

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

FROM HISTORY TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MISSION

900 Years Since the Foundation of Poor Knights of Christ in the Temple of Jerusalem

Pasi Pöllänen and Scott Simon, Editors

By Melinda Richards PhD, Deputy Archivist General, OSMTH

Early on the morning of Friday, the 13th of October 1307, the soldiers in service to King Philip IV (“The Fair”) of France launched a surprise attack on the Knights of the Templar Order . . . thus began a story whose end has never been clear. Were the knights alerted that the attack was planned for that day? Did they escape? Did they take their treasury with them, rumored to be substantial; a treasure-trove that has never been found? Where did they go? The questions have plagued historians for centuries, and eventually became the stuff of legend. A virtual cottage industry has developed whose intention has long been to solve the mystery of the disappearance of the Knights Templar once and for all.

The larger question is: What became of the Order of the Temple of Jerusalem following the famous attack, the capture and eventual execution of the leaders of the Order, including their Grand Master, Jacques De Molay? Did he name his successor before his tormentors executed him, and thus providing a continuation of the line of succession of Grand Masters? Why was it that he chose the manner of his death: public execution rather than live out the rest of his days in prison? Could it have been by design, so that he COULD name his successor, and thereby preserve the line of succession?

History tells us that the Order of the Knights Templar was disbanded, the knights scattered, never to reform under pain of death. There have been many scholars who believe that was not the case; that under a different name and different identity, the Order did, in fact continue, in spirit if not in body.

“Birth . . . death . . . resurrection.” The Cycle of Life appears to have played out for the Order of the Temple of Jerusalem. Through the rigors of the scientific method, the History and Archive Committee of OSMTH has sought to answer these and other questions in the second in a series of books documenting the history of the Order. Through the process of discovery, the Committee has carefully and painstakingly documented and verified a thread of continuance, in spirit and social capital, between the medieval Order of knights and the Order of the modern era.

The Knights Templar: From History to the 21st Century – 900 years Since the Founding of the Poor Knights of Christ in the Temple of Jerusalem seeks to solve some of the mysteries surrounding the Order, through careful exploration and verification of documents which are still coming to light. By applying the methods of scientific inquiry, creating hypotheses, and considered discussion that will allow the drawing of conclusions, a picture emerges of modern Knights and Dames as heirs of the Christian spirit and social capital of medieval chivalry.

As will be shown in this book, the spirit of chivalry, of being of service to humankind, and of a willingness to provide protection and support those in need has never truly died. It lives on in the men and women who pledge themselves to lives of service to others. It lives on in those who choose to carry on in the spirit of those ancient knights; to don the mantle and offer themselves in service to protect the Pilgrim,

to provide help wherever needed, and to work in Christian charity on behalf of a broken world . . . this is the legacy of the Order in the Modern Era.

Its release is timed to coincide with the preparation for the celebration of the 900th anniversary of the founding of the original Order. *The Knights Templar: From History to the 21st Century* promises to engage the reader at several levels: for the casual reader, it provides information and insight; for the inquirer, details and documentation with over 2,000 footnotes to answer some of the nascent questions concerning the order; for the scholar, a deeper knowledge of the history of the Order, and paths for further exploration.