta Cross made by Henry Thomas Lamb of London in 1884 in London. It has the white enamel Maltese Cross with silver-gilt lions passant between the arms of the Cross upper-right and lower-left AND silver-gilt foxes passant at the upper-left and lower-right. This Masonic Jewel pre-dates the establishment of the Order of Saint John by Royal Charter in 1888. Henry Thomas Lamb, registered in 1870, was a jeweler and silversmith, at St. John's Square, Clerkenwell, London, specializing in Masonic goods. An extremely rare item in today's world.

\*\*\* From the Catholic Encyclopedia: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14493a.htm>  
...“If we consider that the [Order of Hospitallers](#) finally inherited, although not without difficulties, the [property](#) of the Templars and received many of its members, we may say that the result of the trial was practically equivalent to the long-proposed amalgamation of the two rival orders. For the [Knights](#) (first of [Rhodes](#), afterwards of [Malta](#)) took up and carried on elsewhere the work of the Knights of the Temple.”

- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33<sup>o</sup>, and a Knight Templar.

- Public notices of Mission Statements of The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta. (S.M.O.M.)

- Personal correspondence between James A. Marples and the Cuban Association of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta.

- Queen Leonor Hospital Spa, Largo Rainha D., Leon., Caldas da Rainha, Portugal.  
Phone +351 262 880 579

- Public notices of the S.M.O.M.'s humanitarian assistance efforts in Turkey, Haiti, New Orleans, and elsewhere.

- Personal correspondence between James A. Marples and The Brotherhood of Blessed Gerard.....of which Frater Marples is himself a member.

- The aforementioned exhibits of postage-stamps, regalia ribbons, and images of Grand Masters.

\*The block of S.M.O.M. postage-stamps depict Grand Masters and their terms of leadership: (TOP ROW): Emmanuel Pinto de Fonseta 1741-1773; Antonio Manoel De Vilhena (of Portugal) 1722-1736; Gregorio Caraffa 1680-1690. BOTTOM ROW: The 2nd Grand Master Raymond Du Puy 1120-1158; Joannes De Vallette (of the Langue of Provence) 1557-1568; and Phillipus De Lisle Adam (of France) 1521-1534.



- Archives and website of The High Council S.R.I.C.F., which serves as the Officially-Recognized governing Body for Masonic Rosicrucians in The United States of America.

Its website: <http://www.yorkrite.org/sricf/info.html>

- Archives and website of Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F.

Its website: <http://www.masonic.benemerito.net/msricf/>

\*\*\*\*\*

About the Author:

Frater James A. Marples, VII<sup>o</sup> is a Perpetual Life Member of Mulvane Masonic Lodge #201 A.F. & A.M. in Mulvane, Kansas. He is a Life Member of The International Peace Gardens Lodge of Freemasons (Canada-USA) and also an Honorary Member of Golden Rule Masonic Lodge #562 in Willard, Ohio; as well as an Honorary Member of Nelson Masonic Lodge #77, in Nelson, Nebraska, which has recently consolidated with the Superior Masonic Lodge at Superior, Nebraska.

Companion and Sir Knight Jim is a Life Member of the Wichita York Rite Bodies (Wichita Chapter #33 R.A.M.; Wichita Council #12 R. & S.M.; and Mt. Olivet Commandery #12 K.T.). He is also a Life Member of the Lincoln Nebraska Scottish Rite Bodies; The Robert-the-Bruce Association (California); The George Washington Masonic Stamp Club; Masonic Order of the Gordian Knot (Indiana); Masonic Order of the Sword of Bunker Hill; Kentucky Chapter #134 of National Sojourners and Heroes of '76; North Texas York Rite College #118 of Sherman, Texas; and Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F.

He is a Regular Member of The Allied Masonic Degrees; Grand College of Rites; St. David Conclave of The Red Cross of Constantine; Shawnee County Kansas Square and Compass Club; and Holyrood Council #61 of Knight Masons (Nebraska).

